



HAPPENINGS IN AG

News about Integrated Pest Management for producers in Castro and Lamb Counties.

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GENERAL CROP CONDITIONS

A good slow soaking 2" rain would sure make everyone feel much better. Producers continue to ask about irrigation termination in corn and cotton fields. Well unless you are at black layer with a full profile in corn, you are not ready to terminate irrigation. Keep in mind that early irrigation termination will lead to light bushel weights. As far as cotton, irrigation may be terminated somewhere around 350 to 450 heat units after cut out. So how about some of those blooms that are just now present on cotton plants? Will they make a good quality boll? Well if you can tell me how many heat units we'll rack up between now and our first freeze than I can give you a better idea about the chances of that

bloom making a good quality boll. I would however say that the chances of those blooms making a good quality boll are not very good according to our historical weather records. We just don't typically accumulate enough heat units from August 20th to our first freeze date to make a good quality boll. So do we irrigate enough to finish up blooms that are just now present? I can't answer that for you. It's just very risky at this point especially with irrigation costs where they are. However with that being said we do need to furnish enough irrigation to fill those money bolls that we know will make it. So there you go if we had a good 2" rain I think it would help make some of these decisions a little easier. I guess I would rather see producers err on the side of too much irrigation than I would terminating too early. Remember that when irrigation is terminated too early in cotton it will cause some fruit to abort and then cause some problems with lint quality. I think for the most part we have an excellent chance of making some good cotton yields in both Castro and Lamb Counties. Corn fields continue to thrive and I think corn fields have excellent potential for good yields as well.

INSECTS AND DISEASES

Cotton

Well we finally got some insect pest activity this week in program cotton fields. Sorry if I sound excited I know that this isn't what cotton producers want to read. We picked up significant lygus bug activity around the Springlake area as well as east and south of Littlefield. We were ranging from 0 lygus bugs per 3 ft row to 3 lygus bugs per 3 ft row. The populations were primarily nymphs which indicates an established population in some of these program fields. So now we have some decisions to make with some of these infestations. First of all is the population primarily adults or nymphs? Remember if the population is primarily adults they could be just passing through and not causing any damage at all and move out in just a few days. Now if they are primarily nymphs than more than likely there is reproduction occurring in that field. Make note of the size of the nymphs as well. How mature are the bolls in the field and are they still susceptible to lygus bug feeding? Bolls that are larger than about 1" in diameter should be safe from small nymphs (1st and 2nd instar). So do we protect the small bolls that are being fed upon at this time? Well again that's just a million dollar question. It will depend on heat unit accumulations and whether or not those small bolls can make a good quality boll. Check the number of damaged bolls and also make note of the size of the bolls that are being damaged. Be sure that you are seeing lygus bugs and not some other insect so be sure to also use the following thresholds.

Lygus bug adults are 1/4 inch long and a conspicuous triangle in the center of the back. Lygus bugs are winged and vary in color from pale green to yellowish brown with reddish brown to black markings. Immature lygus are called nymphs. They are uniformly pale green with red tipped antennae; late instars have four conspicuous black spots on the thorax and one large black spot near the base of the abdomen. Small nymphs may be confused with cotton fleahoppers or even aphids.

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After the third week of squaring, the economic threshold is 2 lygus bug adults or nymphs per three feet of row with less than acceptable fruit retention. A drop cloth should be utilized to monitor lygus bug infestations in cotton fields. We continue to scout for bollworm populations and have not detected any bollworm activity with the exception of seeing a few moths fluttering around some of our program fields. Otherwise we have not found any eggs or larvae in any of our program cotton fields. However, continue to monitor the upper 1/3 of the plant for eggs and be sure to check blooms, squares and bolls for larvae.

Corn

Well the insect pressures in program corn fields have mostly been treated either with a miticide for spider mite infestations or with an insecticide for Southwestern Corn Borer infestations in Non-Bt corn fields or in many instances a combination of the insecticide and miticide. Spider mite populations at this point have decreased. Also it's important to remember that after corn has reached full dent spider mite infestations can no longer affect yield. Now under severe infestations spider mites will cause weak stalks and could result in lodging. For the most part however, I feel like corn fields that have reached full dent should be relatively safe from spider mite damage. Continue to monitor for southwestern corn borer egg lays in non-bt corn fields if your fields have not been treated. For trapping data please go to the following web site and click on the data tab and scroll down to the bottom of the page. You will then see a drop down and you can choose Castro/Lamb and then click on the insect trapping icon. <http://www.cropdefender.com/tamu/>

Sorghum

We have not found any sorghum head worms in any sorghum program fields. Use the beat bucket method to monitor this pest in grain sorghum. Take a 5 gallon white bucket or any white container such as a white waste basket and shake sorghum heads in the container. This process should shake any larvae off of the grain sorghum head and into the container.

**Happenings in Ag is a publication of Texas AgriLife Extension Service
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