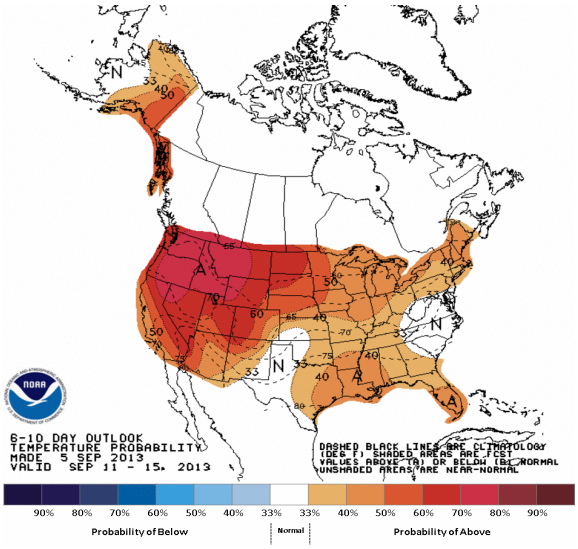
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Plains Pest Management News

SEPTEMBER 6, 2013

General Status

Temperatures this last week have been hot as computers, calculators, and abacus buzzed calculating the heat units accumulated on our later field crops. While most state the need for one more rain event finish most crops this year, especially any surviving dryland, the higher than normal temperatures have helped move late fields along in a good direction. A looming and unknown freeze date awaits our stage scattered crops that all must be managed to finish by then.



Source; NOAA – Autumn Freeze Data for Texas.

Freeze Dates	Earliest recorded	1 in 10 chance	2 in 10 chance	median	8 in 10 chance	9 in 10 chance	Latest recorded
Tulia	Sept. 27	Oct. 8	Oct. 15	Oct. 26	Nov. 5	Nov. 16	Nov. 22
Plainview	Oct. 7	Oct. 18	Oct. 22	Nov. 2	Nov. 10	Nov. 16	Dec. 7

The FAW (fall armyworm), bollworm, and a conglomeration of foliage feeding larva are making one more big push to reach ET (economic threshold) mostly in sorghum, but there could be pest excitement across the board if a few 'if' factors go the wrong way.

Cotton

For the most part, our program cotton has developed passed economic primary insect injury this week. Crop stage ranged from 5% open boll to just cut-out. There remains that handful of fields that were late, lush, and non-BGII that we need to keep one eye on for another few weeks while we try and finish them out in time. A couple of these fields, one in Hale and one in Swisher, reached ET for bollworms during the late worm push in the last seven days and required treatment. One of those fields also had a surprise cotton aphid population that we needed to account for since we were forced into treating the worms.

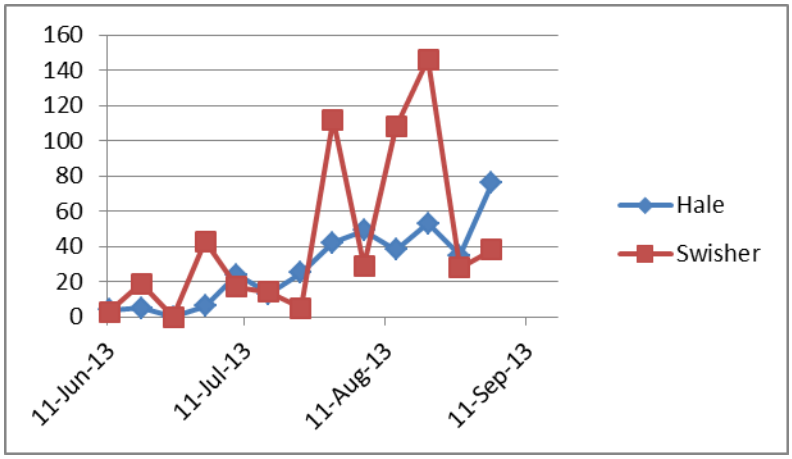
The decision to treat these fields this late rested upon a few hinging factors. One, the harvestable fruit was still 'tender' enough to be at risk and two, there was plenty of 'junk' fruit available to the small worms to establish a treatable worm population. In other fields where we experienced substantial egg lay had one of these two factors missing and the hatching worms could not establish a treatable population. Our general observations about bollworm egg lay remained true this week also; if there was a late corn field within sight, little to no bollworm eggs could be found in cotton. With cotton aphids jumping in as a possible late, secondary pest this year, and cotton bolls popping open, we may want to continue at least some scouting walkthroughs on most fields. The ET for aphids in non-open boll fields is 50 per leaf. Once the field has open bolls, the ET for aphids drops to 12 per leaf to help prevent sticky cotton.

