



## 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

We started off this week with a little bit of light rain showers on Monday with most areas receiving only 0.10 inch, and other areas receiving 0.3-0.7 inches. Very high winds for majority of the week with temperatures mid 80s.

### Cotton

This week cotton was clean checking behind treated acres as fleahopper activity from last two weeks has calmed down a bit. There were reports of fleahopper nymphs near and around the Lyford area and we were finding a couple of fleahopper adults in some areas but overall a lot cleaner in cotton. Cotton aphids were still very minimal to low pressure as many predators were seen feeding in many cotton fields. There is some whitefly nymph activity in cotton near the river.

### Grain Sorghum

Sorghum looks good as we have lots more blooming and the earliest sorghum heading into the soft dough stage with some sorghum already changing color to hard dough. We are barely starting to pick up on a couple of rice stinkbugs and headworms showing up in soft dough

sorghum along the river but no populations of concern yet. We are still seeing pockets of sugarcane aphids, as alates (adult winged SCA) are flying into sorghum fields and laying live aphids. Many fields still look clean but we do run into moderate to high populations in blooming sorghum fields so growers need to walk fields and evaluate populations to see if treatment is necessary. Signs of high populations of SCA that need control treatment are honeydew (sugars) glistening on leaves consistently as you walk through your field, stickiness, and sooty mold present towards lower part of canopy. When treating sugarcane aphids applying at least 10-15 gallons of water per acre is necessary to get product down into the lower part of the canopy where SCA are mostly present to obtain adequate coverage and overall good control. Also adding drops to your booms can increase control efficiency ensuring the product is in the middle to lower part of canopy.

**Click on link below to access the Sorghum insects guide for insecticide charts:**

<https://southtexas.tamu.edu/files/2023/05/managing-insect-and-mite-pests-of-texas-sorghum.pdf>

**Click on the link below to access the Cotton insect guide:**

[https://southtexas.tamu.edu/files/2023/05/Managing-Cotton-Insects-in-Texas-ENTO-075\\_2019.pdf](https://southtexas.tamu.edu/files/2023/05/Managing-Cotton-Insects-in-Texas-ENTO-075_2019.pdf)

Table 8. Action thresholds for sorghum aphids based on sorghum growth stages.

Sorghum Growth Stage	Threshold
Pre-boot to boot	20% of plants infested with 50 or more aphids.
Flowering to milk stage	30% of plants infested with 50 or more aphids.
Soft-dough to hard-dough	30% of plants infested with established aphid colonies and localized areas with heavy honeydew.
Black layer	Heavy honeydew and established aphid colonies. Treat only to prevent harvest problems.

Figure 1: Sugarcane aphid threshold table, on pg. 15 of the Managing Insect & mite pests of Texas Sorghum guide, ENTO-PU-170 April 2023, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

### Sesame

We had several blooming sesame fields sprayed this week for mirid plantbug and tarnished plant bug pressure in northern parts of Hidalgo and Willacy counties. We are also seeing low to moderate aphid pressure in sesame as well and treat if more than 40-60 aphids per young sesame seedling and



Figure 3: Mirid adult with heart shape on back when wings closed

seem to be overwhelming the plant. We noticed several fields with high mirid plantbug (*Nesidiocoris tenuis*) pressure this week in sesame across the Valley (Figure 2). Sesame in the early growth stages of



Figure 4: Tarnished plantbug (close up) & below on sesame plant bloom

seedling to early bloom need to be monitored for mirid pressure. Mirids are a type of plantbug that suck plant juices and can cause necrotic damage and stunting of growth to the sesame plant as well as injury to the pods. *N. tenuis* mirids adults and nymphs are lime green in color measuring no more than 5mm in size (so fairly small). Mirid adults when their wings are closed make a heart shape (Figure 3) that upon close observation is easy to spot. Mirids *N. tenuis* also can be predators to whiteflies feeding on both adults and immatures in the lower canopies of the sesame when present, we have

seen this interaction in sesame over the years mainly along the river and in the Rio Hondo and Bayview areas. However, mirids can develop successfully on the sesame plant alone and will feed on the plant more when they have depleted their food source (in this case whiteflies) or there is an abundance in mirid populations. Signs of high mirid pressure feeding on the plants will be yellowing on the leaves and brownish necrotic damage and the curling under of the leaves. You will want to monitor for mirids and treat if necessary, since their feeding



Figure 2: Several mirid adults and nymphs feeding on sesame



Figure 5: Tarnished plantbugs caught in sweep net in sesame.



can hurt yield potential. Tarnished plantbugs (Figures 4 & 5) have also been seen in sesame this week feeding in and around the blooms causing disruption in pollination of the blooms. Tarnished plantbugs will feed by sucking the juices from the blooms causing them to dry out thus ruining pod development. Products labeled on sesame that control mirids, tarnished plantbugs, and aphids are Transform and Mustang Maxx. We will have much more blooming sesame in the weeks to come as most sesame is still in early seedling stages and just be mindful of populations of mirid & tarnished plantbugs present going forward.

**\*\*\* Please save the date, Thursday May 9, 2024, we will be hosting a Cotton & Grain Scouting School for Pests and Diseases at Rio Farms in Monte Alto, 2 IPM & 1 General TDA CEUs. Sign in will begin at 8:30 am, The program will begin at 9am, end by noon, with lunch provided. See attached flyer for more information. Thanks.**

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