Yellow, stunted winter wheat following herbicide application - What was the cause?

While warm conditions allowed for timely fall herbicide applications, it is important to remember that most herbicides labeled for weed control in winter wheat have specific instructions. A few things to remember going forward:

a) Herbicides should not be applied when the crop is under stress from very cold temperatures,

b) when there are wide fluctuations in day/night temperatures,

c) when a frost has occurred or,

d) when temperatures are below freezing prior to, at or immediately following herbicide applications.

A good rule of thumb is to only apply herbicides to winter wheat when the daily temperature is 50 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. Following this rule of thumb helps avoid possible wheat injury from herbicide applications and improves weed control.

It’s also possible that some wheat varieties have different tolerance levels to herbicides sprayed during cold conditions. Some herbicide injury symptoms illustrated in the photos below were noticed throughout Western and Southwest NY over the past 2 weeks. As long as the wheat was well established, it should have little to no effect on crop yield. It will be important to evaluate wheat stands in the spring to determine the next management steps.