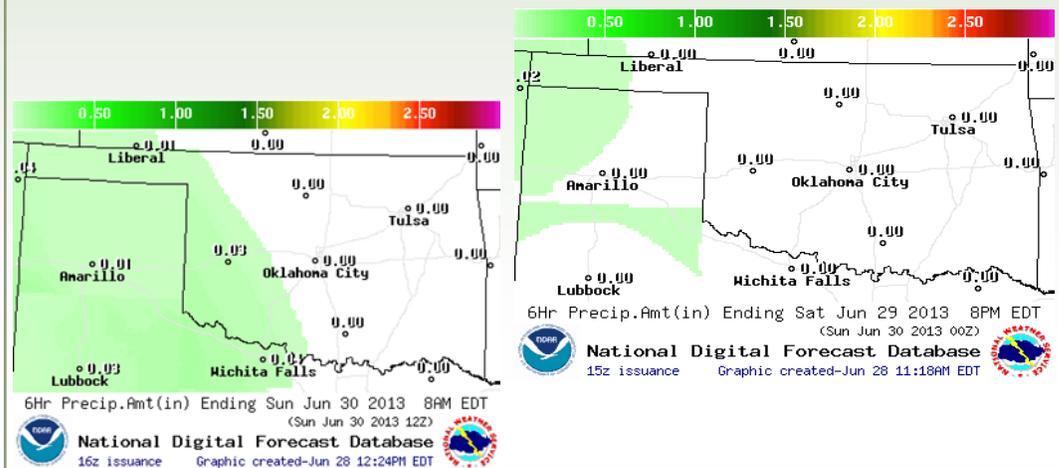


JUNE 28, 2013

## General Status

If there were any doubts that the area remained in a drought situation, the dry heat this last week quelled any argument. As water use up ticked with the thermometer, many area corn fields reached deep for soil moisture to compensate only to find the deep moisture already sapped from two and a half years of limited rainfall. Tired irrigation systems are again working hard to compensate as the pivot tracks are looking deep early again this year. I do not feel these stressed, pre-tasseling corn fields are experiencing serious economic problems yet, but the danger is at the doorstep, beating on the door hard. Corn, being our thirstiest crop grown, is showing stress signs much sooner than cotton or sorghum. Rain is back in the forecast for this weekend, but the predicted amounts do not look stellar. We remain hopeful for next week.



Many of the area rains received this month came with destructive hail and damaging winds. Ridiculously high winds coming in surprise but sustained gusts have likely claimed more acres of cotton than hail has. Speaking this morning with Barry Street, owner and manager of Street Community Gin in Claytonville, Barry stated, "I bet we have lost 30% of our customer's cotton to weather, only about 300 acres of that were due to hail. The fields with lots of cover have fared much better."

David Graf, CEA-Swisher, spoke with another area gin manager this week who estimated that their cotton acres would be down nearly 70% due to wind events and loss of acres to other crops. The gin manager also said that the estimated 30% that was left was doing quite well. Our program acres indicate a similar crop status but we did not lose nearly as many acres to those wind events but rather had fields and spots of fields set back. Those not hailed out in early June are recovering and / or doing quite well, but it has been a rough haul to get them to this point. There are a few cotton fields that have an outside chance of reaching 1<sup>st</sup> bloom by or near July 4<sup>th</sup>. We have even found a few pockets of dryland cotton in the area that look pretty good. These fields are very late and need a good, *gentle* rain soon. Replanting of lost cotton acres is almost complete. Sorghum and late corn look to be the most popular replant choices.

# Weeds

The area weed pressure remains constant, giving no one a break during drought conditions and taking advantage of even the slightest of rain events. Fresh flushes of weeds are doing all they can to test residual control and press over the top glyphosate applications. Area weed knockdown has improved drastically with higher dew points and producer vigilance. We are still finding those handfuls of weeds that come up through residual and survive glyphosate applications. These fields look much cleaner than recent years with the “Roundup failures” but some weeds are making it through. I urge consultants to make your producers aware of any weed situations, even slight ones, before these weeds have a chance to reproduce. I would also urge producers to attack these weeds by any and other control measures before they seed out.

# Cotton

With the high heat came some calmer days that has given much of the area cotton a respite from the winds and a chance to recover from any damage. Even the most damaged cotton has taken advantage of the respite and is developing better. Cotton that had escaped much of the damaging events seems to be jumping through its self.

Our scouted fields this week ranged from 2<sup>nd</sup> true leaf stage to nearly ½ grown squares. Fields at pinhead to match head squares exhibiting 3 to 6 squares per plant were much more common. Insect pressure remains very light.

## Thrips:

Thrips have become an afterthought for all but the latest cotton fields. The thrips seem to have found other, more preferred host plants. Even in our latest fields, we did not see any economic populations this week. Our highest thrips count came from northwestern Hale County with a population of 1.6 thrips per plant on a pinhead square stage field. Every field situation will be different and can change often. I recommend that we continue to check for thrips until these fields reach pinhead square stage. The economic threshold remains at 1 thrips per true leaf stage until we start seeing those pinhead squares.

## Fleahoppers:

Cotton comes under risk from fleahopper damage with the development of the first pinhead square. We began scouting for fleahoppers last week and to this date we have not found any economic populations. We began finding some spotty pressure and fleahopper nymphs just out from the egg about mid-week. This indicates to me a likelihood of future problems developing in pockets where fleahoppers are reproducing. Fleahoppers at this age are very hard to find as they are only about the size of a grain of sand.

