

The Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Newsletter for Row Crops in the Lower Rio Grande Valley

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As many people suspected, the cotton acreage in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas has decreased significantly. Looking at the latest report from the Boll Weevil Eradication program, you will see that the total cotton acreage as of this week is **94,683** for Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, and Starr Counties. I have also attached the **contact information** for the Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation Lower Rio Grande Valley Zone Office managers, district offices, district supervisors and the names of the work unit supervisors. This is the third year (first full season that includes the month of May) of spraying in the LRGV Zone and communication will be vital. Growers may also want to write down the work unit numbers and field numbers located on the boll weevil traps at each of your fields. This may help in the communication as to which fields are being sprayed by the foundation.

### General Situation

Several more fields have started squaring this week. The majority of the cotton is in the fourth to sixth leaf stage. Cotton aphid populations have continued to persist in several fields. Please see the April 13<sup>th</sup> *Pest Cast* Newsletter on aphid management.

### Cotton Fleahoppers

Cotton fleahopper numbers have increased across the Valley (please see attached IPM Scouting Report). Adult fleahoppers and

nymphs have been found in a majority of the fields scouted by the IPM Program. The weed, Woolly Croton, has also been observed in several fields as well.

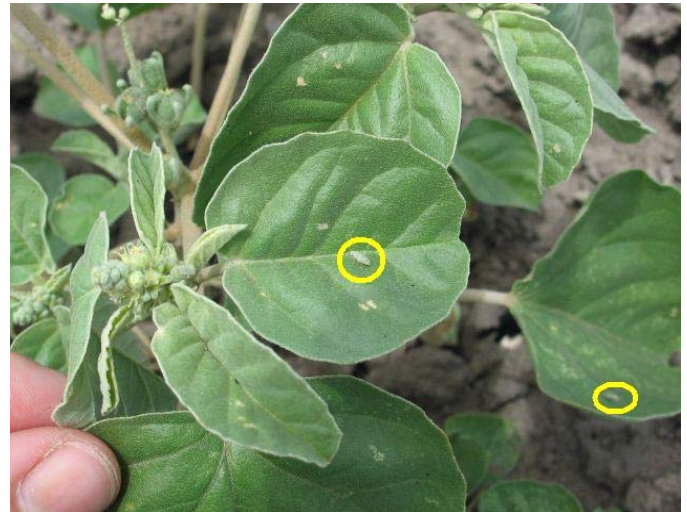


Figure 1. Woolly Croton with two fleahopper adults circled in yellow.

Woolly Croton is the preferred host of cotton fleahoppers. However, fleahoppers will migrate to surrounding cotton plants once the cotton plants have started to produce squares. At this point you may start observing “blasted” squares. Fleahoppers cause “blasted” squares when they insert their mouthparts into the pin head size squares and remove the sap, causing the square to turn black and fall off the plant.

Once your cotton has started to produce squares, divide the field into four sections and inspect 25 random plants in each section.

**During the first 3 weeks of squaring, 15 to 25 cotton fleahoppers (including nymphs and adults) per 100 terminals may cause economic damage.**

**Spidermites**

The number of fields with spider mites has increased. However, we have **not** observed any fields that need to be treated for spider mites.

**Thrips**

Thrips continue to be observed in some fields. When scouting for thrips, examine the two uppermost true leaves. If these leaves are experiencing excessive damage caused by thrips, then you may need to consider treating. However, thrips will soon be a non threatening pest as the majority of the cotton has or soon will exceed the thrips damaging stage (cotyledon to 4<sup>th</sup> true leaf).

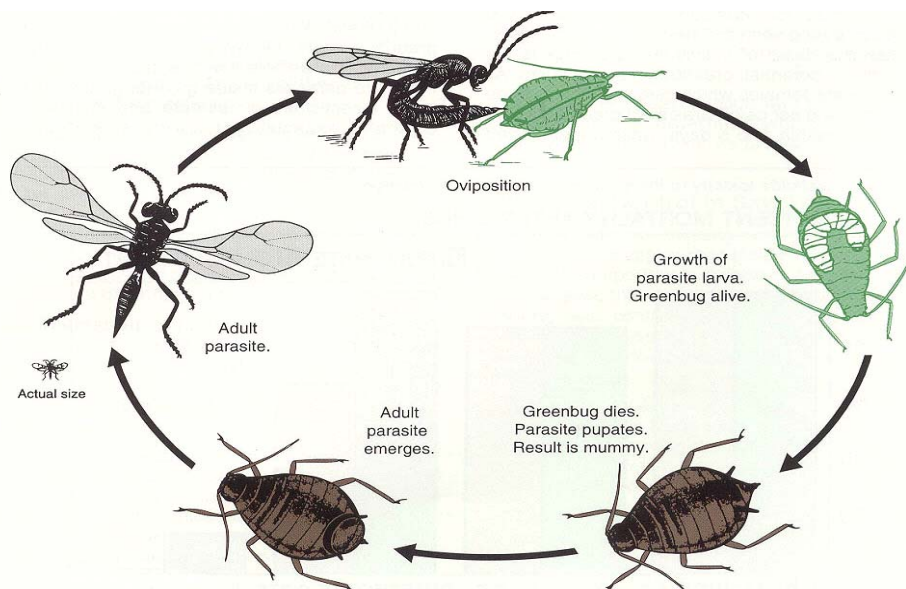
**Beneficial Activity**

Beneficial parasites and predators continue to be observed in a majority of the fields scouted by the IPM Program. Several aphid populations have decreased due to the

beneficial activity. Below is a picture of scymnus ladybug larvae munching down on an aphid colony. The aphid colony is also being wiped out by aphid parasites that are fast at work laying eggs in the aphids (also, please see diagram below on the life cycle of an aphid parasite from the Texas Agriculture Experiment State Publication on "Biology Control of Insect Pests in Wheat").



Figure 2. Aphid colony with aphids that have been parasitized by aphid parasite(s) and have turned into aphid mummies (tan to brown colored aphids). The white objects are scymnus ladybug larvae (circled in yellow) that are feeding on the aphids.



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2007 Cotton Heat Unit (H.U.) Accumulation Graph

