



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

Danielle Sekula
IPM Extension Agent

John W. Norman, Jr.
Editor

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General Situation



Seedling Cotton

We are in about the same place we were last year around this time as far as weather goes. In January we had a little bit of precipitation, averaging about 1 ½ inch rain throughout the Valley and we had no valuable precipitation last month worth mentioning. There does not seem to be any rain in sight according to the forecasts this month, but you never know sometimes those forecasters can be wrong. Wind speeds have been averaging out daily at 12 mph with some days having maximum wind speeds of 40mph. With no precipitation and high winds the soil moisture is pretty much not gone. Even those who irrigated had a lot of the moisture lost to evaporation due to these high winds.

Cotton



Ladybird beetle larvae feeding on aphids

Prior to now, very little cotton has been planted but we are starting to see more cotton being planted this third week of March. Some cotton that was planted 3 weeks ago is already at 2 to 3 true leaf stage and some planted 2 weeks ago has the cotyledon seedlings at about 2 inch tall. Wind damage is being seen on the small cotton seedlings which are just emerging. There have been reports that some cotton is going to be replanted because it failed to get a good stand after the moisture dried up.

Pest activity was low throughout the valley. There were some low populations of cotton aphids (female winged adults and immatures) on cotton already up these past 2 weeks. Aphids will feed on cotton plants by piercing the leaves and drawing the sap from the plant. As their populations grow you will see them secrete a sticky sugary substance called honeydew, this is their frass and eventually you may start to see a black colored fungi called sooty mold start to grow if populations are high. However was glad to see the orange eggs of the ladybug beetle under leaves and the newly emerged larvae feeding on immature

aphids in cotton fields throughout the valley. Ladybug beetle larvae can consume hundreds of aphids a day while the adult can consume about 50 per day. Ladybug beetle larvae look like tiny black little alligators and don't look anything like the adult.

Grain Sorghum



Corn Leaf Aphids

Looking at grain sorghum across the valley, a lot of grain sorghum has weak stands and has received a lot of wind damage. Leaves have been wilting and shriveling up on sorghum throughout the valley. In some dry land fields in Willacy County grain sorghum that was planted a month ago is barely standing about 3 inches tall. It is experiencing stunted plant growth. In parts of Hidalgo and Cameron county we are seeing very light levels of corn leaf aphids and sugar cane aphids being controlled nicely by lady bird beetle adults and larvae. Corn leaf aphids are usually green in color and like to feed in the middle whorl. Sugar cane aphids are yellow and you will usually find them on the under sides of the leaves feeding. Sugar cane aphids secrete a toxin while feeding that turns the leaf yellowish red and causes it to wilt.



Sugarcane Aphids

Corn

In corn it was reported that rootless corn syndrome or “floppy corn” is already an issue throughout the valley due to the drought. Corn that came up good is standing anywhere from 4-8 inches but has been flopping over and dying because the winds have just been too strong for too long. Any soil moisture that was in the ground has dried out making soil hard, cloddy and more difficult for the corn plant to achieve good nodal root development in order to anchor itself in the ground. Without good nodal root development after the seminal root has dried up we expect to see stunted plant growth and plant death. If you have access to water check soil moisture in corn fields to see if it's time to irrigate to avoid this or keep from getting worse. In some parts of Hidalgo County we're seeing some heavy cutworm levels that have been migrating from winter weeds into corn to feed. Cutworms are caterpillars that are the larvae of night flying grayish and brown moths. Cutworms like to cut off newly emerged seedlings at the surface and feed on them during the night. During the day they are burrowed under the soil surface near the lower base of the corn.



Floppy Corn above & below



Corn with no nodal roots developed



Cutworm eating corn plant



Cutworm Damage

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 or (956) 491-1793.

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



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Announcements

- If you haven't already done so, don't forget that the **'Soil Testing Campaign'** is still going on and has been extended until March 31, 2013. So get your samples along with a completed form to the Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, County Extension offices and to the District 12 office in Weslaco.
- **Arroyo Colorado Conservancy** is raffling a Dargel 190 Skout w/115HP Evinrude Motor and McClain Trailer; Total package valued at more than \$35,000. Tickets are \$100 and only 500 will be sold. The raffle will take place on **October 10th, 2013** during the ACC Membership Gala at the Dargel Showroom in Donna. For tickets and more info please contact Jaime Flores at 956-495-5532.
- 1st Annual Lower Rio Grande Valley Stormwater Taskforce Fishing Tournament TO BENEFIT THE **ARROYO COLORADO CONSERVANCY** Saturday, April 20 , 2013 at the White Sands Marina & Restaurant. To Register or get more info go to arroyocolorado.org.
- **Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership** is having their Incentive Programs Update Meeting, April 25, 2013, from 9 am to 11 am at the Harlingen Irrigation District Pump House on Trevino Road south of Military HWY 281 in Harlingen, Texas.

Contact Info

Pest Cast Newsletter
Texas AgriLife Extension Service
South District 12
2401 East Highway 83
Weslaco, TX 78596
(956) 968-5581
E-mail: Danielle.Sekula@ag.tamu.edu
d12south@ag.tamu.edu
<http://southtexas.tamu.edu>