



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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Cotton

Aphids, spidermites, and whiteflies. Still seeing some heavy cotton aphid pressure in some cotton fields along the coast and in the mid Valley that were either not treated and then some were reinfested, and numbers surged again. If you have cotton aphids infesting your squares and overwhelming your leaves you might need to control them if predators are not actively present feeding or are feeding in low numbers, too much feeding can cause aborted squares. Along the river/military highway, and along coast (Bayview & Los Fresnos) I noticed several fields that had high red spidermite pressure along with cotton aphids mixed in. Spidermites have spread in some fields due to the dryness and dusty conditions of many fields right now but hopefully if we get some rain next week they will wash off and calm down. Cotton is most susceptible to injury from spider mites during fruiting periods and when the crop suffers water-deficit stress. Spider mites infest the underside of leaves causing a webbing, and most infestations develop in hot spots in fields, and at dusty field margins. Damaged leaves from spidermites will appear dusty and greyish in color (Figure 1). We are also noticing an increase in whiteflies present in cotton along the river so will want to be proactive in controlling their numbers since they can populate quickly if left untreated. There has been some heavy thrips feeding (~20 per leaf) going on in squaring cotton affecting the whole plant and upper leaves. We are monitoring fields finding a combination of both western flower thrips and detecting the chille thrips along the river where these heavy thrips populations have been reported and treated. Aside from the insect pressure along the river the rest of the cotton mid valley and north was very clean, just some low to moderate aphid pressure and still not seeing any fleahopper pressure either, just a couple every once in while.



Figure 1: Spidermite damage on cotton leaves above & below



Grain

We are still seeing some high sugarcane aphid (SCA) pressure in the mid valley and along the coast in flowering and soft dough sorghum. Most sorghum fields I was seeing low to moderate sugarcane aphid pressure and plenty of predators such as syrphid larvae and ladybug larvae feeding to control them. However, there were many fields that are experiencing 50 + SCA/ leaf and heavy honey dew from SCA feeding under the canopies in which more than 30% of the plants in the field were infested in which a spray treatment is warranted. Lots of sorghum was blooming this week and I just didn't pick on any midge

populations of concern. When checking for midge inspect the heads for a small orange/reddish flying insect around the yellow flowering spikelets as this is where the female will lay her eggs, usually

about 50 yellow-white eggs, the adults only live for one day. The eggs hatch in 2 to 3 days so you must check daily for sorghum midge as new populations emerge/hatch each morning. It is imperative that if you have flowering sorghum you try to get out there every 3 days between the hours of 10 am and 2pm to inspect for midge pressure. Threshold for midge is one per sorghum head. We beat bucketed lots of sorghum heads in several sorghum fields that were blooming or in soft dough stage in Willacy and Cameron counties and did not pick up on any headworms or rice stinkbug populations. I saw a little rice stinkbug egg laying in Willacy County and a couple of worms, but that was it. Remember threshold for headworms in sorghum is 1-2 per head and for rice stinkbug it is 1 per head. Our later planted sorghum that is still in the pre-booting stages will be the fields that will really need monitoring later in the season as the earlier sorghum is ahead of damaging insect numbers so far.

Table 11. Action thresholds based on sorghum growth stages (Source: revised from thresholds created by Louisiana State University)

Growth stage	Action threshold
Preboot	20% of plants infested with 50 or more aphids
Boot	20% of plants infested with 50 or more aphids
Flowering-milk	30% of plants infested with 50 or more aphids
Soft dough	30% of plants infested with established aphid colonies and localized areas ¹ with heavy honeydew
Dough	30% of plants infested with established aphid colonies and localized areas ¹ with heavy honeydew
Black layer	Heavy honeydew and established aphid colonies. Treat only to prevent harvest problems. Observe preharvest intervals for insecticides.

¹: A single plant or group of adjacent plants with sugarcane aphid colonies



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