Finishing out cotton fields with irrigation, or pulling late and lush fields in were our largest concerns in cotton this week.

Corn

I noted that harvest of the area's earliest corn has started. All of our program's normal planted corn passed the 25% starch down line and finally became unattractive to insect infestation. These fields only need to stand and dry down for harvest.

Our late planted corn ranged in stage from green silk to milk stage. Spider mite populations remained low in these fields. A few FAW did make it passed my scouting last week, but were not near ET. Most FAW seemed to be primarily attracted to our region's large number of late sorghum fields. Bollworms continue to sink into these late corn fields, but should not be an economic concern here and will eventually balance at one worm per ear.



2013 bollworm trap data

Sorghum

I have also noted that some area sorghum harvest has started also. Most of our program's early planted sorghum has also developed passed economic insect damage and only needs to dry down and await harvest also.

Our late planted sorghum has experienced more pest pressure this past week than all other crops have for the entire season. Last week we had bollworms, the main species that makes up our sorghum headworm complex, reach ET periodically. This week the FAW joined them in force. The bulk of our program's late sorghum ranges from just emerging from bloom to soft dough. These stages, occurring this late in the season, appear to be the FAW favorite host and they are proving it.
The ET (economic threshold) for any sorghum headworm is roughly the same without much regard to larva species. Literature regarding headworm control, etc. can be found in Managing Insect and Mite Pests of Texas Sorghum. However, species identification is crucial if your field does have an economic headworm problem. **Most of the labeled products for bollworm (i.e. corn earworm) will not control FAW larva.** In this case, we must change our recommended treatment to a product that has a chance to control both. Changing products does come with a higher sticker price, so we really need to make certain of your species present before applying any labeled product for headworms. Good photos to aid with larva identification between bollworm and FAW can be found in the July 5 edition of FOCUS.

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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.

I feel it is entirely possible that the majority, if not all, of our late sorghum fields will reach ET for headworms. I also have reports from area consultants that several Hale, Swisher, and Floyd late sorghum fields have and are reaching ET for midge, although none of our program fields have yet. I am also picking up some yellow sugar cane aphids and two spotted spider mites moving into these younger sorghum fields. This makes for quite an interesting array of pest foes to finish the season out with, and all factors need to be addressed to avoid flares, misses, and expense.

General Watch

After noting intense feeding upon pigweed by an unknown Lepidopteron species in the area, I enlisted the aid of Dr. Bynum, District 1 Entomologist, and subsequently Dr. Porter, District 2 Entomologist, in identification. This species turned out to likely be the garden webworms that Manda Anderson, EA – IPM Gains, had mentioned back in her July newsletter that has been spreading, in very high numbers, across the region. These garden webworms can currently be found locally by the thousands feasting upon Palmer, kochia, and even some Johnson grass, doing what our best efforts in weed control could not (unfortunately they are doing it after the weeds have seeded out). However, the garden webworms are not working alone. There is a healthy mix of yellow stripped armyworms, beet armyworms, various cutworms, multiple looper species alongside the webworms, and likely several others such as the smartweed borer.

So far I have only noted this conglomeration of foliage feeding caterpillars focused on these weed species and just a few field margins. Several of these species are known crop pests. It is possible, maybe even likely, that once the weeds have been laid to waist, these hungry caterpillars could move to our area crops, gardens, and yards. As veracious as these caterpillars are, they could devour and ruin a small garden, hedge, or certain trees in a matter of hours and a crop field in days. On the crop side; any BGII cotton should be safe as should any Bt corn. All sorghum and other non-Bt crops are at risk.

Garden Webworm

Yellow Stripped Armyworm

I suggest keeping an eye on these caterpillars. In the meantime, we are finally getting to see much of our weeds turn brown. Hopefully, that is all they will attack.

Please call or come by if I can help in any way,

Blayne