Our highest population was in a northwestern Hale county field where fleahoppers had infested 10% of the cotton plant population that had experienced a 5% square drop. Our predator counts have also been pretty high so far and I would estimate that there is a moderate to good chance they may control some of the potential fleahopper issues for us. The economic threshold for fleahoppers is at 25 to 35% plant infestation with square drop considerations. For those of you making use of drop cloths, and do not know the plant population of the field being scouted, this translates into roughly 1 fleahopper per 1.5 to 2 ft. with the same square drop considerations.



Fleahopper

Adult



Fleahopper Nymph

## Lygus:

Many area producers and entomologist, myself included, have come to the conclusion that the Lygus complex is the most damaging insect pest for most season on our area cotton. Several area cotton fields are quickly nearing the dreaded 'Lygus season.'

There are multiple species of Lygus bugs that haunt our area crops, but all belong to the Lygus genus, giving them their lumped common name. Almost all of these species of Lygus share a pest status and exhibit many similar behavior patterns which thankfully allow us to generally speak about "the Lygus problem" without troubling producers too much about species identification. The prevalent species in our area vary slightly in color but are usually a pale green base color and about a quarter of an inch long. Lygus bugs can look similar to cotton fleahoppers at first glance, but they will be notably larger and often exhibit a distinct triangle or V prominently on their backs. The nymphs are more similar to cotton fleahopper nymphs when very young, but the Lygus nymphs will have five dark, distinct spots on their backs, while fleahoppers will not. Lygus are primarily attracted to wild succulent plants as well as alfalfa, clovers, potatoes or vetch, but will feed on cotton squares and bolls almost as readily.

In cotton, their feeding pattern is similar to fleahoppers, only potentially much worse as they are proven to cause damage to medium sized cotton bolls. Lygus are also capable of traveling distances with impunity. Lygus are generally larger and more robust than fleahoppers. They can cause square drop and blackened lesions or dents in bolls, as well as deformities within the bolls. These insects start moving into cotton around the time it is squaring, and will hang around for the rest of the growing season.

There are dozens of acceptable host plants Lygus can feed upon, but alfalfa seems to be a favorite. Even though Lygus adults can move regularly, they tend to stay in or near an abundant food source. However, if that food source is disturbed, Lygus adults have proven to move quickly and 'set up shop' in cotton, devastating yield potential remarkably fast. Cotton fields within three to five miles of any alfalfa field should be watched a little more cautiously with every alfalfa cutting. Fields adjacent to highway medians and ditches that contains large amounts of clover, etc. should also be on high alert when the medians are mowed as should producers with fields near weedy CRP fields that get bailed or cattle turned onto them.

The damage from heavy populations of adult Lygus alone can be quite serious, but it is the damage from high numbers of nymphs that is generally a larger concern. Once adult Lygus are forced to, or decide to, feed on a cotton field, they will generally stay in that field or nearby lending them to reproduce within the field. Once a more preferred host becomes available, the adults have the ability to leave the field at will, and often times, they do. This often mitigates the longevity of potential adult Lygus damage. The wingless nymphs have no such option; therefore, the nymphs have much more potential to damage cotton. Combined populations of Lygus adults and nymphs at economic populations can be disastrous.

With the potential for damage to Lygus so great, I recommend extreme vigilance when scouting for this pest. Scouting procedures are very similar to fleahopper and often make use of drop cloths and / or beat buckets and / or sweep nets. The most common utilized economic threshold for Lygus is 1 per 2.5 to 4 ft. with square drop, fruit loss, and fruiting stage considerations.

We have not seen any in the field yet, but quite a bit of the area's cotton is getting just the right size for them to be moving in. Area conditions are right for much of their most preferred host to be drying down, or otherwise disturbed, leaving our irrigated cotton as a very attractive food source for the Lygus. These small green bugs can reduce yield in cotton very quickly, so please keep an eye out for them!



225 Broadway, Suite 6  
Plainview, TX 79072

Tel: 806.291.5267

Fax: 806.291.5266

E-mail:

Blayne.Reed@ag.tamu.edu

*Blog:*

<http://halecountyipm.blogspot.com/>

**WEB**

<http://>

[hale.agrilife.org](http://hale.agrilife.org)

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*Fox Talk 950 Ag*

*Show. Fox Talk 950*

*AM - Lubbock.*



Adult  
Lygus



Lygus Nymphs at varying stages

## Corn and Sorghum

This week we found our first tasseling corn field of the season. Most fields are still two to three weeks away. We found very few corn or sorghum pests to speak of this week in field. We continue to find just a few spider mite colonies in both crops hanging on, but predators have almost completely cleaned them out. I do recommend we stay on top of the spider mite potential this season. Mites tend to thrive in hot and dry environmental conditions, much like what we have been experiencing this week and expect to continue. They also tend to increase in numbers in tasseling corn. Once area corn reaches tassel and sorghum boots, the potential and conditions still look favorable for a spider mite 'perfect storm.' I would refer readers to Dr. Ed Bynum's, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Entomologist – district 1, work and experience with spider mites in corn available firsthand through his newsletter, "Panhandle Pest Newsletter" and the Plant Management Network. We will be passing information along here as well as sharing what we will be seeing locally as needed.

Dr. Pat Porter, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Entomologists for district 2, began picking up large numbers of fall army worms (FAW) in his regional traps this last week. This could be an indication that we should start seeing larva activity in whorl stage corn and sorghum over the next few weeks. We remain watchful but as of this date, we have only found a few scattered FAW larva in a non-Bt corn refuge area.

Our bollworm traps recorded no moth activity for either Hale or Swisher County this week. Damage to the traps from weather that allowed moth escapes are likely to blame. The same situation developed for Gary Cross's, CEA-Hale, local FAW traps this week.

Please call or come by if we can help,

*Blayne*