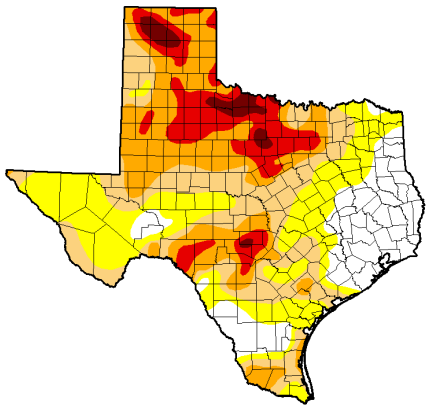
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

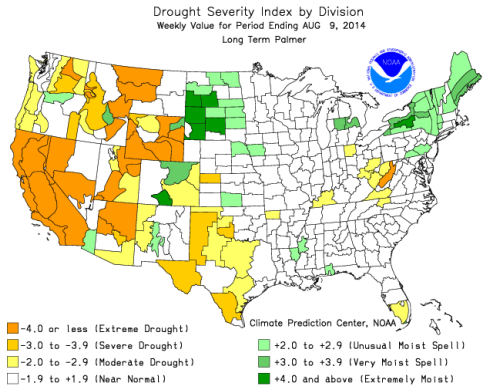
Plains Pest Management

AUGUST 15, 2014

General Status

We remain in 'crunch time' for the majority of our crop acres with pretty decent potential still out there. Irrigation systems are working hard as cotton rushes to cut-out, late sorghum boots, late corn pollenates, and earlier corn and sorghum grain out. This last week some of us received a dousing rain early in the week, some of us received a few tenths last weekend, and some of us just got the smell. For most dryland crops under those rain showers the timing was ideal, but more is needed to make those field's best potential. Those dryland fields that did not catch a rain are really starting to show it, particularly sorghum as it nears boot. A lot of pests are still coming up on our radar with more expected, but very few required treatment this last week.





Cotton

Our program cotton ranged in stage from 7 NAWF (nodes above white flower) to absolute cut-out this week. The majority of fields fell between 3.6 NAWF and 5.3 NAWF. As our fields move through this critical management time of 5 NAWF and absolute cut-out of 3.5 NAWF fruit retention remained high again. Most of our fields remained between 88 to 94% fruit retention as massive amounts of squares turn into bolls. This is higher percentage than we can normally expect for fields going through these stages as natural shed always takes its toll. Our fields also got a late and slow start and have fewer total fruiting sites than usual for this time of year so our actual maturing bolls making lint might be 'average' when we actually reach absolute cut-out as a region.

We did have a few fields that were exceptions to this higher than expected fruit retention for the stage. These fields fell to not yet bad 78%, 81%, and 82% as water availability became an issue in those fields and there just was not enough soil moisture to hold all of the dime sized bolls the plants were trying to set at the same time. Without a quick change in their moisture situation, those fields will continue to shed fruit it cannot support and finish up too soon and much shorter on yield than their potential had suggested all season long.

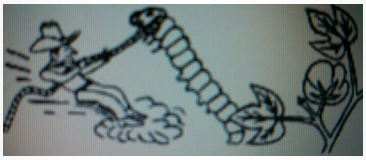
We can expect some natural drop as fields reach absolute cut-out. We just need to manage our water today so that we are not loosing more than we should. Ideally we would want manage our cotton to reach 5 NAWF by August 8th through the 10th and 3.5 NAWF by August 24th at the latest to set that last harvestable boll for an average season. All irrigations after that absolute cut-out point them become for boll fill and maintenance only.

