

HAPPENINGS IN AG



News about Integrated Pest Management for producers in Castro and Lamb Counties.

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GENERAL CROP CONDITIONS

Cotton

Mother nature finally stepped in and offered a little relief from the hot dry weather conditions we experienced two weeks ago. Both counties have been blessed with some very good moisture over the past week, unfortunately there is the good and then there is the ugly. Some portions of both Castro and Lamb counties were hit with severe hail storms and some cotton and corn acres were severely damaged. Some of the cotton fields look as though they were already harvested. Most of this damage was to the east and north of Earth. I did also hear of some hail damage near the Fieldton area.

Otherwise, cotton is progressing well and corn fields have really taken off over the past week. Some areas of the two counties have received close to 5 inches of rain. Cotton fields in these areas have responded to this moisture and have hit a growth spurt. Some program fields have had applications of plant growth regulators (PGR's) to help control this growth. Many producers have been asking about Pix, Pentia or other PGR's. Most of the cotton in program fields continue to have appropriate internode lengths and plant height, square sets in these fields are also acceptable. These fields do not need a PGR application at this time. So then when is the appropriate time to make an application of a PGR to control growth? To be quite honest there is no real science or threshold for when to apply these materials. The best I can say is that every field and every producer manages cotton differently. With the rains that we have received over the past week I feel comfortable saying that some fields do need a shot of a PGR, but I would also say that for those fields I also know that these producers like to keep the pivot going and irrigate heavily. I do not believe, however, that these rains we have encountered will cause uncontrollable growth in your cotton fields therefore I do not recommend an application of a PGR, unless you are going to continue a heavy irrigation schedule. Knowing your own fields is the best you can do to help make a decision. If you consistently have tall cotton year in and year out than I would control that growth early. It is recommended to make mepiquat chloride (active ingredient in pix, pentia type products) after your field has 50% matchhead squares. These products under good growing conditions help in square retention and control growth. Keep in mind that these products do not increase yield!!! Proper crop management is still the key to yield. Be sure that PGR's have a fit in your management program, again the use of these products does not make a cotton crop. Cotton growth stages range from pinhead square to bloom.

Corn

Other than hail damage in some areas corn continues to make good progress. It seems as though overnight many fields have reached 100% tassel stage. The rains have really taken some of the pressure off of irrigation schedules. I would like to say that we should not fall behind on irrigation either. Corn has began to pollinate and water demands are reaching their peak. Corn growth stages range from early whorl to pollinating.

INSECTS AND DISEASES

Cotton

Fleahopper and lygus bug pressures remain light in both counties. Most program fields should be entering the bloom stage within the next week or two, at this time fleahopper infestations will be less damaging and should not cause much concern. Lygus bugs on the other hand can still damage large squares, blooms, and even small bolls. As mentioned above lygus bug numbers have been relatively light within program fields. We are finding an occasional lygus bug from time to time

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in program fields. Most lygus bugs we have found are in the adult stage with only a few nymphs. This leads me to believe that lygus bugs are not really infesting cotton fields at this time due to the lack of nymphs we are finding. As alternate weed hosts die or are shredded along roadsides and ditches we could see lygus bugs move into cotton fields. In my last newsletter I listed the threshold for lygus as 1 lygus nymph or adult combined with less than 90% square set. I should clarify that to 1 lygus nymph or adult per three ft of row combined with less than 90% square set during the first week of squaring. The threshold remains the same in the second and third week of squaring with the exception of the square sets, which is 85% during the second week and 75% during the third week of squaring. After the third week of squaring, the threshold is two lygus bug adults or nymphs/3 ft. of row with less than acceptable fruit retention. Very few “worms” have been found in program fields. The most common worm we are finding has been the beet armyworm but they are very sporadic and causing very little damage. Beneficial insects continue to infest cotton fields in high numbers. Damselfly bugs can be found in every field as well as crab spiders. Overall I feel like the insect pest situation in cotton is light with little to worry about at this time.

Corn

Spider mites remain light in corn fields and are nearly non-existent in program fields. We did pick up 3 program fields this week that reached economic thresholds for southwestern corn borer egg masses. These fields were located around the Springlake area. This seems a little early for southwestern corn borer activity but I would certainly recommend scouting for this insect. The adult lays egg masses on the top sides of corn leaves. Eggs can be laid in a mass of 3-5 or more or they can be laid single. The egg color is white when freshly laid and then as the eggs mature they develop three red lines across each egg. Most of the eggs can be found on the middle seven leaves of the stalk. These leaves are: the ear leaf, two leaves above and four leaves below the ear leaf. Insecticides to control corn borer infestations should be made when 20% to 25% of the plants are infested with eggs or newly hatched larvae.

Heat Unit Accumulations For Cotton As of May 1st-July 13th

	2004	2005
Dimmitt	850.5	830.5
Earth		915

Happenings in Ag is a publication of Texas Cooperative Extension in Castro and Lamb Counties.

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