



## 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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### General Situation

Hi everyone, what a whirlwind of a year this has been already! We saw recording breaking cold temperatures we had not had here in the LRGV since 1989 with a freeze February 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> dropping temperatures down to 22°F and below with the wind chill. We lost early planted corn, and sorghum in all 3 counties and had several growers replant their acreage. Our vegetable growers lost many of their leafy green vegetables but seems onions and cabbage made it. Unfortunately, it was our citrus growers who took the hardest hit losing the rest of last year's crop yet

to be harvested and having this year's crop freeze as well but since then there has been many warm days and signs of life with new green flush growth. Even though we had the freeze hit us last month we quickly regained heat units with the very warm days that followed, and it has been interesting to see how this year 2021 compares to past years (Refer to Figure1). Remember how 2019 was an odd year that was considerably colder, and our heat units were quite behind, then 2020 last year was considerably hot and we were in a drought early on and thru majority of the growing season. Now here we are in 2021 and we are behind in our heat units compared to normal years (2017 & 2018) but ahead of 2019 despite of the freeze we received last month. It has been dry this year 2021, but not as dry as last year 2020 at this time. One thing that hasn't changed is the winds! The winds have been nonstop with 25 to 35 mph wind gusts for a couple days then we get a calm day but by the next day its windy again. Growers who have irrigation have been watering fields prior to planting and then after. Soil moisture had been surprisingly good for planting the last three weeks on the very eastside of the Valley along the coast, Willamar, Sebastian areas east of

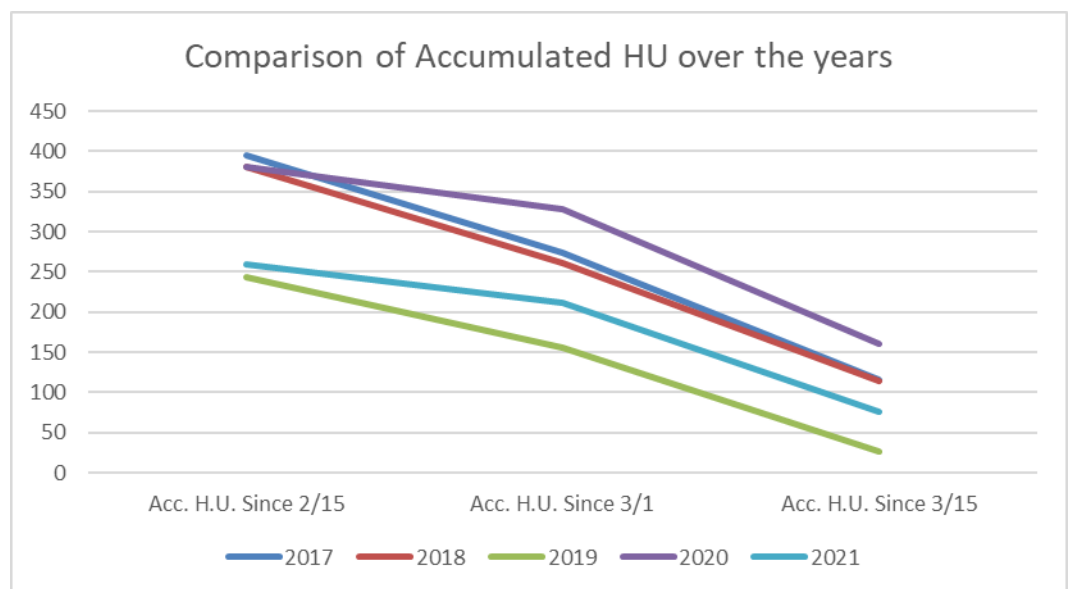


Figure 1: Heat Units Chart Comparing Present & Past Years

Year	Acc. H.U. Since 2/15	Acc. H.U. Since 3/1	Acc. H.U. Since 3/15
2017	395.5	274	115.5
2018	380.5	261.5	113.5
2019	244	155.5	27
2020	380	327.5	160.5
2021	259	212	75.5

HWY 77, and on the very west side of the Valley such as in the McCook area. However, with all the wind and high temperatures many dryland growers have yet to plant, and everyone is losing moisture fast or has very little soil moisture left all over the Valley. As I was driving through the middle of the Valley around the Lasara, Lyford, Raymondville areas checking dryland fields for soil moisture, I had to dig very deep only to see minimal moisture to none in fields with rows ready to go but again no moisture present. We hope to see some rain soon.

### Cotton

Many started planting cotton about 2 ½ weeks ago and according to the Texas Boll Weevil Eradication program as of Wednesday March 24<sup>th</sup> they were showing total current planted acreage at 100,013.1 ac. identified as cotton. With the majority of acreage being in Cameron County 34,735.4 ac., Hidalgo County 23,388.4 ac., Willacy County 40,525.1 ac., and with remaining acreage in Starr and Zapata Counties. As we continue to plant cotton, we want to encourage producers to leave access around entire perimeter of field to be able to monitor trapping along with applying ground applications in case of weevil detection.

