TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Plains Pest Management News

AUGUST 2, 2013

General Status

Well folks, we're in crunch time. It's the time of year when hours matter as our main crops turn blooms into bolls and fill our grain. Getting off to a good start is always imperative, but for the fields that we have gotten here in good shape, the yields (and our annual income) will be set over the next three to four weeks. Crop management and inputs this month are key, especially in cotton. All of our crops remain highly variable in stage with quite a bit, mostly replanted acres, lagging behind.

This last week seen a few additional but spotty rain showers across Hale and Swisher Counties. Amounts rarely breached the half inch mark while many areas missed rain altogether and others withstood damaging hail. In either case, this last week has been 'muggy' and a better situation for overall crop development environment. Crop development looks good, even if quite a bit is late and varied.

Weeds

The battle with phenomenal weed pressure continues well into the growing season as we reach ever deeper into our increasingly expensive weed control bag. Most of us would like to be done with weed issues so that we could freely manage our crops for yield alone, but there have been too many weed escapes to ignore.

David Graf, CEA – Swisher, conducted a helpful squirt and see demonstration trial for the effectiveness of spot spraying surviving weeds in cotton recently. David compared glyphosate, banvel, fluroxypyr, paraquat, Liberty, and Kixor via hand sprayer to see what would perform the best in knocking down these surviving weeds. This demonstration plot is 1 ½ miles west of Claytonville, Texas on the south side of FM 145 for any who may want to see it for themselves. Be careful, the plot is small and easy to miss.

I took the opportunity to view the demonstration Wednesday. It appeared to me that if a herbicide killed the weeds, it killed cotton as well. Kixor (Sharpen) performed the best in weed kill, but desiccated the most cotton over the largest area. Paraquat and Ignite killed small weeds easily but the larger weeds had already begun to grow back from alternate growing points. Only nearby or splashed (Roundup Flex) cotton received damage with these two herbicides. The hormone herbicides twisted both weeds and cotton in the vicinity of the application site. Unfortunately, most of the large weeds were staying green and still making seed. Glyphosate had no impact whatsoever on Palmer or cotton that I could see.

Based upon what I seen from this demonstration, I may have a few suggestions if you are considering a spot spray. First, I do not suggest making additional glyphosate applications if weeds have already survived any over-the-top sprays. That might be the very definition of futility at this point. Next, if a producer has a GT/LL type cotton field with a few troublesome weeds (not patches) that producer might be able to get 80-85% of his surviving weeds by spot spraying a couple dozen or so rather than making an Ignite pass over the whole field. In the same situation for a RF field, kixor (Sharpen) might be a good spot treatment option. Do please note that Kixor will kill any cotton it is applied to as the label plainly states. This label means what it says. This might be a quick fix for a weed here and there, but not patches of weeds as I feel it would cause too much crop damage. Anywhere kixor is applied to cotton, there will be a hole in the field, but it would be a weed cleared hole. The hormone herbicides are an option, I do not think they are the best option.

Personally, I would like to see how Staple would perform in a spot treatment situation. It should not damage cotton even at high rates. While Staple has a rather long grass crop plant back restriction, this should not be a major factor in a spot spray scenario, except for those spots in the field. In fact, it could provide another layer of residual directly on the potentially dangerous patch of resistant weeds. In this scenario, I could see a mix of Staple and glyphosate, both at high rates, almost cleaning up patches of weed escapes. If a weed survives a drowning in glyphosate and Staple, then we can confirm ALS resistance too. I am yet to see this applied in field. As of today, iron is still working pretty well, if the weeds have been brought down before going to seed.

Cotton

Cotton is the least varied of our program crops, yet is so varied it remains difficult to describe our area's crop stage. We have no dry-land cotton in our program and only a small amount in the area, but what I have seen is at least 10 days from blooming. This week the bulk of our program cotton acres ranged between 6 and 8 NAWF with good yield potential if managed. The full range of our cotton stages were a thirsty 4.9 to a late 9.8 NAWF at first bloom. There are a handful of truly late fields, but nothing early. Most fields should have time to set bolls and quality for good returns. Fruit retention remains high, 87.6 – 96.9% unless induced by economic populations of insects. We expect natural fruit drop to increase soon as the 'loading' cotton plants decide just how much they will be able to hold on to.

