

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

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Editor

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General Situation: Very warm, windy and still dry in many areas. Rain fell on Thursday afternoon (May 12) in doppler radar-estimated amounts of 1/4 to 2-1/2 inches in spots in northern and western Willacy County (north of FM 186) and in eastern Hidalgo county. Lesser amounts were estimated in southern Willacy and most of Cameron County at not much more than a trace. More rain is needed, but fields where the heavier amounts fell should be helped.

Cotton: Much of the crop was blooming with heavy fruit loads observed. Many fields had total fruit loads ranging from 8 to 18 squares, blooms and bolls per plant observed this week. That kind of fruit load is more than most plants can hold, especially with the current weather conditions. Peak bloom is still a week or more away. Many dryland fields observed this week showed Nodes Above White Flower (NAWF) at 5-9. Five (5) NAWF or lower indicates that cotton has reached cut out and likely will not produce any more squares this year. A couple of fields at the 5 NAWF level had only squares left in the plant terminals this week. Most other fields with larger NAWF readings continued to show new green leaves and squares in the plant terminals indicating continued growth and fruiting potential. Getting a big drink of water (3/4 to 3 inches) real soon would improve both the crop's prospects and grower attitudes about this season's crop.

Irrigated farms were being routinely watered this week. Fruit loads in the irrigated fields were large also. NAWF readings in irrigated fields observed this week ranged from 5 to 10 indicating very strong growth and fruiting potential. However, in irrigated fields the plant height was only about two-thirds the height of plants in most dryland fields. No one seems to be have a definitive answer as to why plant height in most irrigated fields appear to be lagging behind that of most dryland fields at this time. Irrigated farms have not been responding to water applied to cotton in the usual manner. Growth has been slow. Heat unit accumulations have been equal all across the Valley this year. Lately, dissolved salts in irrigation water have been what we normally expect of Rio Grande water-- about 600 parts per million. So, no answer there either. A few fields showed a slight improvement in plant height this week, still, most irrigated fields appeared to be in a very slow growth mode.

One final note on rain; expect to see considerable fruit shedding, especially small 2 to 5 day old bolls following any significant rainfall. Cotton is stressed, especially in the dryland areas and rainfall will provide a shock to the plants and accelerate what the plant was going to do anyway, whether it rains or not.

Insect activity was further reduced this week compared to last week. Fewer aphids were observed in all fields. Where aphids were seen, heavy numbers of beneficial insects were with them, thus limiting aphid infestations to isolated spots and/or plants in any given field.

Spidermite infestations were up very slightly in some fields while a few others required treatment for mites this week. The continued dry weather has only enhanced spidermite survival by stressing cotton and providing ideal conditions for spidermite reproduction.

Thrips infestations were up slightly around old onion fields and a few other fields with thrips wild host-plant borders. Mostly, cotton is blooming and generally mature enough to resist thrips feeding damage. But, fields where thrips have been observed in the last few weeks should be checked closely in case thrips do more damage than the books say they should.

The Boll Weevil Eradication Program runs beet armyworm traps across the Valley each year. Their report on beet armyworm moth captures was 14.7 for the week of May 1. The week of May 8 reading was 448.3 moths per trap out of a total of 70 traps from across the Valley. The same dry and hot weather conditions that favor spidermites also favors beet armyworms. Generally, no direct correlation between beet armyworm trap numbers and field infestations of worms has been shown. However, all cotton fields should be carefully monitored for any changes in beet armyworm activity, especially conventional cotton fields without Bollgard or Widestrike technology.

Grain Sorghum and Corn: No insect activity reported in either crop. However, the time line for sorghum midge to start appearing in blooming sorghum is just around the corner. Anytime around May 25, midge can occur in rapidly increasing levels. Sorghum midge have been detected at damaging levels as early as May 15th. So, start watching those later planted fields for the number one pest of sorghum in the Valley - Sorghum Midge.

LRGV

BOLL WEEVIL TRAPPING INFORMATION

YTD	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
	.00191	.00944	.20591	.14138	.29212	.39110	2.03058

Week Ending	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
4/3/11	.00476	.00672	.19847	.08503	.64118	.48544	0
4/10/11	.00360	.00592	.11633	.30512	.40392	.37552	0
4/17/11	.00114	.00312	.23686	.17102	.36414	.88875	6.47392
4/24/11	.00133	.01426	.38106	.05425	.23751	.15855	3.48685
5/1/11	.00043	.01528	.09081	.09113	.18227	.08629	1.70269
05/8/11	.00077	.00825	.05548	.08168	.07073	.09976	.73028

Traps inspected for current week: 46,570

We thank the following sponsors of the Pest Cast newsletter for their very generous contributions toward this effort.



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