

Plains Pest Management Newsletter

News About Integrated Pest Management in Hale & Swisher Counties

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COTTON

This year we have gotten off to a slow start. Several cold fronts have kept temperatures mild and set off many thunderstorms over the region. On several occasions winds have led to blowing sand which in some cases has damaged cotton. Hail has also been associated with a number of these thunderstorms and has caused extensive losses in some areas. Some areas reporting hail damage have been Kress, Aiken and north of Petersburg. With the cool wet conditions, seedling disease has been on the increase, but is highly variable from field to field. Also wet weather blight has become evident in some area cotton fields

We have already noted a number of cotton pest showing up this year. One of the first to be reported were wireworms attacking cotton at germination and as the young plants were emerging from the soil. The wireworm complex included both true wireworm and false wireworm and were more commonly associated with high residue fields, where cotton followed sorghum, millet and corn.

The next pest to show up were thrips. Migrations from wheat, pasture and alfalfa have been occurring since late April and continued throughout last week. Damage to cotton has been highly variable ranging from light to very extensive.

The recent heavy rains and high winds have reduced thrip counts in some fields, but untreated fields still have high numbers. Most cotton planted this year had insecticide applied as a seed treatment or planted box application. As residual of these products has diminished a foliar application has been needed. Products commonly used in this region have been acephate (Orthene & Address), Bidrin and dimethoate. The economic threshold may shift up or down based on environmental conditions and cost of control, but generally control may be justified when the average number of thrips per plant is equal to the number of true leaves present. In most years once cotton reaches the 5 to 7 true leaf stage, thrips control is rarely justified.

False chinch bugs have been reported moving into cotton and other crops over the past 3 weeks. So far damage has not been extensive, but populations should be watched for damage to cotton or sorghum. Some homeowners living in the country have reported that false chinch bugs are invading their homes from adjacent wheat fields as they dried down. Insecticide barriers can be sprayed between the house and wheat field or pasture areas, from which the bugs are migrating, to slow down the invasion.

Beet armyworm larvae have been observed in several fields in the Cotton Center area. Trap collections have reached 84 per week in this area and 76 per week in the Kress area. The last several years we have had early season infestations of beet armyworms, but they were controlled by parasites and predators. Generally when traps exceed 100 beet armyworm moths per week we can be concerned for increased activity.

SORGHUM

Grasshoppers have been found in many pasture and wheat fields moving into sorghum, cotton and corn. The potential for damage is greatest in young sorghum. Currently, corn is large enough to sustain a moderate amount of foliage feeding. So far damage has not been reported in cotton.

CORN

A few mite colonies have been found in corn adjacent to wheat. Most of the lower leaf damage in corn has been due to thrips and not Banks grass mites. Also note that the western flower thrips (the same one we have on cotton) will feed on mite eggs early in the season and this helps to hold these early infestations in check. Minute pirate bugs have been abundant in corn feeding on the thrips infestations and may also help us with early mite infestations.

Southwestern corn borers are being collected in area traps. We have had problems with the 60 to 70 mph winds damaging a number of our traps. For a one week period ending on June 4 moth collections averaged 110 per trap in the Cotton Center area. We expect to start seeing whorl feeding by southwestern corn borer larvae this week or early next week.

European corn borers are also being collected in area traps, but numbers are very low at this time.

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