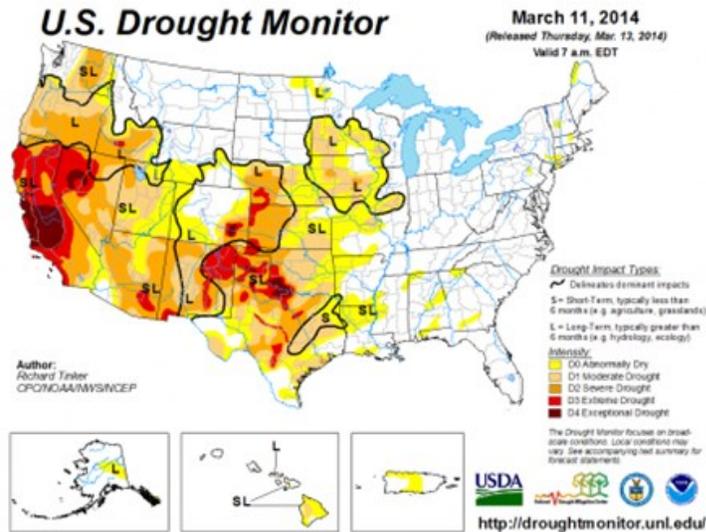


MARCH, 2014

## General Status

It's all about the water. It is a subject of conversation on just about every turn row, coffee shop, and grower meeting over the past meeting season. Without some abatement to the drought situation it seems difficult to find much excitement about our upcoming growing season. While many of us are familiarizing ourselves with the latest water conservation practices, it is an understatement to say it is difficult when there is no natural moisture to work with yet.



Hale & Swisher County did receive some light fall, winter moisture and even a drop this past weekend, and there is some limited deeper moisture as a result. I am finding the overall soil moisture very short, particularly in the upper six inches. Despite our hopes, the main weather events we have received this year has been cold dry winds that threaten to turn into hot dry winds soon. Preparation for the season continues, as should planning our IPM strategies for the year.

## Wheat

Due more to the drought than any other factor, I would estimate this season's wheat as a couple of weeks behind. The actual amount a field might be behind seems to depend upon the amount of water the field has had to work with. Most evaluating our wheat crop have noted that the fields look fairly rough, especially the late planted dryland. These fields have experienced considerable leaf burn and drought stress resulting from the environmental conditions they have been subjected to. I would remind those invested in this wheat crop that wheat can surprise with quick turnarounds if given a chance and something to drink. If there is to be a turnaround for these dryland fields the time is fleeting by rapidly. Any very late planted dryland is very far behind and faring poorly. Earlier planted dryland wheat had been able to take advantage of the fall moisture and established better, giving it a better chance at that turnaround and in many cases offered some, if not quickly fleeting, winter grazing. We need to make some hard decisions as to how much we can realistically invest in marginal wheat as spring rolls around.

Despite the drought there are some irrigated wheat fields that are in respectable shape with real yield potential. The owners of these wheat fields have sacrificed a fair amount of irrigation to keep it that way. In fields where soil moisture is available, jointing is well underway.

Wheat pests have been fairly quiet although we should keep an eye out as temperatures rise. Green Bugs, Russian Wheat Aphids, Oat Aphids, mites, and a few others should be making their annual appearance. So far, I have found their populations very light and fairly difficult to find. That can change rapidly. It is not known what impact the drought will have on the pest situation. The population could remain light due to moisture stress, but they could just as easily congregate heavily on the better irrigated fields. There is no substitute for a good scouting program for each field.

Winter weeds have been present for several weeks, most emerging shortly after our first winter moisture event. Mustard weed, London Rocket, maretail, and a few of the other usual suspects are sucking water as fast as they can and growing rapidly. In fields thus far untreated, the weeds are getting a fair amount of size to them. Whether a grower intends to take his wheat to harvest or be forced to use the wheat as cover, I strongly suggest controlling these weeds while they are small. Control of any weed seems tenuous if the weed has been allowed to establish and our winter weeds are no exception.

## Weeds

Many area producers now view weed control, glyphosate-resistant pigweeds to be specific, as our number one IPM problem for the area. Unfortunately, there has been no silver bullet development this offseason, and no one-shot cure for the weed dilemma. I would like to quote Dr. Peter Dotray about the issue, "While glyphosate resistance is a big problem, it is one that we have an answer for. We can, with the technology we have available today, make effective sprays and achieve control of glyphosate resistant pigweed and other troublesome weeds."

The renewed idea and use of pre-plant residual, rotation, mode of action alteration, and in-season residual are all common in the area's agricultural lexicon again. There might not be anything groundbreaking or "new" this season for our weed control battle and the release of some much anticipated technology is still at least a year out. For this season, most of us have discussed the systems approach to weed control and our recommendations until producers can recite them verbatim. And still, we have weed problems and expect more. There are two main points that I would like to drive home to producers today on the subject.

The first is residual incorporation. Regardless of what systems approach to weed control we choose, it has been proven by experiment and experience that poorly incorporated pre-plant herbicides lose levels of effectiveness if incorporated poorly or late. Producers must become knowledgeable with whichever residual path chosen, and make certain these herbicides are optimally incorporated. This does not necessarily mandate conventional tillage for all fields. But if we are utilizing tillage for incorporation, we need to make certain the herbicide is fully incorporated into the top two inches of the soil, the area where most weed seeds germinate. Likewise, in no-till scenarios, we must apply enough water to move our residual herbicides into the same two inch zone.

The second point I would like to stress is the necessity to control young weeds and not allowing them time to mature. Mature weeds are better prepared to 'resist' any herbicide treatment. The majority of weed problems the producers in our program experienced during the 2013 season resulted from missing small weeds early. In some cases, a percentage of weeds came through a pre-plant residual herbicide. This was the likely result of an unfamiliar residual herbicide application or poor incorporation, but the environmental conditions and weed pressure faced during 2013 cannot be ignored. Another factor is the timing of our first over-the-top (OVT) herbicide application in cotton. In the past our first OVT herbicide application could be made to sizeable weeds with good affects. This is no longer the case. I strongly suggest scouting fields for any

marginal wheat as spring rolls around.

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*We're on the air...*

*"Tuesday's with Blayne"*

The 1090 AgriPlex  
Report from 6 – 7 AM  
and 12:30 – 1 PM  
on 1090 AM –  
Plainview

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

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Please call or come by with any questions. Thanks,

*Blayne Reed*

*Workshop on pre-planting  
consideration on March 31st from  
8:30 till 11:30 a.m. at the Ollie Liner  
Center. Topics on grain, cotton,  
insects and planter settings.*

*2 CEU's*