



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.*

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Editor

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General Situation: Wet weather just about says it all for this week. Monday and Tuesday were dry days. Rains started on Tuesday night and are predicted to last through Saturday morning. *Doppler radar rain estimated amounts from Tuesday night to Friday morning, May 11, ranged from 1/2 to 11 inches near McCook. (See doppler radar storm total map at end of this newsletter.)* The timing of the rain could not have been much more perfect for cotton and grain sorghum crops in the Valley. Hail damage appears to have been isolated and light in early reports, but actual extent has not yet been reported. Pest activity increased this week.

Cotton: Cotton was making good progress this week. Many fields were showing their first blooms of the season this week. Cotton ranged in age from just coming up to bloom. Plants in some fields have begun to grow rapidly. Some varieties may need to have a growth regulator applied before the plant size gets out of hand. The rains this week could lead to more rapid and unproductive growth and all fields should be checked to evaluate plant growth. If the top five nodes of a plant are exhibiting growth in excess of an average of two inches, then a growth regulator application may be needed. This is good cotton growth weather!

Many fields were sprayed or about to be sprayed by the end of this week for either *aphids or fleahoppers* or both, rains permitting. Aphids were more of an issue in Cameron County while fleahoppers were more of a concern in Willacy County. Hidalgo county had a little of both pests. Aphid infestations were dramatically higher than last week's counts in most fields in Cameron and Hidalgo counties. The highest aphid numbers were being seen from just north of Harlingen to the east, west and south across Cameron and Hidalgo counties. Most of the spraying for aphids was occurring in that area.



Figure 1. Lady beetle larvae feeding on aphids.

Populations of *beneficials* like lady beetles were also high, but in many situations, aphid populations were too high for the beneficials to manage without damage to the crop. Populations of *aphid parasites* which produce aphid mummies were either non-existent or were in high numbers depending on individual field situations.

Cotton fleahopper populations were much



Figure 2. Wild melon in cotton field. Photo courtesy Enrique Perez-CEA, Cameron County.

higher, especially in Willacy, Hidalgo and much of Cameron counties. The highest counts reported this week were in Willacy County. Overall, counts of fleahoppers ranged from 0 to 50 per 100 plants. Many fields were sprayed this week for fleahoppers.

Whiteflies were much higher in some locales this week compared to last week. Whiteflies were reported from just about every field in the Valley this week, even in Willacy County where whiteflies are not routinely found in the dryland areas. Reports of whitefly counts ranged from less than 1 per leaf to over 40+ per leaf in one situation.

Whitefly infestations in cotton usually do not originate in cotton but come



Figure 4. Wild melon with whitefly infestation. Photo courtesy of Enrique Perez-CEA, Cameron County.

from other sources. Most often, the highest infestations can be found in the vicinity of fields of watermelons, cantaloupes, old cabbage, cucumber and squash fields. Some of all of those situations were to be found this week in various locations in the Valley. However, last week I discussed wild melons as a possible source of whiteflies, especially if the wild melons were near or in the fields. One wild melon plant in a cotton field was photographed this week and demonstrated the potential for large whitefly infestations. Nearby cotton plants were also heavily infested. Field sanitation of old host plants is very important to keep whitefly levels near zero, regardless of plant type or location.



Figure 3. Large numbers of whiteflies on underside of cotton leaves. Photo courtesy Brad Cowan-CEA, Hidalgo County.

Spider mite infestations were also on the increase in some fields this week. Mites and whiteflies may suffer from

the rains, but growers should not assume the rain took care of their problems. Fields still should be checked for both pests following the rains this week.

Bollworms and bollworm eggs were reported in very light numbers in the few conventional cotton fields in the Valley this week. No spraying was reported this week for bollworms.

We have made a change in the way the Heat Units for cotton are presented in Pest Cast this week. Instead of showing a graph, which some had indicated was somewhat confusing, we have a table showing this season's Heat Unit accumulations based on planting dates compared to the last 5 years' average heat unit accumulations. We hope this change will be easier to read and therefore more useful.

