

Comanche County Agriculture Newsletter

If the weather forecast is correct we will have had 2" to 3" of rainfall by the time you receive this newsletter. If we get the rain that is forecasted, things will all be good in country. If not, then I am so sorry to bring up a sore subject. As I finish-up this newsletter, probably 75% of the corn has been planted, small grains made an amazing recovery after the excellent late February rains. Bermudagrass is trying to get a start, but the cool nights and cool soil temperatures are still holding it back, but it will not be long now. I have seen a few mesquites trying to break dormancy, but no pecans just yet.

If they have not already, things are going to start moving really fast in the next few days for all our local farmers, ranchers and agriculture businesses. After what seemed like a long winter everyone is happy for a change and to be able to stop feeding hay. Regardless of weather predictions or price outlooks, it is the miracle of the changing seasons and the potential of a new growing season that give most folks involved in agriculture the enthusiasm and desire to keep going and keep growing.

Sugar Cane Aphids and Forage Sorghum and Sorghum Crosses

Before Sugar Cane Aphids(SCA) forage sorghum, sudangrass and haygrazers were a big crop in the area. Around 2014 we started seeing considerable damage to these forage crops from the SCA, since then the acreage of these crops has probably dropped 90% in the area. This is unfortunate as these are good crops for our area. Forage sorghum has always been a low maintenance, drought hardy crop with good value. Before SCA there were very few insect pests to worry about with the crop.

In the last few years there has been a lot of research done on sorghums and the SCA. The result is we now have some identified sorghum and sorghum crosses that are more tolerant to SCA. This offers you a good option if you are considering a summer annual forage crop. Here is a list of sorghum sudan hybrid varieties that have shown resistance to the SCA: Sweeter N Honey II, Sweeter N Honey BMR both from Richardson Seed, Super Sugar DM from Gayland Ward Seeds and Gro-N-Graze by Warner Seed. All Pearl Millet varieties that I have seen, have also shown excellent resistance to the SCA. Your seed salesman may know of other varieties that have been tested and shown resistance.

Remember resistance is not immunity, and the SCA may still be a problem on resistant hybrids, you will still need to monitor your fields and apply an insecticide or take an early harvest if infestations increase to where leaf damage is occurring. While we like to wait until soil temperatures are in the 60 to 65 degree range to plant sorghum, planting as early as possible helps to get the crop large enough to harvest before the SCA populations get to point that severe damage occurs. Having the ability to harvest for either hay or silage within a week to 10 days after infestation is also important. The longer you wait the more damage and yield loss.

Comanche County

Bermudagrass Stem Maggot

Most everyone is now familiar with the relatively new pest Bermudagrass Stem maggot (BGSM). In the last few years there has been a considerable amount of effort and research done in the county to try and answer a few questions about the BGSM. We did gather some good information on the maggot, but unfortunately like most pest we found no permanent solutions for getting rid of the BGSM. One thing we did do is get some good local economic threshold data for the pest. The table below list treatment threshold for Bermudagrass stem maggot given an insecticide application cost of \$10.00 and variable hay costs. Insecticide treatment or early harvest should be considered when stem maggot damage exceeds the treatment threshold.

Value of Hay, \$/ton	Treatment Threshold, Percent Infested Stems
100	22 %
80	27 %
60	37 %
40	55 %

The insect has multiple generations during a growing period, this can make control very difficult. The best option is to harvest the hay crop as soon as possible if you find significant damage. The Maggots feeding in the stem will die once the hay is cut and dried for hay. Unfortunately, new flies will emerge from the pupae that are already in the soil and reinfest the field. To protect from infestation, apply a labeled insecticide 7 to 10 days after cutting. The insecticide treatment will only kill the adult flies, not larvae feeding in the stem. If you had a severe infestation you might consider a second treatment 5 to 7 days following the first treatment. If your field has no history of the stem maggot then do not spray. Some of the better insecticides that offer good residual, like Dimilin and Prevathon seem to have no effect on the BGSM.