Showing my son how to use a drop-cloth in cotton to find Lygus and fleahoppers, 2012

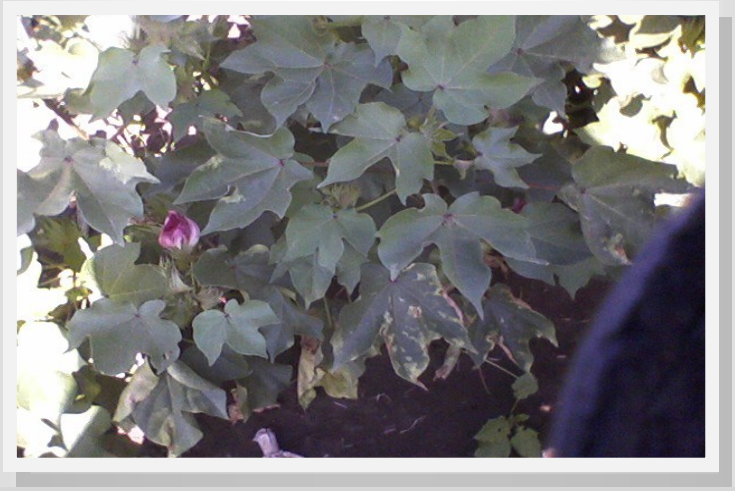
Our number one pest this week was Lygus, but they remained very spotty with no field reaching ET (economic threshold). There were a few fields that Lygus adults, disturbed and migrating from other habitats, moved through and caused an increase in fruit loss from 91% to 83% and 94% to 82% respectively. These Lygus did not stay in these cotton fields for long and the fruit loss stabilized quickly once they left. We will be watching these fields very carefully for Lygus nymphs over the next 10 days in case the adults have laid eggs in the cotton or until all of our harvestable bolls develop past Lygus damage, whichever comes first.

My suggested ET for Lygus is something of a sliding scale and always based upon potential fruit damage and loss. In fields at 4 to 9 NAWF and actively setting multiple bolls I prefer to use 1 Lygus per 2.5 row feet with an economic level of Lygus proven fruit damage or loss. Research has proven that Lygus do not cause boll drop on medium to larger bolls without multiple feeding wounds per boll and cannot feed upon maturing bolls whatsoever. Using this information, cotton fields already at or past absolute cut-out, 3.5 NAWF, and setting the last of its harvestable fruit and already shedding everything it cannot hold onto, a Lygus threshold of 1 – 1.5 Lygus per row foot with proven fruit damage and drop would be more appropriate.

The bollworms from the eggs we had picked up last week were nowhere to be found this week. Predator populations in our cotton remains good to excellent.



Verticillium wilt is showing in just about every cotton field by now. There is little to nothing that can be done for fields when symptoms show. Our best management is in preparations for the future to lessen vert's impact and reduce its future spore release. Management options include resistant variety selection and crop rotation.

