

AUGUST 9, 2013

General Status

Crops in Hale & Swisher remain all over the board this week. Generally, I feel we are in pretty good shape but everyone is looking to the fall. An early freeze, even by a few weeks, could be disastrous for our late corn and sorghum while the bulk of our cotton should be alright if managed correctly and we are timely with harvest aids. But let's not get ahead of ourselves. We remain in crunch time, especially for cotton, when hours count toward yield. We have late fields that need to be managed for maturity, fields that need to be focused on fruit production a bit, fields desperate for additional water, fields where weeds will not die, and some pests are starting to heat up.

Hale and Swisher received a touch more moisture as a front moved into the area late this week and dropped some very spotty and very brief downpours. Some very damaging and localized hail events caused some serious crop damage and stripping over a relatively small area. Most locations only received a cooling blast of air and a light show. The area plainly remains under drought conditions but it is the 'greenest' drought most can remember. We are still showing a lack of sub-soil moisture as most of the rain we received last month has already be utilized by our crops (and weeds).

Weeds

Unfortunately, I have no new silver bullet to share that will get rid of those escaped weeds that are proving the ability to survive everything except iron. That is a pill to swallow, especially when the use of an integrated approach increased area wide this season (as has our cost of control). I remain impressed by our integrated approach in our efforts and I maintain that without those solid efforts, there might not be a crop worth fighting for this season. I feel the weed pressure, and the resistant nature of those weeds, has been that severe. I continue to urge producers to not gamble on any weed that has survived over-the-top herbicide sprays. We need to attack those weeds with iron, and if the weed has seeded out, we must remove it from the field and destroy it. One other thing I know we have learned this year; multiple residual use and earliness are key to good weed control. I am not sure we will ever be able to kill any weed over 2 ft. tall with any herbicide ever again.

Gary Cross, CEA – Hale, is working on a field day at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Center at Halfway for some time in September. As Gary gets those details ironed out, we will pass the information along. One point of weed interest at the Halfway Field Day should be some of Dr. Wayne Keeling's and Dr. Pete Dotray's, (Texas A&M AgriLife weed specialists) weed / residual herbicide plots. I will be looking forward to seeing, hearing, and sharing information about field situations with most of the control options before us in one field. There we should be able to talk out what seemed to work, what worked best, and what did not work and get an eye on all of those situations together.

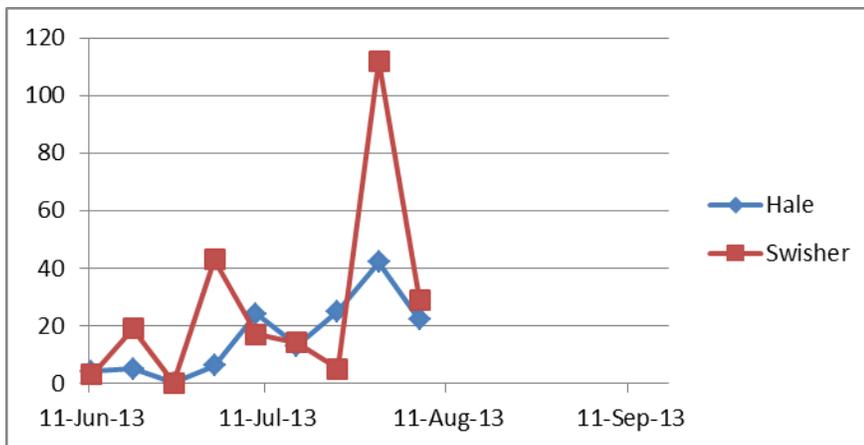
Cotton

Cotton is generally still setting bolls well with a very high fruit retention rate, unless infested with an ET (economic threshold) population of Lygus or under serious drought stress. Our fruit retention remained surprisingly high again ranging from 70.8 to 98.2% with most fields hanging in the upper 80's to lower 90's. Our program's fields ranged from 4.25 to 8.75 NAWF with most fields coming in at 5 to 7 NAWF this week. I do not feel any of these stages are truly late, but certainly nothing is early. We are yet to experience our typical peak bloom fruit shed. How bad that will be depends primarily upon water availability during peak bloom. Peak bloom, and peak water use, usually occurs around the 5 NAWF stage. As fields reach this point I generally suggest, if it is at all possible, increasing (or borrowing from your neighboring – system sharing crop) irrigation to help set as much fruit as possible. On the other hand, there are many cotton field situations this season where we are wrangling PGRs (plant growth regulators), and irrigation management with load considerations to focus a field and / or manage the field for maturity just to beat the final bloom date. We rather expected this situation with the late start our cotton had this season.

Cotton Pests:

For the second straight week we found a few cotton fields with Lygus at ET, both in Swisher. These fields were again lush and neighboring Lygus alternate habitats that were disturbed one to two weeks ago. This indicates a keen need to scout each field thoroughly. We are also starting to pick up on some 'lost' bollworms and eggs in our area cotton. We found bollworm eggs in a dozen fields and small worms in just three. The highest egg count was 10,875 from a Hale County field not near any corn or sorghum to 'sink' the worms into. Most other fields were running 1,000 to 1,500 eggs. The worm population never topped 1,800. Non BGII fields need to be scouted for bollworm infestations weekly.

After a short spike in bollworm moth catches, our weekly traps declined. We still expect a large moth flight this August.



Corn

Corn has been the focus of most of our pest 'excitement' this week as spider mites have made their rude appearance in our program fields. The mite problem appears to be limited to a field by field basis so far. My impression is that if the field has sufficient predators, mites have been under control, but if predators are lacking, the odds are that mites could be at ET or could be soon. Two of the best mite predators in corn are the six spotted thrips and mite destroyers.



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"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.*



Spider Mite Destroyer



A good workable ET for spider mites is 50% mite coverage of the zero leaf with coverage below, movement above, and a limited predator population. I currently estimate that 30% or the area corn that is now in milk to hard dough stage is now at or very near ET. Careful field scouting, with multiple sites checked with in a field, is needed to make any decision to treat for mites as their population will vary from site to site. I do urge producers to not let a borderline population of mites wait too long for treatment. All of our current products for spider mite control work pretty well, but they need to get out ahead of any serious populations. Coverage (5 GPA minimum) and the aid of beneficials are essential to achieving mite control.

Our program corn ranged from V8 to dent. The majority of our planned, or not replanted, corn fields range from late milk to hard dough, prime mite feeding stages. A few early planted fields were going into full dent, the first stage that can tolerate higher mite populations without yield loss. We are still finding FAW in our later planted corn, but only limited mite populations

I fielded a question about SWCB (southwestern corn borer) in conventional or refuge corn today. Gary Cross, CEA – Hale, and David Graf, CEA – Swisher, are both part of a region wide moth flight study under Dr. Eddie Bynum, District 1 Entomologist. They have been trapping SWCB, FAW (fall army worm), and WBCW (western bean cut worm). To date, David Graf has caught no SWCB and Gary Cross only a handful. We have also not found any SWCB egg masses nor noted any moths in any area corn, refuge or otherwise for the season. I certainly do not recommend adding a pyrethroid to any mite application just for the sake of covering the SWCB without confirming SWCB any in your field. In my opinion, this would only worsen your mite situation.

Sorghum

Our program sorghum ranged from V9 to dough, but very field fields are in bloom at this time. In the few fields we have blooming, we found no midge. We are finding several corn leaf aphids in dough stage fields with no economic impact. FAW counts have increased in whorl stage fields, but remained below ET with none found in any head stage fields. A few headworms (bollworms) have been found in early dough stage fields, but also well below ET.

Blayne