AgriLIFE EXTENSION
Texas A&M System

UPPER COAST
CROP IMPROVEMENT NEWSLETTER

Matagorda **Wharton** **Jackson**

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General Situation

Weather conditions in this area of southeastern Texas have changed from cool and wet to warm and dry. Unfortunately, following the accompanying recent scattered rains, prevailing high winds caused cotton to be damaged and hampered field spraying activities. So, the cotton growth stage is variable throughout the area and ranges from fields that are in the pinhead square stage to 1/3 grown square stage. We are currently in need of good rain which will help out all the areas crops.

As with all years, in regards to weather, we tend to think of certain ones that were exceptional. With that in mind it is always interesting to take a look at the past. Listed below is a comparison of the 2004 through 2008 total rainfall accumulated for the first five months of the year. Source and location of the rainfall totals were obtained from the crop weather station located at Rancho Grande Farms near Crescent in Wharton County.

Month	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
January	3.73	0	1.12	1.68	3.17
February	2.26	0	0.86	4.37	3.53
March	3.50	6.56	2.60	3.99	2.56
April	1.94	2.88	1.85	1.26	4.62
May	0.23	0.36	1.03**	4.37	6.64
Total	11.66*	9.80*	7.46	15.67**	20.52

Source: http://cwp.tamu.edu
* through the 12th of May; ** through the 17th of May.

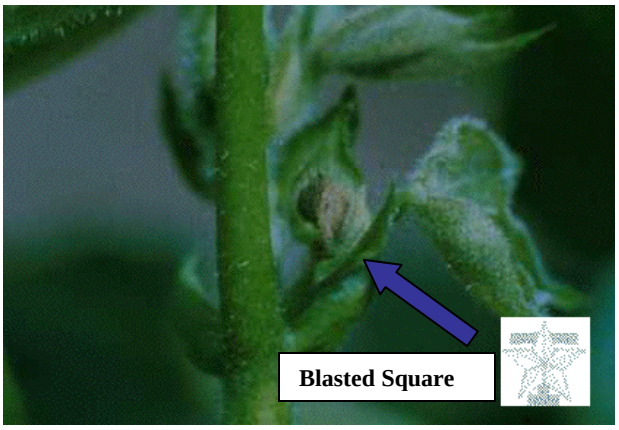
What's Happening in the Cotton

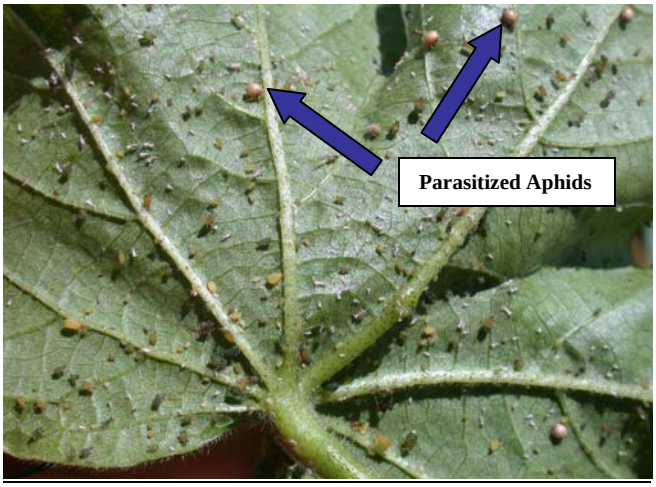
Fleahoppers:

Fleahopper adults and nymphs suck sap from tender portions of the plant, including small squares. Pinhead size and smaller squares are most susceptible to damage.

The decision to apply an insecticide should be based upon the number of fleahoppers present. As the first small squares appear (5 to 6 leaf stage), examine the main stem terminal buds of the plants. For each acre in a field, one plant should be examined. At each site or location of the field, 25 plants should be examined. For example, when scouting in a 100 acre field - four different locations in the field will be scouted. At each location, 25 plants will examined for a total of 100 plants. The number of fleahoppers found divided by the 100 plants examined will give you the percentage amount of fleahoppers in your field.

