



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

So we missed the hurricane but have been receiving consistent rain showers for the last 5 days now. Most areas in the Valley have received an accumulation of 1.5-3 inches of rain this week, with a few areas in the Valley that have received even a bit more rain. Cotton growers have just been waiting for hotter temperatures, and dry days so we can get in there to apply defoliant and begin to harvest.

Cotton

We have lots of open boll cotton across the Valley, anywhere from 35-95% open boll cotton. With the recent rains I am seeing lots of green regrowth on tops of the mature cotton plants that were done. The cotton is hanging in there (literally) as I have seen some droopy strung-out cotton, in some areas that received more rain it looks worse, and in some cotton fields the bottom cotton bolls have dropped to the ground because of too many rain events. Some of this open boll cotton has received anywhere from 3-5 rains already and hasn't had a chance to dry up. I was able to walk into a few cotton fields Friday morning (yesterday) and I noticed some sprouted cotton seed in the lint. I really hope it dries out soon and we don't see more of this but that's



Rained on cotton that's strung out (July 11, 2024)

what's going on. We've been having wet, muggy, cloudy, humid weather for several days now so unfortunately, we do have some sprouted cotton seed.

As far as pests are concerned, whiteflies are the main pest across the Valley in cotton. I have some later planted cotton at cut out stage with no open bolls just loaded with whiteflies around the Monte alto area and along some portions of the river as well. For those with open boll cotton and increasing whitefly populations hopefully defoliation of leaves can occur soon this next week to rid whiteflies from field. Whiteflies feed on cotton excreting sugars that cause black sooty mold to develop and inhibit cotton plant growth and once we have open bolls sometimes the sooty mold can stain the open boll cotton if we receive rains. We are also seeing chilli thrips populations increase greatly in cotton across the Valley but are not concerned as majority of cotton is done and bolls have been established at this point, however younger cotton should manage chilli thrips populations. Chilli thrips can cause severe bronzing and defoliation of the leaves when populations are left unmanaged and can reproduce rapidly as they thrive in this intense heat. If you are maturing out the tops of your cotton plants or just have very late cotton still squaring, we have lots



Figure 1: Lots of whiteflies in cotton (July 2024)

of fleahoppers and you consider spraying to control them. Also still seeing a few Verde plant bugs present in cotton with young penetrable bolls but not seeing anything at threshold. Plus the fields I have checked have more mature bolls than young and doesn't justify treatment. I'm sure though that we have a few fields with very late planted cotton I haven't seen so if that's you it be best to check for Verdes, fleahoppers, whiteflies, and chille thrips populations and treat accordingly.

Grain Sorghum

I've received reports that late planted sorghum has high sugarcane aphid populations, especially with this wet, muggy, hot condition it has caused SCA populations to soar. We are not really checking sorghum as 98% of Valleys sorghum crop has been harvested but did notice these high SCA populations in one field we came across.

Sesame alert for those at mid bloom stage

We have about 85% of the Valley's sesame crop at cut out stage with the other 15% at mid-blooms stage. In the later planted sesame, this is sesame planted later than April 15th, that is at mid-bloom stage now, we are seeing **very heavy mirid plantbug pressure** and treatment is necessary to protect the blooms as rest of the pod load is being produced on the plant. 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). Once sesame is at cutout stage mirids and other plantbugs are not a concern, but for high populations like this being found in mid-blooming sesame it is best to treat this coming week so as not to diminish your pod load being established. Products labeled on sesame that control mirids, tarnished plantbugs, and aphids are Transform and Mustang Maxx.



Figure 3: Several mirid adults and nymphs feeding on sesame



Figure 2: Lots of mirid plantbugs in sweep net found in sesame fields. July 13, 2024

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