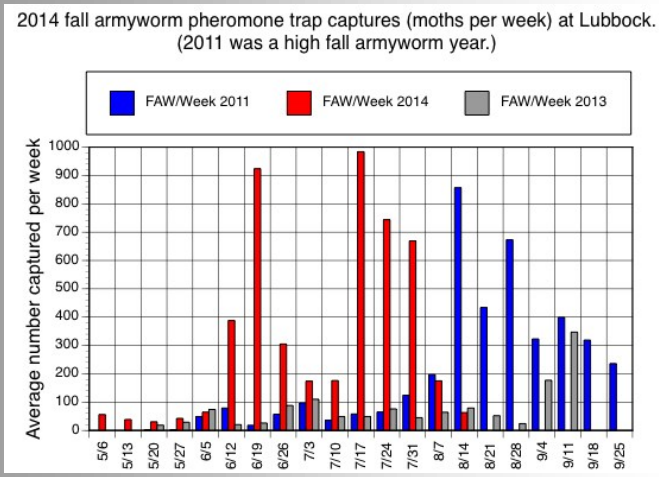


Early symptoms of Verticillium Wilt, western Swisher County 2012

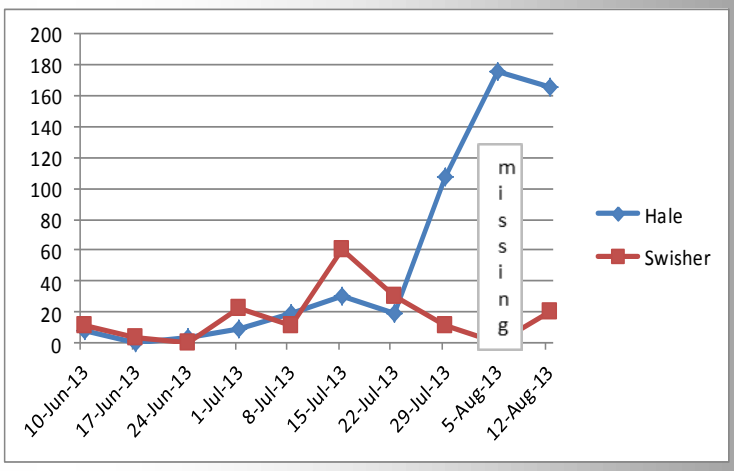
Corn & Sorghum

Our early corn ranges from dent to 10% starch line and our early sorghum ranges from early dough to dough. All of our early program corn was treated for spider mites during late July. Now the predators have eliminated them from all but the lowest leaves. Mites are still a concern in our early planted sorghum as several fields neared ET. It did take a little while but the key mite predators eventually found that the spider mites were in sorghum fields too. There are several of our program sorghum fields teetering about the ET line and could need to be treated if these predators slip even slightly. We are still not seeing any of the expected FAW (fall armyworms) in our headed and grain filling sorghum yet.

Just where those FAW are at this time is a slight mystery. Our numbers of larva in late sorghum this week are down and we are not picking any up in our late corn either. Most likely they are just about to emerge from pupation as moths and start their egg lay soon. We did pick up a few bollworms as headworms (max = 0.19/head) in our older sorghum this week. It remains difficult to find spider mites in our later planted corn.



FAW moth trap numbers– Lubbock



2014 Bollworm moth trap data

Our late corn ranges from VX to early dough. Bollworms, or the corn earworm if you prefer, are easy to find in these fields, some at a rate of 25 small worms per ear. Still they are not an economic concern as eventually there will eventually be only one worm of any size per ear through cannibalism. Our late sorghum ranged in stage from VX to 45% bloom. Most are peeking out the flag leaf to peeking out the head at early boot.

Our biggest concern for this upcoming week should be sorghum midge along with the fore mentioned lookout for FAW / headworms too. Our numbers for midge were spotty this week. We have several fields now in full bloom but did not find midge there. In some earlier fields that have gone into dough stage we found several hot pockets of midge. We found the midge on secondary heads and/or sucker heads that are normally too late to be of economic concern, even if totally lost. In these late blooming heads we could easily find 1 to 4 midge per heard. We did not treat any field in that situation as there just was not enough blooming heads still available to justify treatment.

When I evaluated where we were finding these 'odd' midge and where we were not I found some distinctions. Either there was earlier planted sorghum nearby (sometimes in field) or large amounts of seeded Johnson grass in the area. Where we did not find midge these two factors were missing from within horizontal eyeshot of the back of my pickup. All of this together indicates to me that the midge population built at a sub-economic level on the earlier blooms of sorghum and Johnson grass in those pockets and is ready to scatter out just in time to catch the majority of our late planted sorghum just as it starts blooming. From the size of the midge pockets we 'discovered' this week, I would estimate that 40 to 60% of our area sorghum that blooms in the next few days will be at serious risk of ET damage from sorghum midge while all of the earlier planted sorghum has escaped midge with only a grazing blow for the latest earlier fields. I recommend scouting daily for all sorghum in bloom this next week. The ET for sorghum midge should be near 1 midge per blooming head at our current grain price. At that point the midge will be causing enough damage to the grain to pay for chemical and aerial application but that ET level should be less for seed milo, the value of the seed contract depending.

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We're on the air…

"Tuesday's with Blayne" from 6:00—7:00 AM & from 12:30—1:00 PM on the 1090 Agri-Plex Report on 1090 AM KVOP-Plainview.

"IPM Wednesdays" from 1:00-2:30 PM on The Fox Talk 950 Ag Show. Fox Talk 950 AM - Lubbock.