During the first three weeks of squaring, 10 to 15 fleahoppers per 100 plant terminals may cause economic damage and an insecticide treatment is warranted. As plants reach first bloom, fleahopper control is not justified after the first week of bloom. Throughout the past decade, numerous trials by Dr. Roy Parker have provided ample evidence that the 10 to 15 fleahoppers per 100 plant terminals is without a doubt and undeniably correct. **In program fields we are finding a few fleahoppers, the highest being 5%, which are still well the below economic threshold level also, square sets are excellent at +90%.**





Cotton Aphids:

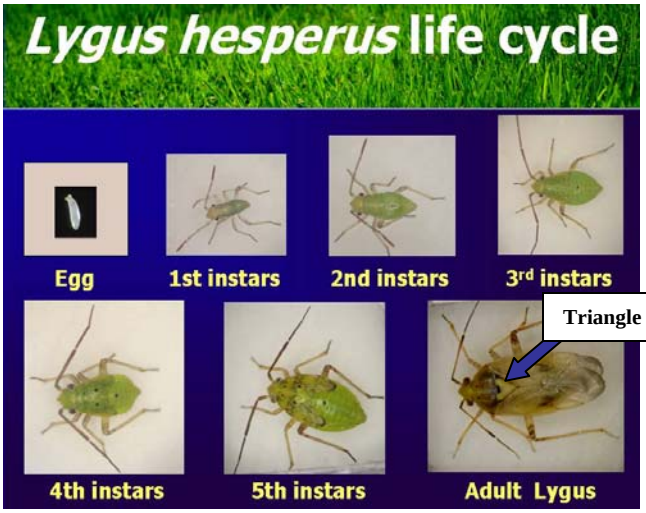
Aphid populations are continuing to be found in most of the program fields, however the balance of fields have yet to reach treatable levels. Higher populations have been found in the Danevang and Palacios areas, but their numbers appear to be on the decline due to predators and parasitic wasps and in some cases spraying.

Now, although we are only seeing a few aphids at this time, the potential for aphid problems are always a concern in cotton. While this may not necessarily be a problem this year due to the higher fertilizer costs, typically plants with higher nitrogen levels often have the heaviest aphid infestations. Prudent nitrogen fertility management can help mitigate this situation. Also, the avoidance of any unnecessary insecticide applications for other pests could delay the buildup of damaging aphid numbers.

A number of insecticides are known to "flare" aphids; most notably the pyrethroids. Damaging infestations of aphids during the bloom and boll filling stages can significantly reduce yields. Aphids present when cotton bolls open can deposit contaminating sticky honeydew on the lint. This can potentially cause problems at the spinning mill unless rainfall comes to reduce the sticky cotton potential.

Lygus: can damage **squares** of all stages and young **bolls** so monitoring for this pest will need to continue even after cotton begins to bloom. A *Lygus* adult is pictured to the right; take notice of the triangle on the back. There is another insect that you will find in cotton that looks similar yet it does not have the triangle and its antennae appear to be larger on the ends (club like). This is the scentless plant bug, don't confuse the two. *Lygus* nymphs are wingless, 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. **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).** Reliable methods for detecting *Lygus* are the use of a beat bucket or drop cloth as visually sampling may be difficult due to the fact that *Lygus* move quickly when disturbed.

Now in a "normal" year we think that these square robbers are an economic threat particularly during the first few weeks of squaring however, we are currently seeing a very small number of fields that have blasted squares on the 1st and/or 2nd fruiting nodes which may not be insect related but environmentally induced (wind damage). So please, scout your fields carefully for this pest and base treatments on actual populations and not just square damage.



Beneficial insects found in fields included lady beetles, scymnus lady beetles, minute pirate bugs, and syrphid flies. Other beneficial arthropods found included spiders.

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. Registration begins at 5:30 pm at the Wharton County Fairgrounds Director's room with the program going from 6:00 – 8:00 pm. Additionally, 2 CEU'S (1 IPM, 1 General) will be offered and you must R.S.V.P. by calling the Wharton Agrilife Extension office at 979.532.3310.

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

Newsletter by E-Mail

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TPMA Website

The Upper Coast Crop Improvement newsletter and other Texas Agrilife Extension IPM Program newsletters from across the state can be viewed at the Texas Pest Management Association website at www.//tpma.org

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