



UPPER COAST CROP IMPROVEMENT NEWSLETTER

Matagorda

Wharton

Jackson

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Survey Program

Another year is upon us and once again thanks to the commitment of local businesses and the agricultural community, we will conduct the IPM survey scouting program. The scouting program is designed so that the IPM agent can become familiar with what is taking place around the county by actually being out in the fields. We are looking at about 2,000 acres of cotton that are spread out over the three county area. Fields were chosen in specific areas so that there would be equal representation from each county.

The funding for the program was given in the form of donations from many of the local businesses. A list of those businesses is located at the end of this newsletter. Without the support and donations from these establishments the success of this program would be limited.

General Situation

The start to the 2008 cropping season seems to have been underway for a long time now. Since planting began in March, rainfall accumulations have varied widely across the county. Weather data from Wharton County indicates that we were about an inch below normal whereas Jackson County was about 0.2 of an inch below normal for April. However, early season low temperatures along with unusual high winds have affected the crop. Conditions continue to fluctuate with cloudy cool weather in the morning hours and the warm up in the afternoon.

So, the area cotton is off to a bumpy start to say the least. The cool windy weather we experienced last month really slowed down growth and development and much of the cotton seems to be playing catch-up. Cotton across the area varies in growth stage from 4-5 true leaves to having match-head size squares. The majority of the cotton we are looking at regardless of development stage appears to be behind and in some cases looks kind of “sick”. The cotyledon leaves as well as the 1-4th true leaves on some of the older cotton are torn, burnt, and exhibit spotty patches of discolored tissue. Also when you dig the plants up the roots are a tan to dark brown color. We have determined that in most of the fields we are looking at that this is due to the cool-wet weather and the wind and rain events and not disease. What we really need are a few hot dry days to get this cotton established.

You need to remember the environmental conditions and stress that the cotton has gone through when examining the new fruiting positions. Fruiting positions can be lost due to factors other than insects, and it is very important to investigate what is actually causing the square loss so you do not spend money where you do not need to. Cottons’ main goal in life is to live, not to make you lots of money. Cotton is a selfish plant; many plants put their energy into reproductive parts such as the development of the seed (fruit) to ensure that new plants survive to grow at another time. Not cotton, it sheds its fruit so that it will continue to survive.

Beneficial numbers in cotton are low to moderate with lady beetle adults and big eyed

bugs being observed. A handout on identification of beneficial insects can be obtained through our office.

What’s Happening in the Cotton

Roundup Ready and Liberty Link:

If you have Roundup® Ready cotton remember that over the top applications is time sensitive and need to be out by the time cotton reaches the 5th true leaf stage. Whereas the “flex” type varieties gives you a wider range of options. Other options do include Ignite® used in concert with Liberty Link® cultivars, which may be of particular interest when considering weed control problems.

Thrips:

With some fields varying from 4-5 true leaf stage thrips activity needs to be monitored on a regular basis. Heavy thrips migration can occur as bordering crops and or weeds dry down and mature. Prolonged migration can occur for fields that are next to range land so keep a careful watch on those. Fields that still fit these criteria, in the area that were treated with at-plant systemic or seed treated insecticides have already shown signs that the residual is wearing off. These fields need to be monitored closely as heavy infestations may destroy terminal buds resulting in stunted growth. Treatment is advised when the number of thrips averages 1 or more per true-leaf present. **Be careful when scouting as thrips damage and wind damage are often confused with each other. Also remember that insecticidal control is rarely justified once plants reach the 5-7 true leaf stage, or when plants begin to square.**

Fleahoppers:

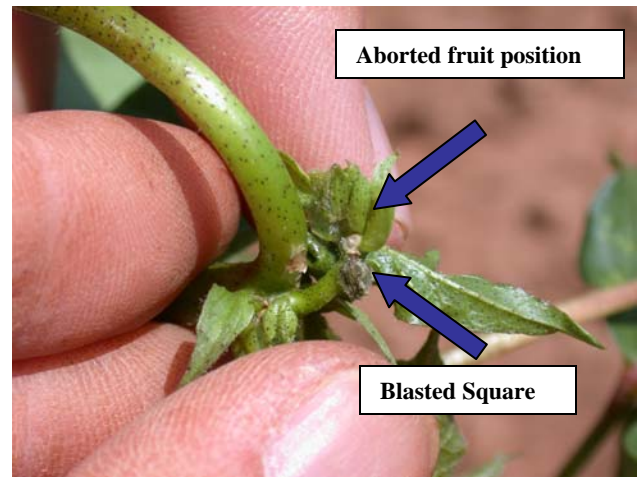
Weeds are beginning to dry up and become less attractive as a host to our plant bugs. This definitely means a movement off of the weeds and into our cotton. Rainfall triggers fleahopper emergence from diapause; therefore, we may see more activity shortly, especially on wild host plants such as horsemint, goatweed, and silverleaf nightshade. **Cotton that is in the squaring stage across the entire area needs to be monitored for fleahoppers immediately.** In program fields we are finding fleahoppers but most fields are still below economic threshold

