



## Pest Cast

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

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Editor

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**GENERAL SITUATION:** The weather was mostly hot and dry, early in the week. A few sea-breeze showers were reported in isolated spots on Monday afternoon through Thursday afternoon. Predictions for the rest of the week were for less rain chances. Insect activity continued but was mixed in intensity.

**COTTON:** More cotton fields had open bolls this week. Cracked bolls were evident in many fields this week. Dryland and a few irrigated fields were in desperate need of moisture this week to finish the large number of incompletely filled green bolls present. A 2 to 3 inch rain about now would fill smaller green bolls in dry fields and produce a lot more cotton. *The first bale of cotton* was brought to the gin late last week. I have received no information on the first bale variety as yet. The first bale seed cotton will be ginned next month as more bales are brought into the gin.



Early planted cotton opening bolls



Whiteflies in cotton.

*Whiteflies and Verde bugs* were the principal pests of cotton

this week. Whiteflies were responsible for more insecticide applications and expense than any other pest, especially along the Rio Grande in Hidalgo County. Reports of high numbers of whiteflies were received this week in the Raymondville area in Willacy County. More fields were either sprayed for the first time or received a second treatment for whiteflies this week. Whiteflies appeared to be under control in many fields which were treated two weeks or so ago.

However, a few fields needed repeat whitefly sprays this week. Either way, whiteflies have been a serious problem in many

fields in the southern part of the cotton growing area of the Valley this year.

*Verde bugs* infested more fields in larger numbers this week. Most of the reports of increased Verde bug infestations were from eastern Cameron County. However, some other reports of changes in Verde bug infestations also came from Hidalgo and Willacy counties his week. Insecticide treatments



Verde bug adult on cotton this week

for Verde bugs were made in several fields. Verde bugs were being reported coming from grain sorghum fields being harvested in eastern Willacy county and eastern Cameron county.

Large numbers of Verde bug nymphs were reported in some grain sorghum fields in eastern Cameron and eastern Willacy counties this week.

In one grain field east of Los Fresnos, grain heads were beaten into a 5 gallon bucket to determine what insects were present. An average of 15 Verde bug nymphs and 2 adults were taken from each head of grain sampled. In eastern Willacy county large numbers of Verde bugs were being sucked into the dust screen on the engine of a combine that was harvesting grain. Nearby cotton fields were examined and large numbers of Verde bugs were found in the cotton. No other areas besides eastern Cameron and Willacy counties reported large numbers of Verde bugs being found in grain sorghum this week.

Why are large numbers of Verde bugs being found in the eastern part of the Valley and much lower numbers elsewhere? We know from research conducted by USDA research entomologists Randy Coleman and Dr. Scot Armstrong that most of the wild host plants which support Verde bugs early each season are found along the coasts and eastern Valley drain ditches. Rains that fell this spring may have kept those wild host plants in good shape until this recent very dry and hot weather. Once the wild host plants dried out, Verde bugs started to move in mass to something green, like grain sorghum and cotton. So, the closer to the coast grain sorghum and cotton is, the more likely they could be infested by Verde bugs at sprayable levels. It may be a good idea to check sorghum fields in other areas to determine if Verde bugs are using sorghum as a host and jumping-off point to move to cotton as they have done in eastern Cameron and Willacy counties. Remember, Verde bugs go after large squares and small to medium sized bolls. Check fields with fruit in these stages closely.

*Spidermites* continued to plague some fields and some needed spraying this week. However, most fields with mites had populations below the treatment threshold and required no sprays.

Very large numbers of *green lacewings*, *minute pirate bugs* and various species of *spiders* were observed in all cotton fields examined this week. Maturing and harvested grain sorghum fields are providing area cotton fields with lots of lacewings, pirate bugs and spiders. Lacewing larvae, pirate bugs and spiders do a good job of feeding on various pests of cotton and sorghum.



Spider on cotton leaf.



Lacewing adult.

**GRAIN SORGHUM:** Many fields of grain were harvested this week. Growers were dodging from field to field to avoid sea-breeze showers. Many fields were harvested in a split fashion so that grain which had *charcoal rot* and was falling over could be harvested first. Then the standing grain was harvested. The time lag between harvesting of falling grain and the rest of the field was as much as 5 to 7 days. Increasing reports of charcoal rot were received this week as harvesters began working in new fields. Overall, early harvested yields in dryland sorghum ranged from 4000 to 6500 pounds per acre. All in all, these are good dryland grain sorghum yields in the Valley.



Minute pirate bug on cotton.





Rice stinkbug on sorghum head

*Rice stinkbugs* were reported from a number of matured sorghum fields across the Valley this week. Head samples from the same field east of Los Fresnos where the Verde bugs were found also had an average of 3 rice stinkbug adults and 7 nymphs per sorghum head - as determined by beat bucket sampling. Adult and nymphal stages of rice stinkbugs were found in many other matured sorghum fields across the Valley this week. No damage from rice stinkbugs was expected in mature sorghum fields. If there are any immature sorghum fields in the vicinity of mature sorghum, you should watch them closely for *sorghum midge* (if the sorghum is just now blooming) and rice stinkbugs.

**CORN:** Harvesting is the name of the game in corn this week. Some late fields were still approaching final maturity, but most fields are ready and many have already been harvested.

Heat Units (H.U.) as shown are calculated from the dates of planting shown in the left column		
Planting Dates	2012 H.U.s	Historical H.U.s
2/15	2396.5	2111.3
3/1	2240.0	2009.4
3/15	2136.5	1894.2
4/1	1864.0	1690.0

## LRGV

## BOLL WEEVIL TRAPPING INFORMATION

YTD	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
	.00747	.00268	.00733	.15796	.11355	.27630	.35697	1.52198

Week Ending	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
4/1/12	.03353	.00476	.00672	.19847	.08503	.64118	.48544	0
4/8/12	.01617	.00360	.00592	.11633	.30512	.40392	.37552	0
4/15/12	.01572	.00114	.00312	.23686	.17102	.36414	.88875	6.47392
4/22/12	.00339	.00133	.01426	.38106	.05425	.23751	.15855	3.48685
4/29/12	.00474	.00043	.01528	.09081	.09113	.18227	.08629	1.70269
5/6/12	.00136	.00077	.00825	.05548	.08168	.07073	.09976	.73028
5/13/12	.00055	.00174	.00291	.02454	.07013	.17113	.09204	.72057
5/20/12	.00485	.00234	.00140	.10516	.08410	.06717	.20786	.58319
5/27/12	.00426	.00177	.00336	.20724	.06413	.17113	.09204	.72057
6/3/12	.00339	.00244	.01018	.13857	.04752	.13497	1.00114	.82565
6/10/12	.00281	.00720	.00794	.17487	.11127	.03975	.46624	1.77066
6/17/12	.01212	.00556	.00766	.06249	.13535	.17113	.09204	.72057

Traps inspected for current week: **35,631**

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