Producers are also asked to please contact Boll Weevil office in their area to report acreage planted in cotton to insure there are no fields that are missed causing potential of weevil infestation. According to Edward Herrera, Zone manager for the LRGV with TBWEF we are currently at very low numbers and have very unique opportunity to advance the eradication effort. One silver lining with the freeze was it killed all the volunteer cotton we had left over due to hurricane Hanna last year and boll weevil numbers are very low and the TBWEF along with our LRGV growers will strive to keep it that way.

Cotton across the Valley is pretty clean right now. I was scouting last week into this week and we have a lot of cotton just coming up in cotyledon stage up to 3 true leaves. Along the river in the Progreso area, I was picking up on a couple of adult winged cotton aphids and a few immatures out there but other than that was very clean. In Progreso, Donna, and Pharr areas though I was picking up on a couple of adult thrips just barely starting to enter the fields on cotyledon cotton. There are several onion fields being harvested and due to be harvested soon so be mindful to get out next week and check for thrips as they will be looking for new food, hence new emerging cotton. I did pick up on some ladybug



Figure 2: Two true leaf cotton

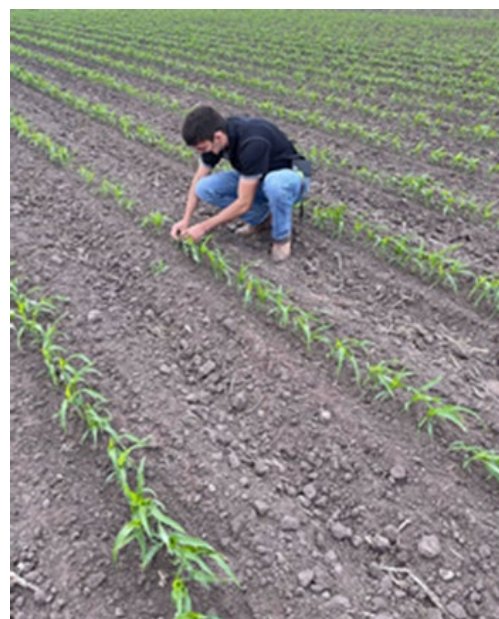


Figure 1: Field tech scouting sorghum



eggs and a couple of adults so that's always good to see our predators in the field. Cotton was clean from McCook to Willamar and in between as I scouted across the LRGV.

### **Grain Sorghum**

Lots of grain sorghum coming up in all 3 counties as I scouted many fields stages V1 to V7 out there and it too is looking pretty clean. My colleague Holly has been setting traps for fall armyworms and caught some adult moths this week, but I have yet to see any fall armyworm activity in commercial sorghum. I have not picked up on any sugarcane aphids in commercial sorghum either. However, before the freeze I was finding sugarcane aphids in sorghum buffers around the Weslaco station, after the freeze hit it set them back but as of last Thursday, I was finding some very active healthy sugarcane aphids in sorghum that was growing back.

### **Corn**

Walked through a lot of corn fields coming up, stages vary across the Valley same as sorghum with corn stages of V3 to V7. I was not picking up on any cutworms or other pests of concern. Was very clean.



**Figure 3: Double row corn**

### **Sunflowers**

Despite the freeze McCook growers managed to replant and even had some sunflower fields make it through the freeze and I saw many nice stands as I scouted around McCook. No pests of concern in sunflowers except for some unwanted birds eating seed in some fields.

### **Soybeans**

This is the first spring that I have encountered a considerable amount of soybean acres in the early growth stages in the Mid Valley. It looked very clean and beautiful stands.

### **Audio Update for South Texas IPM in row crops**

As a new row crop season gears up we have kicked off a weekly audio update for South Texas IPM in row crops. This is new for our area this year and each week we will provide a 5-7 minute update on what is going on in the LRGV and Costal Bend. It is a great way to get a heads up on what pests you may need to be on the lookout for in your area and other issues that may be of concern to you. We hope that you will follow this link and sign up: <https://www.texasinsects.org/south-texas.html>

You will receive text when a new update is available and can listen to it right there in your truck, tractor, or wherever you may be. This does not replace the Pest Cast Newsletter but is an extra source of information to have available. Thank you.

**Signing up is easy:** Click on this link, <https://www.texasinsects.org/south-texas.html>

On the top of the page select:>> Signup to get a text message when a new post is made.<<

Next, Signup for South Texas IPM Updates, by entering your cell number and input if you are a PRODUCER, CONSULTANT, AG INDUSTRY, AGRILIFE OR OTHER.

And that's it!

### **RGV Bug Blog**

You can sign up for Extension Entomologist Holly Davis **RGV Bug Blog**, at <https://rgvbugblog.blogspot.com/>

### **Sponsorship**

Past sponsors and new sponsors thank you so much for supporting our local IPM program. If anyone would still like to sponsor, there is still time and your support is greatly appreciated. If you would like more information on the sponsorship levels or have any questions, feel free to email or call me. Thank you.

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**Figure 5: Sunflowers in McCook**

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Have a great weekend everyone and stay safe and well. Take care.