Dates	2012 H.U.s	Historical H.U.s
2/15	1381.5	1141.7
3/1	1176.5	1039.8
3/15	1073.0	924.6
4/1	800.5	720.4

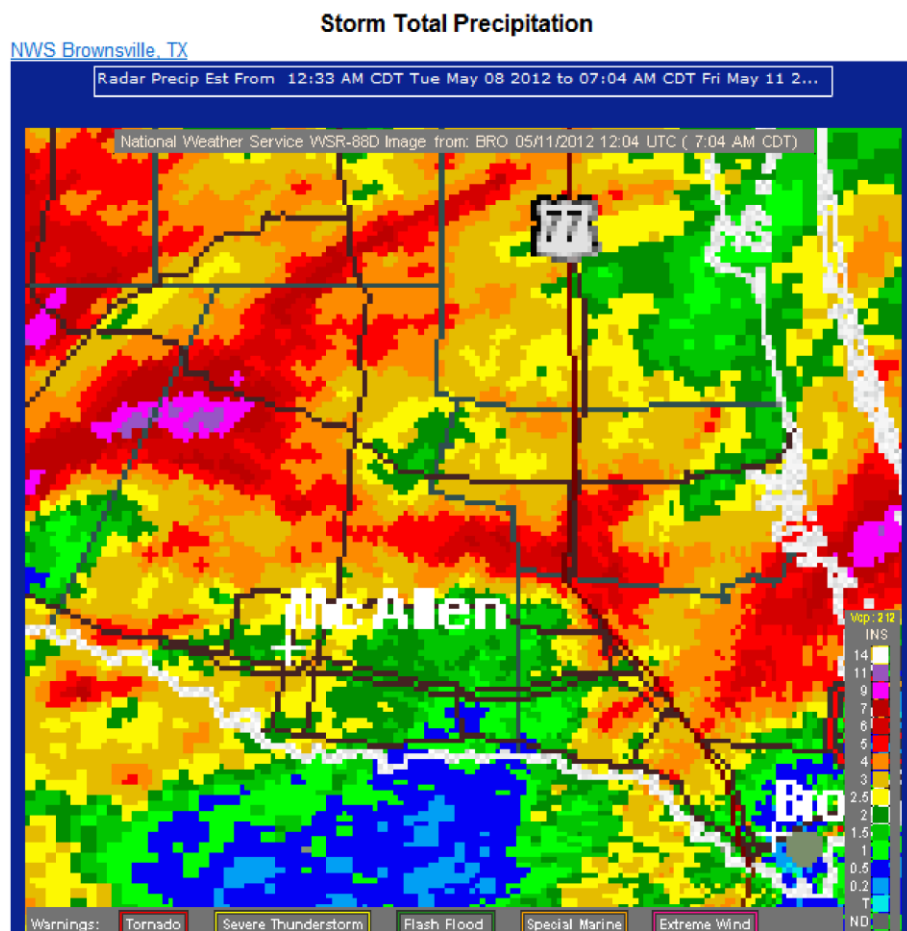


Figure 5. Sorghum head with milk-dough seed stage growth, dryland field.

Grain Sorghum: There was a sweet smell of blooming sorghum all across the Valley this week. Some fields were just past bloom and were starting to show milk stage grain heads.

Sorghum midge has not been reported from any fields, yet. Generally, midge begins to show in late May. Any sorghum fields just beginning to bloom by the 4th week of May or later should be routinely checked starting at about 10 am. Midge tends to appear in their highest numbers each day from 10 am to about 1 pm. watch for them.

CORN: No reports of insect activity in corn were received this week.



LRGV**BOLL WEEVIL TRAPPING INFORMATION**

YTD	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
	.01086	.00191	.00944	.20591	.14138	.29212	.39110	2.03058

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

Traps inspected for current week: 35,329

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