Pest Cast
The Row Crops IPM Newsletter for the LRGV, a cooperative project of Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Cotton & Grain Producers of the lower Rio Grande Valley

John W. Norman, Jr.
Editor

Volume XXXIII  Issue 4, April 2, 2011

General Situation: Cotton, grain sorghum and corn continued to make good progress this week. Weather conditions were nearly identical to last week; hot, dry and very windy. Amazingly, both dryland cotton and grain still were growing and maturing quite well, thank you. Rain now would definitely be beneficial for all concerned.

Cotton: Cotton throughout the Valley ranged from still not up to nearly ready to bloom. In most of the dryland fields observed this week, plants were very green and most had from 1 to 3 squares per plant. Plants in most fields had some wind and blown sand damage that occurred over the last two weeks. Plant size ranged from 6 to 14 inches in both irrigated and dryland fields. Insect activity increased in much of Cameron and Hidalgo counties, but remained low in Willacy County. Aphids were the main pest of concern in much of the irrigated country this week. Infestations ranged from just a few aphids per leaf to stunted plants completely covered with aphids and heavy layers of honeydew. Beneficial insects, namely lady beetles, big-eyed bugs and pirate bugs were on the increase. Some parasitized aphids were observed, but not at levels which could provide help in the near future in reducing aphid numbers.

Cotton fleahoppers increased in number over last week, but were still relatively low overall. A few nymphs were reported, but most fleahoppers observed this week were adults.

Thrip infestations were seen in most fields with numbers ranging from none to 4 per plant. Generally, thrip should not be an important concern in rapidly growing and squaring cotton - like this year’s crop. Cotton near onion fields still should be checked frequently for thrip moving from the onions to the cotton. Cotton fields adjacent to onions can quickly develop large numbers of thrip which can cause severe damage cotton in short order. So, keep checking those fields.

Good news for now on a pest of cotton that none of us wants to see. Dr. Scott Armstrong, USDA research Entomologist at Weslaco, reported that sampling for the verde plant bug was negative this week. They sampled known host plants at the Laguna Atascosa wildlife refuge in eastern Cameron County for the verde plant bug. Dr. Armstrong used vacuum samplers which generally are very effective in locating plant bugs and none were found. We are most pleased by that report.
Boll Weevil Eradication Update
(04/20/2011)
The LRGV zone has 192,275 acres mapped as of today. The Foundation continues to find new
fields. It is critical that all fields are mapped and trapped...one missed field can cause weevil
problems for everyone in an area. If you have a field that hasn’t been planted to cotton in recent
years, make sure your Foundation supervisor knows about it. Also, please contact the
Foundation if you see a field or know of a field not trapped.

There will be about 25,000 acres in the bloom stage next week. The Foundation has treated
111,379 acres year to date. Continued high winds have delayed treatments on many fields. With
limited opportunities to make treatments, the Foundation has had to change their protocol away
from the two automatic treatments at pinhead. Currently they are concentrating treatments on
fields catching weevils in recent weeks and the fields adjacent to them.

Weevil captures in Raymondville have remained low. Most captures in the other districts are
located along the river.

Grain Sorghum and Corn: Much of the sorghum crop was heading or nearing heading this
week. Good head exertion was observed in dryland and irrigated fields despite the dry, windy
weather conditions of late. With an inch or so of rain, the dryland grain crop could be very good
if it rains very soon. Reports of increased corn leaf aphids and some fields with yellow sugarcane
aphids were received this week. Since most of the grain crop is well advanced and heading, the
likelihood of damage from either aphid is low. Most of the corn leaf aphid infestations were deep
inside the whorls of the sorghum plants and thus very hard to reach with an insecticide if control
was required. Corn was well into tasseling this week. No insect pest activity was reported in
corn this week.
We thank the following sponsors of the Pest Cast newsletter for their very generous contributions toward this effort.

- Valley Co-op Oil Mil
- Texas Sorghum Producers
- Wilbur Ellis Company
- Hidalgo County Farm Bureau
- Bayer Crop Science
- Ross Gin
- Dupont
- Monsanto
- La Feria Co-op
- RGV Gin
- Harlingen Gin
- Adams Farms