

The Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Newsletter
for the Row Crops in the Lower Rio Grande Valley

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PEST CAST

GENERAL SITUATION: This week was hot and dry. Some fields of grain sorghum were showing signs of drought. Many fields of cotton were showing some wilting in the afternoons. Of course, so were some producers and entomologists. Insect activity changed slightly this week. Less aphids and more fleahoppers and weevils in cotton.

Cotton Making Good, but Slow Progress



Cotton continued to show reasonably good signs of progress despite the various adversities encountered over the last several weeks. While the difficult weather conditions slowed planting and in some cases slowed maturity of earlier planted fields, the overall crop condition remained good this week. Even in most dryland situations, cotton was progressing well, but all crops could use a little rain to keep moving forward.

Cotton was growing taller than usual this week due to the continuous smoky-hazy conditions. Not enough sunlight was reaching the plant canopy and the plants were responding by growing taller and had larger than usual leaf sizes. Many plants, even in some dryland fields had 4 inch internode lengths this week. Many fields of cotton also had what often is called “elephant ear” cotton leaves. The extra large leaves also were a result of the hazy weather conditions.

Some days and nights this week were extremely hot. Daytime temperatures above 95 degrees and nighttime temperatures exceeding 80 degrees appeared to have had an impact on many fields of cotton. Some fields with blasted squares but have no cotton fleahoppers or other square feeding bugs present. The blasted square damaged observed this week was in fields, but fields which were just initiating squaring seemed to be ones with the most square damage.

It is a well established fact that extreme high daytime and nighttime temperatures can cause a loss of squares and/or slow square production. Most nights this week had temperatures no lower than 79 degrees and most were above 80. This has been a hot May even though we have only passed just 9 days of it, so far. Again, some rain would help.

“Red” Boll Weevils Found

Boll weevil punctured squares were reported this week. A high count of 6 punctures per 100 plants was reported from one field just south of Weslaco. Other reports of a few “red” boll weevils were also received this week. A few scattered squares on the ground were observed to hold boll weevil grubs. Most fields were showing no signs of weevil activity by the end of this week, but that could change quickly. Trap counts were down some this week as more cotton was fruiting, but weevils still were being trapped. (See attached trap records) Growers should continue to monitor fields often for new indications of weevil activity.

Aphids Light

Cotton aphid infestations were much lower this week. No reports of insecticidal control failures on aphids were reported. Beneficial insects and the fungus seemed to be keeping helping to hold aphids to low numbers, especially in untreated fields.

Fleahopper Counts Higher

Cotton fleahopper counts were much higher in some fields this week. Fleahoppers were the primary concern of many cotton producers around the LRGV. The highest counts were noted in Willacy county, but there were significant fleahopper counts found in Cameron and Hidalgo counties as well. Counts reported ranged from 0 to 24 per 100 plants. Most of the fleahoppers observed this week were newly hatched nymphs. Pinhead sized squares were observed to be damaged in some fields, apparently due to fleahopper feeding. Other similar damage may have been weather related. See notes above.

Beet Armyworms

Some beet armyworms were reported in isolated, but scattered locations this week. No egg masses (hits) or other larval feeding were reported.

Bollworm Still Present

Bollworm larvae were detected at very low levels according to reports received this week. No significant damage was reported. Counts reported ranged from 0 to 2 larvae per 100 plants.



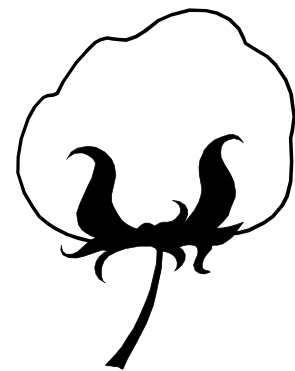
Many fields were showing increased drought stress this week. Twisted, rolled leaves and a general gray colored cast to fields were a sure sign of the sorghum begging for a drink of water. Some fields were being irrigated for the first time. Many others will just have to wait for rain since they will not be irrigated to save water for other crops or because there is simply no water to irrigate.

