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Northwest Plains Pest Management News

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Hot dry conditions continue to dominate Northwest Plains weather. Temperature forecasts for the next 7 days range from 97-101 degree highs and 68-72 degree lows. 75% of Texas is considered to be under "exceptional drought" conditions whitch is the most severe classification. Forecasts give little hope for precipitation in the next 10 days; I actually heard one weather forecaster state that precipitation was possible in the next ten days but it was also possible that he could win the lottery. If the "weather man" wins the lottery the NW portion of Parmer County looks to have the greatest chance of precipitation over the next few days.

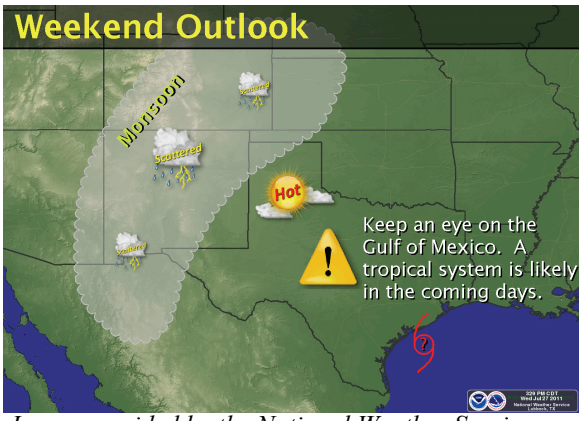
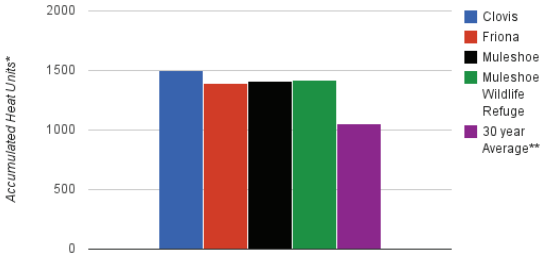


Image provided by the National Weather Service

With little hope of significant precipitation in the near future, area crops will continue to struggle in growth and development.

Potential Weekly Water Use*	
Crop	Inches per week
Corn Silk	2.73
Cotton 1st bloom	2.48
Sorghum 5 leaf	1.68

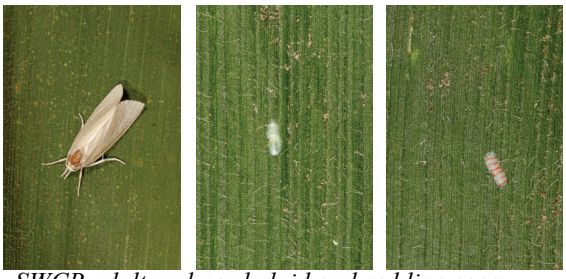
*Weekly estimated crop water demands (inches of water per week) during the week ending July 13 based on PET data from Lubbock.



** DD 60 based on May 1*
*** Based on Muleshoe long term weather data 1971-2000*

Southwestern Corn Borer (SWCB) is a major pest of non-Bt corn on the High Plains of Texas. They have a few alternative hosts including sorghum and johnsongrass but none are as preferred or suitable as corn.

Adults are ¾ inch long white moths with no distinct markings other than tan scales along the veins of their wings. The wings, when at rest, are folded around the body in a tent like shape. Eggs are creamy white, flattened, approximately 1/8 inch in diameter and can be laid singly or in groups of 2 to 3 or more. When in groups eggs are laid in an overlapping pattern resembling fish scales. Eggs will develop 3 parallel red bands about 1 day after they were laid. There are two color phases of larvae. In the summer larvae are white with conspicuous dark brown to black spots.



SWCB adult and newly laid and red line eggs

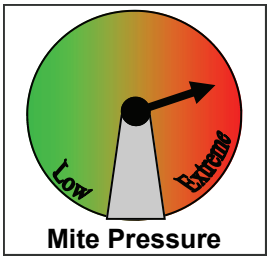
Yield losses may occur as a direct result of stalk and or ear shank feeding, as well as lodging. Small

larvae will feed on leaves, ear shoots, husks, and silk for about 5 to 10 days before tunneling into the stalk or ear shank and continuing to feed.

Second generation SWCB will lay 75% of their eggs on the upper surface of the middle 7 leaves; the ear leaf, two above and four below. Inspection should be concentrated in this zone. A sufficient number of plants across the field should be inspected to get an accurate representation of the percentage of plants infested with eggs or larvae. The established economic threshold for second generation SWCB is when 20 to 25% of plants are infested with eggs on small larvae.

Bt technology is very effective in suppressing SWCB but traditional hybrids must be carefully monitored for this pest. There are a variety of insecticides available to manage SWCB in corn. Timing is critical when making an insecticide application; insecticides must be applied prior to larvae boring into the stalk to be effective. Insecticides should be selected carefully; some are harsh on beneficial arthropods and may cause a secondary outbreak of an existing sub-threshold spider mite population.

Spider mites continue to infest area corn. Corn fields which were treated early in the vegetative stage continue to look good but mites have began to reinfest some fields. Curative miticide applications (Oberon for the most part) have performed very well thus far. I have several mite trials out evaluating labeled (Oberon, Onager and Comite) and some potential new products, but we are just beginning to collect post treatment data.



Six spotted thrips, continue to be the primary mite predator in area corn. This predator has been known to completely eliminate spider mite infestations from corn and have been making a significant impact in mite populations.

Area Cotton has a wide range of development which in most cases is directly tied to available moisture. Most cotton is blooming; nodes above white flower (NAWF) counts have ranged from 3-9. Later planted fields (last week of May) have just started to bloom and will need to be managed for earliness especially if adequate moisture is present and NAWF are greater than 8 going into bloom.

In general, pest pressure in cotton remains very light. Lygus infestations, to this point, have been extremely low. A few green stink bugs have been noted in a few fields as well but again in low numbers.

Striped flea beetles have been observed in very high numbers (approximately 1000/100 sweeps) in a field in northern Parmer County. The beetles are a bit over 1/8 inch long, shiny black, with two yellowish stripes down their back. Adult beetles are foliage feeders and have been observed feeding on cotton leaves and bracts. There is very little information about this pest in cotton but should likely be managed based on plant defoliation.


Striped flea beetle

Other crops should be monitored for this pest as well as the beetle has a wide host range which includes potatoes, sunflowers, tomatoes, peanuts, corn, cotton, peas, beans, watermelon, grapes and pumpkins.

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