



## 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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Volume XXXVII

Issue 1, March 7, 2014

### New Year/Season

Time to get geared up for a new year and new growing season here in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. At least this year we are going into it with some good moisture that we started to receive in late August that generally continued through December into January. Many farmers were able to get into fields in February and start planting. This first week of March has brought us a mixture of drizzle with cold temperatures. Gotta love the Valley, one day we're at 80° F the next we're at 35° F. With the soil moisture we received prior to the New Year, fields planted have had seedlings coming up in one week or so. Soil temperature has been right at where we need to be since February 15<sup>th</sup> at 60° F, and steadily climbing till this brief cold snap, its right at 58° F at 3 inches deep and 61° F at 8 inches deep.

### Cotton

Many of you have already started and have been planting cotton this year, quite earlier than last year. This month has brought about some nice showers as well, and this week again it seems we are delayed a bit in planting but it's a good delay when moisture is involved. This year there will be about a 5% increase in cotton being planted from last year. For those who did not go to the Farm Bill information meeting at Rio Farms you can download the presentation at [www.cotton.org](http://www.cotton.org) or ask your local gin about information. With the new Agricultural Act of 2014 there will be a lot of important decisions to be made. A calculator is being developed by Texas A&M to help with deciding between PLC or ARC. I contacted my colleagues and it will be available soon in the very near future, just keep checking the website [www.AFPC.tamu.edu](http://www.AFPC.tamu.edu) for new developments.

One of the key subjects touched on at the Cotton Beltwide Conference this year was the decline of honeybee populations and the impact that it might have on agricultural practices. While much research is being conducted that shows that there are multiple causes of the decline in bee health and populations, many agricultural products in use today are being targeted by certain groups. Producers need to be aware of what products they are using and if they have a beekeeper working with them they need to have good communication. Some pesticide labels will be changed to protect honey bees and other pollinators. As always follow the label and use good safety and stewardship practices when applying chemicals.

### Grain Sorghum

I'm sure many of my growers have heard of the sugarcane aphid (Fig. 3) a new invasive species recently found in Texas, not to be mistaken with the Yellow sugarcane aphid (Fig. 2) that we have had down here for years. For those of you who have not been informed, the sugarcane aphid is an invasive species that was detected here in the Valley back in October of 2013. Simply put, the sugarcane aphid is very host

specific feeding only on grain sorghum, starting from the bottom of the plant and working its way up. When it feeds it produces lots of honey dew. All aphids are females and can live for 28 days. They reproduce viviparously, giving birth to small, live female aphids which are ready to feed. They then go through 4 nymphal stages and become adults in 5 to 10 days in which then those females can start reproducing more female aphids.

Since planting began a couple of weeks ago, we have started to drive around the valley, surveying fields with sorghum seedlings. So far the majority of seedlings we have looked at are 1 week old or so do not have any sugarcane aphids present. We are however finding the sugarcane aphid in volunteer sorghum (Fig. 5) left in the fields and in Johnson grass. The sugarcane aphids are not in high populations right now but there is definitely a well-established population.

This season we all (growers, consultants, and researchers) need to be proactive and start monitoring for this aphid and make applications of insecticides when the sugarcane populations are small.

I would like to request help from my growers this year that if you find these aphids feeding on your

grain sorghum to please contact us here at the AgriLife Center in Weslaco at 968-5581, ask for Danielle or Raul Villanueva, or call my office at 969-5608. We will be surveying random sorghum fields throughout the valley and looking to see what the effects of the aphid are this year. Many projects are also being conducted to help shed some light on good control practices for the sugarcane aphid. For more information on the sugarcane aphid you can go to the Hidalgo County Extension website:

<http://hidalgo.agrilife.org/home/agriculture/sugarcane-aphid/>

Here you will be able to click on 2 links, an extension publication and a PowerPoint presentation. Both have pictures and information on the sugarcane aphid. In the PowerPoint presentation, as you scroll through the slides some slides will have a yellow dialog box on the left upper corner, if you click on that it will give you some notes with better description of what you are seeing in each slide. We also have the PowerPoint available at the link below as well as a pdf version, whichever you prefer at these 2 websites below.



My Colleague, Extension Entomologist Raul Villanueva inspects volunteer grain sorghum for the Sugarcane Aphid while we were surveying fields.



Figure 1: Corn Leaf aphid



Figure 2: Yellow Sugarcane aphid



Figure 3: Sugarcane aphid (New invasive)



Figure 4: Greenbug aphid



Figure 5: Sugarcane aphids found in volunteer grain sorghum on February 27, 2014 in Willacy County. Notice the ants protect the aphids as they feed on the honeydew that the Sugarcane aphids produce.

**PowerPoint**

<http://bug.tamu.edu/cdn/Villanueva%20New%20Aphid%20Pest%20of%20Sorghum%20AgriLife%20Extension.pptx>

**Adobe PDF**

[http://bug.tamu.edu/cdn/Villanueva New Aphid Pest of Sorghum AgriLife Extension.pdf](http://bug.tamu.edu/cdn/Villanueva%20New%20Aphid%20Pest%20of%20Sorghum%20AgriLife%20Extension.pdf)

**Corn**

Corn stands are at its best due to the cloudy and damp weather. Stands range from very good to picture perfect and plants are rooting well due to the ample moisture around the crown roots. No insect activity has been observed but some very limited bird damage that has been seen on edges of fields and near power lines.

**Sponsorship**

Pest Cast sponsorship opportunities will be available again this year. Your support is very much appreciated. Cotton and Grain Producers of the LRGV will be coordinating the sponsorships again. For more information on sponsorship, please contact Webb Wallace at [cottonandgrain.lrgv@gmail.com](mailto:cottonandgrain.lrgv@gmail.com) or (956) 491-1793.

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