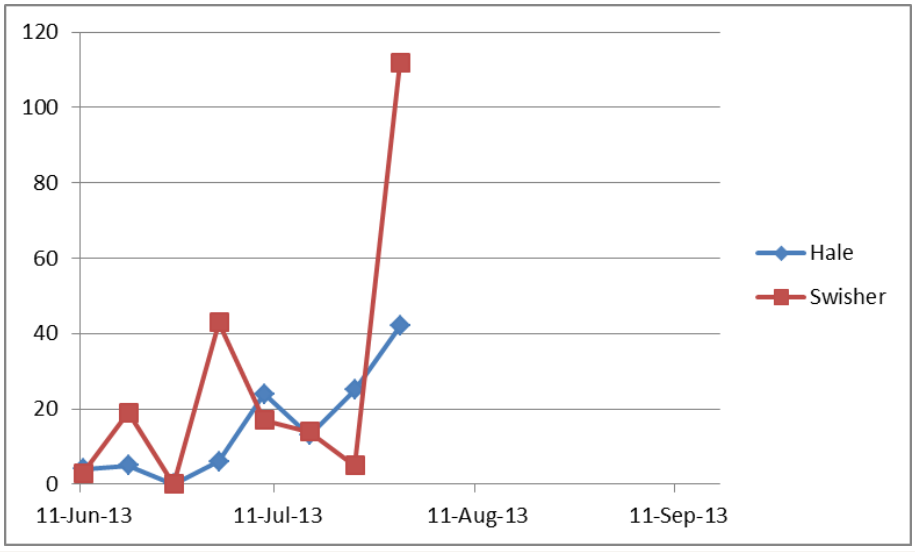
It has been my experience that in 7 out of 10 years we can expect the last square that has a chance to make before frost be put on the plant August 4th. This puts our last bloom to set into a harvestable boll around August 25th. Therefore, ideally, we should manage our cotton with water, load, PGR, heat, and insect considerations to reach 3.5 NAWF on August 26th. The ideal is hard to achieve, but at least it is a target. The main unknown about making a cotton crop this season, weeds and water aside, is just what the fall holds for us. If some of the old 'farmers tails' hold true about the first cold front of the season, we could see another early freeze this year.

Lygus:

Lygus have been a fairly common occurrence in our program fields thus far, but only reached economic threshold (ET) in a few Swisher County fields this week. These fields are lush compared to the surrounding area and were near alternate Lygus hosts. All Lygus found in these fields were young nymphs that caused the usual sharp increase in fruit drop associated with plant bug feeding. The fields with Lygus problems dropped to 78.2 and 79.5% fruit retention from 87.2 and 91.6% respectively last week. In most fields we are only finding 1 Lygus / 7 to 31 ft. and in several fields we had difficulty finding Lygus at all. We are even having trouble finding Lygus on those alternate host plants this week. The 'pocket' nature of the Lygus populations this season highlights the need for a solid crop scouting and consulting regiment.

Bollworms:

We are still expecting a large worm flight this month. We had a sharp increase in our moth catches this week, especially in Swisher. We would expect to be on the very front side of a large flight that could last weeks, cumulating in a large egg lay during the next full moon. We are still finding worms in our program corn at a rate of one worm per ear.



We probably need to start a careful watch for bollworm eggs, especially in not-BGII fields with little corn or sorghum to 'sink' worms into. The average 'trouble' date for bollworms in our area is August 20th. The ET for bollworms is 10,000 to 12,000 small and worms per acre, crop stage and value depending. We should never spray for eggs alone as many could prove to be sterile and predation can have a major impact upon egg populations.

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We're on the air…

"Tuesday's with Blayne"

6:00—7:00 AM & Agri-Plex Report from 12:30—1PM 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.

Corn

Corn continues to develop well. Our program fields ranged from V6 to early dent. The bulk of our earlier or planned corn fields are at milk stage and the bulk of our replanted corn is at V12. All fields have taken advantage of recent rains and environmental conditions.

Despite these conditions spider mites have increased drastically this week in most of our older corn. These mites have had a toe hold in these fields for some time. We have been watching a gradual decrease in important predators over the past few weeks and last week the mites had gained a good foot hold. This week the mites increased to a full camp compound, unless predator populations have stayed high. From the information I have, the problem seems to be developing west to east. I have reports of fields between Kress and Hart being treated for mites already and reports of fields needing to be treated west of Cotton Center. If this trend continues, most of our program fields will be at ET next week. I consider a good ET to be 50% mite coverage of the zero leaf with coverage below, movement above, and limited predator population. Mite destroyers and six spotted thrips are among the best spider mite predators.

There are some very good mite control products available that are very easy on predators. None of these products come with an optimal quick knock down but do carry what some would call sticker shock. I urge producers that find a need to treat for spider mites to not wait too long about deciding to treat and to use good rates. Higher rates of these newer products will help get a better knockdown. There are no products available that can catch, let alone control the mites if they are left to cover the plant.

Our younger corn fields look to be mostly mite free, but seem very attractive to fall army worms (FAW). Refuge areas and non-Bt fields have a healthy population of FAW feeding in the whorl. We need to watching these fields very closely for FAW as they move into tassel.

Sorghum

Our program sorghum ranges in stage from V8 to soft dough. We continue to find a few midge in several fields, but still sub-threshold. Infestation rates ranged from 0 to 0.2 midge per blooming heads. Due to the midge's life cycle, blooming sorghum needs to be checked daily for midge.

We are picking up some spider mites in area post-boot sorghum also. A few fields were nearing 25% leaf damage starting on the lower leaves, but populations were very spotty. We are not finding very many FAW in sorghum at this time.

Today Greg Cronholm, now consulting limited acres locally, reported very high numbers of FAW in area millet fields and a borderline population of headworms (bollworms) in one sorghum field.

Please call or come by if we can help,

Blayne