

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

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General Situation

Sorghum harvesting has been delayed in some areas of the Lower Rio Grande Valley due to rain. According to the Texas Cooperative Extension Hidalgo County Agent, Brad Cowan, there is a record high percentage of sorghum that has been sprayed with a harvest aide prior to harvest. The increased use of harvest aides is partly due to the large sorghum harvest this year and grain elevators being limited on time available for drying.

The cotton crop is looking better. We are finding larger bolls in most fields. Several fields have reached cut-out (5 nodes above whiteflower). On average we are accumulating 26 heat units per day. If heat units continue to accumulate at this rate, today's white flowers will be open bolls around the end of July.

Aphids populations have increased in some cotton fields, but populations have stayed below threshold levels (50 aphids/leaf).

Bollworm/tobacco budworms larvae populations are still present in a majority of the conventional cotton fields and about 1/4 of the fields are above threshold levels. Please refer to the June 11 Pest Cast newsletter for threshold information. Bollworm and tobacco budworm trap catches have dropped significantly this week. Please refer to Table 1 below.

Whitefly populations continue to increase in the fields. Please see last week's Pest Cast Newsletter for reference on whitefly insecticides and economic thresholds.

EPA Approves Natural Refuge for Bollgard II cotton

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has approved a natural refuge option for **Bollgard II** cotton in Texas and states east of Texas. The EPA has approved natural refuges (alternative crops and weeds) instead of non-Bt cotton. This does not apply to the first generation Bollgard cotton. A non-Bt cotton refuge is still required for Bollgard cotton. Please refer to the following link for further details

<http://monsanto.mediaroom.com/index.php?s=43&item=495>.

Fall Armyworms

Fall armyworms have been found in the IPM Scouting Program fields in work units 1705 (West Raymondville), 1706 (Port Mansfield), 1710 (East Lyford), 1712 (Santa Rosa), and 1715 (Rio Hondo).

The threshold for fall armyworms is based on observations in Texas and other states. No threshold work has been conducted in Texas because of the sporadic infestation experienced. Based on these observations and other states' experiences, once bolls are present, an insecticide application may be

justified when 15 to 25 or more small larvae are present per 100 terminals and 10 to 15 percent of the squares or bolls are worm damaged. If worm numbers are high, it may not be appropriate to wait until the damage threshold of 10 to 15 percent square damage is reached.

Larval color can vary from light tan to shades of green. The head is brown or black with prominent white line between the eyes that forms and inverted "Y". The fall armyworm larva also has four large spots that form a square on the upper surface of the last segment of its body.



Figure 1. Two fall armyworm larvae. The larva on left displays the invert "Y" on the head and the larva on the right displays the four large spots that form a square on the last segment of the body.

Small larvae are difficult to detect because they often feed on boll bracts and on the surface of bolls, hidden behind the bracts. Larger larvae are often the first to be detected while feeding in blooms. Fall armyworm infestations have been so sporadic in Texas that little is known about their ability to damage crops. Observations made in the 2005 growing season indicated that fall armyworms feed on a relatively small number of bolls compared to bollworms. Thus it takes more larvae to do as much damage as a smaller number of bollworm or tobacco budworm larvae.

The fall armyworm is inherently difficult to control with insecticides and larvae are often found deep in the canopy in protected areas. Divide the field into four quadrants and examine 25 plant terminals, selected at random from each quadrant, for small larvae and eggs. Also, from each quadrant, examine 25 one-half grown and larger green squares for armyworms and armyworm damage. Squares should be selected at random and flared or yellow squares should not be included in the sample.

Please refer to Texas Cooperative Extension publication "Managing Cotton Insects in the Lower Rio Grande Valley 2007" for more information on Fall Armyworms.

Location	Boll Worm	Tobacco Budworm	Beet Armyworm
North of Weslaco (Hidalgo Co.)	0.8	5	0.2
North of Sugar Mile (Hidalgo Co.)	1.7	0.2	-
North of Combes (Cameron Co.)	0.9	1	-

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