No Midge Yet

Many fields of sorghum were headed and blooming this week. Many others were either just entering boot stage or were about to head. Midge activity has not been reported so far this season. If all goes as usual, potential economic midge levels could start appearing in area fields by the last week of this month. Sorghum bloom completion by the end of this month should be free of midge concerns. However, if sorghum commences blooming near the last 10 days or so of this month or for the next two to three weeks thereafter, then midge damage could be serious. Check all later maturing sorghum for midge infestations frequently.

Cotton Heat Unit Accumulation Table			
Planting Dates	Accum. H.U.	Planting Dates	Accum. H.U.
2/15-----	1002	3/15-----	838
3/01-----	970	4/01-----	683

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Rio Farms, Inc.
Trap Line Data - 2003 - Boll Weevils per trap per day

Trap Lines	May 6	May 13	May 20	May 27	
Taco Baja	n/a				
Edinburg Area					
KURV	0.02				
Hans	0.00				
Fike Home	0.00				
Hill	0.02				
Bobby	0.10				
Seminary Rd.	0.24				
Delta Area					
L V-N. Sugar Mill	0.00				
La Sara	0.19				
MA North	0.60				
MA S. West	0.12				
Hargil	0.43				
DL South	0.64				
KSOX - E. DL	0.07				
Raymondville Area					
Ray West	0.26				
Ray East	0.00				
Southmost Area					
Florida	0.50				
Docberry	3.74				
Alaska	0.19				
Arkansas	0.52				
S. Oklahoma	0.24				
Santa Rosa Area					
Peterman	0.00				
Santa Rosa	0.00				
Dillan	--				
River	--				

Rio Farms, Inc.
Trap Line Data - 2003 - Boll Weevils per trap per day

Trap Lines	May 6	May 13	May 20	May 27	
Progreso Area					
Nogales	1.28				
Las Palomas	0.39				
Santa Anna	0.56				
Las Milpas	0.14				
Progreso Gin	0.14				
Bridge	0.31				
Sebastian Area					
Armandice	0.00				
Santa Rosa Lake	0.00				
Rio Hondo Area					
Airport	0.00				
Parker Rd.	0.17				
Paredes Line Rd.	0.00				
777	0.02				
Mercedes Area					
Valley Acres Lake	1.69				
SRS - HQ	0.52				
Ross	0.79				
Rangerville Area					
Turner Rd.	--				
Tanimachi	--				
Chinaberry Rd.	--				
McCook Area					
Davis	--				
Citrico	0.19				
Wells	0.31				
Starr County					
Starrco	0.02				
La Casita	0.00				
Los Puertos	0.00				

Special Addition for Pest Cast Subscribers

With the hazy conditions John mentioned last week, it is really time to start mepiquat chloride (i.e. Pix, Mepex, Mepichlor, Mepiquat Chloride, or other brands) applications on cotton that is expanding and growing too fast. Sunshine actually reduces the size of leaves and stems by destroying a plant growth hormone in developing cells. That's why plants on a forest floor are so tall and spindly. With cloudy or lack of sunshine conditions, the plants will expand developing cells to their maximum size. This will result in long internodes up the stem and super-sized leaves. This will increase evaporation rates from the leaves and shade the lower bolls and fruiting forms - which will cause abortions of the developing fruit.

Of course the amount of plant growth regulator mepiquat chloride used will depend on the variety, the amount of water and fertilizer and the size of the plant. 8 ounces at early bloom is an excellent start for applications. If the cotton is not blooming yet, 4-6 ounces, again depending on the size of the plant.

There is an excellent bulletin that goes into much detail on timing and rates and plant growth regulator management; B-6042 [Using Mepiquat Chloride on the Texas Coast to Reduce Cotton Plant Height](#). This bulletin was written by Dr. Steve Livingston, Dr. Juan Landivar and I several years ago, but the information is still correct.

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