levels. To determine if you have an infestation you need to carefully inspect 100 plants across the field, looking closely in the terminals and on the fruit. Adult fleahoppers (FH) are about 1/8 inch long and pale green (see picture below). Nymphs resemble adults but lack wings and are light green, and they both move very rapidly when disturbed. Pinhead size and smaller squares are most susceptible to damage. **During the first 3 weeks of squaring, in our area, 15 to 25 fleahoppers per 100 terminals is considered economically damaging.**



Lygus:

Lygus numbers will also need to be monitored closely as this pest can damage **squares** of all stages and young **bolls**. Adults are 1/4 inch long, have a conspicuous triangle in the center of the back, are winged and vary in color from pale green to yellowish brown with reddish brown to black markings (see picture below). Nymphs are uniformly pale green with red-tipped antennae; late instars have four conspicuous black spots on the thorax and one large black spot near the base of the abdomen. The nymph's wings are not developed, but they can move rapidly and are difficult to detect in cotton foliage. **During the first 6 weeks of squaring, control measures should be considered when *Lygus* bug numbers average 10(count nymphs as two) per 50 sweeps on more than two successive sampling dates (spaced 5 days apart).** Scout your fields carefully for FH and *Lygus* and base treatments on actual populations and not just square damage.



Cotton Aphids:

Populations are beginning to be found in a handful of program fields and treatable levels have yet to be reached. However, their numbers seem to be on the decline due to predators and parasitic wasps. Within the coming weeks aphids can affect yield by reducing boll size. Therefore, it is critical to protect the crop from high aphid populations during the boll filling period. **So remember, that treatments should be initiated when the field averages 50 aphids per leaf and if the population is continuing to climb.**

Boll Weevil (BW):

Pheromone trap catches are much lower this year, when comparing it to same time last year (see table below) according to data received by our local zone office. While I cannot give you all a good explanation as to the exact reason for this, I can say that the independent trap line that we are running just south of El Campo has **NOT** caught a boll weevil yet this year!

Now, having come from an area where boll weevils have been effectively rendered a non-pest, due to eradication efforts, I can say that at least up there (Western High Plains Boll Weevil Eradication Zone) it did work. **Was it easy, NO, was it fun, NO, were there significant problems, YES.** Our best hope is to do like the other areas of Texas that has dramatically reduced this pest through eradication efforts and put this problem behind us.

Year	2007	2008
Total Cotton Acres in Zone	129,974	106,897
Total BW Captured Last Week	1351 (21,073 traps ran)	74 (26,174 traps ran)
Total BW Captured Year to Date	1751 (61,736 traps ran)	343 (112,432 traps ran)

Upcoming Events & Announcements

- > Pecan IPM Newsletter: If you would like a copy of the Pecan newsletter put out by our State IPM Pecan Specialist, send me an e-mail letting me know or call the office.
- > May 22nd Wharton County Hay and Forage Field Day
- > June 19th Wharton County Agricultural Applied Research Field Day

Acknowledgements

Funding for the IPM program is provided by donations from local agribusinesses. Money goes towards postage, travel, and wages for scouts. We are still in need of funding so if you know someone you think would be interested in donating please contact them or call our office. The IPM staff would like to thank these businesses that donated to the program and encourage producers to support their business as they have supported the producers.

Danevang Farmers COOP
DuPont Crop Protection
Farmers COOP El Campo
Helena Chemical Company
Moses Gin
Prosperity Bank
South Texas Cotton & Grain Association
Vanderbilt Gin
Wharton County Farm Bureau
Wiese Crop Insurance
Wilbur-Ellis

Newsletter by E-Mail

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