

TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

**SOUTHERN BLACKLANDS**  
*PEST MANAGEMENT NEWS*  
WILLIAMSON AND MILAM COUNTIES

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**GENERAL SITUATION**

Very isolated showers fell over the past week delivering up to 1.5 inches of rainfall in localized areas. However, most areas did not receive any measurable rainfall over this time period. Grain sorghum harvest is in full gear with yields ranging from 3500 to over 6000 lbs. Thus far only a small amount of corn has been harvested. Reported yields range from 35 to 80 bushels. Aflatoxin levels have been very low in most cases, with at least one exception so far, where results from a load in one field were very high. Many more fields of cotton have open bolls this week and most fields will have some open bolls by next week. The premature senescence that was documented last year in the Southern Blacklands has took off over the last 10 days in some fields.

**COTTON**

Cotton ranges from first bloom to 30 percent open bolls. Most of the cotton has already completed blooming and any remaining squares are likely to shed unless adequate moisture remains available. The less mature cotton is still maintaining a good fruit load. However, additional moisture will be needed soon on most of that cotton to keep it going and to prevent heavy fruit shed.

**Premature senescence** is occurring in some fields of cotton across the Southern Blacklands. In general, the symptoms are the leaves throughout the plant are turning reddish, followed by them becoming blackened and necrotic, and then dropping to the ground within the next few days. Not all fields are showing these symptoms and each field has varying degrees of the symptoms. The symptoms show up more in certain areas of some fields and not all plants in these areas are showing symptoms. This problem would not be that significant if all the bolls on the plants were fully mature, but when the plant drops all its leaves and still has young bolls, then lint yield and quality are being effected, because although it is fairly dry, there is still some moisture available to the cotton.

Evidence points to potassium deficiency as being the primary cause of this phenomenon. This problem developed following the rain that fell between late-June and mid-July of 2002. The fields that are showing the highest degree of this premature senescence are in areas that have received more rainfall over the last 3 weeks than areas where this is not occurring. This phenomenon did cause some yield reduction in fields that had high levels of this early leaf drop, but there was no unaffected control to compare it back to determine how much of loss in yield there truly was. The cotton that is being affected has mature bolls on the bottom two-thirds of the plant, but does have the upper one-third to mature out.

**Aphid** pressure remains low in most fields. There are a few fields where aphid levels could continue to increase and thus force an insecticidal application. However, most fields are mature and are thus not an attractive host for aphids.

**Cotton bollworm/tobacco (CBW/TBW)** budworm egg counts have increased over the past week in fields of younger, greener cotton. Egg counts range from 0-66 eggs per 100 plants and worms range from 0-28 per 100 plants. This worm pressure is only occurring in a small number of fields. Fields of Bt. cotton will not likely be affected by worm pressure; however, fields of non-Bt. will need to be closely monitored over the next week. Most of the cotton remaining in the area will be mature enough to withstand future worm threats within the next two weeks.

**Spider mites** remain nearly non-existent in area fields. There are still small pockets in a few fields where moderate levels of spider mites are being found. There are even smaller areas in a few fields where numbers are high enough to cause some leaf shedding, however, these are very isolated cases and not currently large enough to warrant an insecticide application.

Low levels of **Beet Armyworm (BAW)** are still being found in some fields, mostly non-Bt. cotton. However levels are lower than they were last week. No fields are requiring BAW applications this week. Good levels of the *Cotesia* parasite are being found near many of the sites where BAW hits are found.

No **boll weevil** punctured squares or bolls were found in program fields this week. The eradication foundation has been actively spraying cotton throughout the cotton season this year without causing much of an increase in secondary pests. Aphids have remained light in most fields throughout the season. Over 80% of the cotton in the area is B.t. and therefore has helped in minimizing the level of worm-type pests outbreaks.

**Stink bugs** are ranging from 0-3 per 100 plants checked with most fields averaging 1 or fewer per 100 plants.

**Beneficial** levels remain relatively light compared to earlier in the season. This is a result of the hot, dry weather, periodic insecticide applications and low levels of host.

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