One interesting bit of information about the bermuda stem maggot is that it seems to prefer finer stemmed bermudagrasses over those that are more coarse stemmed. Bermudagrasses like Coastal, Common or Alicia will have a higher incidence of infection than Tifton-85. Like most other insects the BGSM seems to prefer the highly managed irrigated fields. On fields that are being grazed, the BGSM is not such an issue as the cattle will usually remove the top leaves where the BGSM would lay its eggs. It is also important to note the maggot is not transported in hay as it dies when the hay cures. Movement occurs at the adult stage as the adult fly is a strong flier.

Upcoming Programs:

Small Grain Turn-Row Meeting

Small grain for forage production is one of the largest crops grown in Comanche County and the surrounding areas. While this year has not been typical, small grains are typically one of our more reliable crops, especially on dryland fields. For the last several years the Comanche County Agents office along with the Small Grain Specialist for Texas A&M Crop Sciences Department have conducted small grain research trials in the county. These trials include over 40 varieties of small grains including; wheat, oats, rye, triticale, barley and ryegrass, as well as some blends of grains.

We will be hosting a small grain tour of the trials on Thursday, April 13th at 10:00 A.M. at the field. To trials are located on county road 338 off county road 304. Following the tour, we will have a sponsored lunch at the City Café in Gustine. We will be offering 2 CEU's at the event. If it looks like the weather is going to be bad you might call the office to be sure the date stays the same.

This is an excellent opportunity to view many species and varieties of small grains side-by-side.

Pecan Production Program

The Early-Season Pecan Production Program will be held on Thursday, April 26th at the DeLeon City Auditorium in DeLeon. Registration for the program will begin at 9:30 and the program will kick off at 10:00 and run until 2:00 or so. Topics at this year's program will include: Depredation Hunts-Rules and Regulations, Hedging Pecan Trees, and Pecan Tree Pest Management. We will be offering 3 CEU's, 1 IPM, 1L&R and 1 general. This will be a very good pecan program, be sure to get it on your calendar.

Multi-County Sheep Program

This sheep program will be held on Thursday, May 10th at the Hamilton Commission Company in Hamilton. The program will begin at 8:00 and run until 3:00. Topics and speakers include: Best Times to Sell, Best Weights to Sell and Tails vs. No Tails- Derek Poe, Parasite and Predator Control-Dr. Ried Reddon, Forage and Grasses for Dorper Sheep-Dr. Larry Redmon, Economics of Dorper Sheep-Dr. Jason Johnson. There will be a \$10.00 registration fee. Lunch and 2 general CEU's will be provided.

Corn Progress Tour

The corn progress tour is tentatively set for Tuesday, May 15th. The tour gives everyone an opportunity to look at the corn silage variety trails and county corn progress in general. This is always a good opportunity to get out in the field and see how the crop is doing and to discuss any issues or challenges the season may be presenting to corn growers. We will have more details as we get closer to the date. Be sure to watch the paper for exact date, time and location.

Spring Dairy DOPA Training

This year the Spring DOPA Training for dairymen will be held on April 10, 2018 at the AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Stephenville. The program will consist of a morning and afternoon session. Registration for the morning session will begin at 9:30AM and the program will begin at 10:00AM. The afternoon session will begin at 1:00PM and end at 4:00PM. We have an excellent line up of presentations planned for the meeting, topics include: Herbicides & Potential Herbicide Residuals, Liability Issues from Herbicide Residuals & Working with Neighbors, Trucking Laws & Regulations Associated with Manure Hauling, Air Emissions and Potential Reporting Rules and Requirements, Lagoon Treatment & Management.

There will be 5 total DOPA credits offered, 2 DOPA credits for the morning session and 3 for the afternoon session. Lunch will be sponsored by our excellent local agriculture sponsors. This is going to be an excellent program, be sure to get it on your calendar.

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