

HUB OF THE PLAINS PEST MANAGEMENT REPORT

A newsletter about integrated pest management for growers in Lubbock, County

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CURRENT CROP CONDITIONS

The area cotton crop is extremely variable ranging from not emerged to six nodes. Dryland fields and some sub surface drip irrigated fields have poor plant populations or no stand at all due to the hot dry conditions. Most of the row water and center pivot irrigated fields have excellent plant populations with an average of three plants per foot on program fields. With the exception of the few individuals that received rainfall in North Central and South East Lubbock County last week I am advising producers to start their wells. In addition, I am also advising producers with center pivot irrigation to apply their water in low amounts with high frequency. For most producers this means putting on a 1/4 inch of irrigation as frequently as you can. If your cotton is sitting at five or more nodes per plant, then you need to start your wells. More on this later.

WHAT THE SCOUTS ARE FINDING

The number one pest in Lubbock County continues to be the lack of moisture and the hot windy conditions that this young cotton must endure. With that said, the insect pest pressure this week revolves around thrips. In Eastern Lubbock County especially in the Idalou area we are finding at least one to two thrips per

true leaf and we are starting to pick up immature thrips feeding within the terminals of the plants. Most producers in the program have utilized either an at planting insecticide namely Temik or Thimet and a seed treatment (Cruiser) which has kept thrips feeding damage to a minimum. But, when we start finding immature thrips feeding on the plants, we know that these products are starting to play out. Realize that the adult thrips must feed on the cotton plants to take an insecticide dose and if the adults are staying on the plants long enough to reproduce then this is a good sign that your at plant or seed treatment product of choice is no longer effective. The economic threshold for thrips is an average of one thrips per true leaf. Now with that said, common sense needs to take over. Several program fields have exceeded economic threshold for this pest and we have recommended foliar treatments especially if you were going to apply glyphosate or Ignite anyway and we were not adding an extra trip across the field. The decision to treat becomes complicated when thrips are the sole target of an application and the field is under a limited irrigation regime. To put it simply, why would I want to go into first bloom with a 90% square set knowing that I will come out of bloom with a 30 to 40 percent boll set due to lack of water. Basically, when you treat limited irrigated fields for thrips, you are banking on the fact that you will receive at least an inch of timely rain in July and August in order to preserve the yield you protected in early June.

WHEN TO START WATER?

By Mark Brown, CEA-Agriculture

One of the most difficult decisions a South Plains cotton producer faces is when to start irrigating. Many of the cotton fields in Lubbock County will be starting to square in the next 12 days. I obtained a couple of “quotable quotes” from Charles Stichler, Extension agronomist and these quotes are worth sharing at this point. He strives to think like a cotton plant. Stichler says: “The first priority of a cotton plant is survival. Second most important is seed production. Least important to a cotton plant is lint production.” “Water supply at first square is critical, and most people irrigate too late.” “By first bloom, every harvestable boll is already present on the plant.”

Most areas of the county are suffering from a lack of rain and hot windy conditions. Managing soil moisture is much like managing a bank checking account. The sandy loams we have will hold around 1 to 1.5 inches of available moisture per foot of soil profile. Sub-surface drip and center pivot operators have a greater capability of managing that soil moisture account so as to “avoid going in the red.” One great tool that is available is the South Plains ET network at <http://lubbock.tamu.edu/> ET stands for evapo-transpiration, which is a combined term that describes crop water demand by combining evaporation and transpiration. This information is now in a much more user-friendly form than in the past. The daily fax version that can be downloaded or printed out provides the estimated daily water use of corn, cotton, sorghum, soybeans, and peanuts under Lubbock’s current environmental conditions and specific crop growth stages. Current estimates of seasonal water use for cotton planted May 15 is just over 5 inches. Daily use is approximately around 0.1 inch per day, and as the cotton progresses into peak bloom, that daily use requirement will rapidly increase to .2 to .3 inch or more per day. It’s difficult to meet this demand based on water availability on most Lubbock County farms. Of course, that’s why the soil moisture checking account needs a little cushion flying into peak bloom. Check out the South Plains ET Network. Hopefully it will be a valuable “banking” tool to help you “stay out of the red.”

