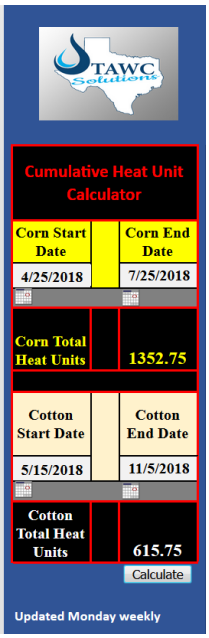
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

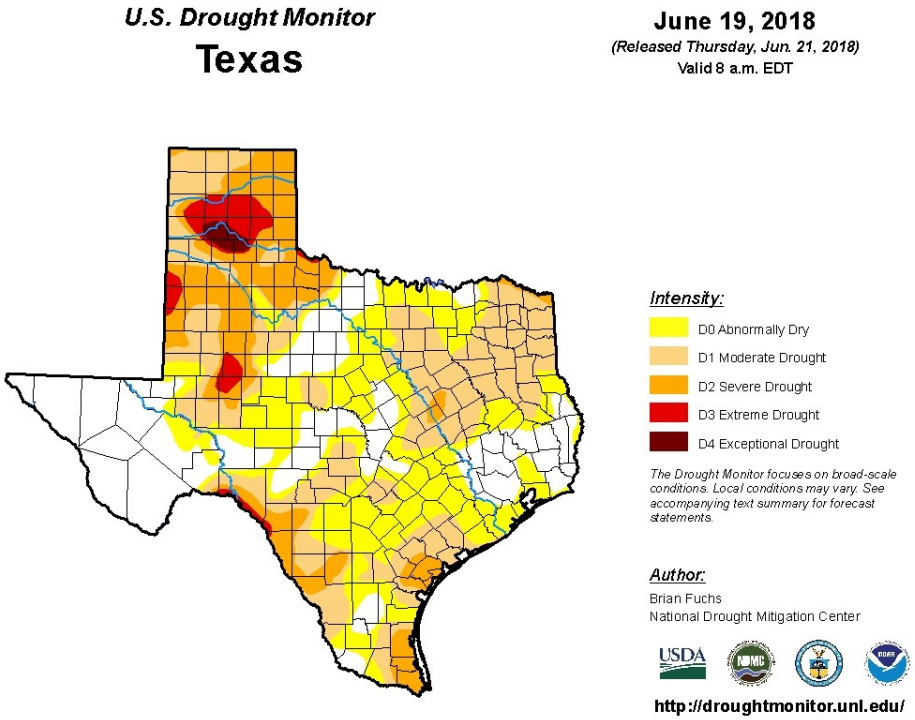
Plains Pest Management News

JUNE 22, 2018

General Status

After a hard-fought emergence battle, and some area rains, we are starting to see some green countryside in West Texas. It is a good to look across our irrigated fields and see green replacing brown as the dominant color for that spot. Generally speaking, it is a sign of some successes causing good vegetative growth. Most dryland fields remain brown as producers decide which direction to take them now that dryland cotton has mostly failed. There seems little consensus as to whether these fields will be layout or take the many chances on a replant crop. Meanwhile our 'greening' irrigated fields are growing out well. There seems little time for a deep relaxing sigh as weed pressure, and some pest pressure, continue to push us with treatments, scouting, and impactful decisions.





Cotton

Younger cotton still at risk for thrips damage.

This week our scouting program cotton ranged from cotyledon to 1/3 grown square. While we do have many irrigated fields with light plant populations, and we need to mindful of this for inputs for the remainder of the growing season, these fields are looking pretty good and growing well. Growth both above and below ground is rapid. Enough so that PGRs (plant growth regulators) are being considered and applied to many older fields as a precaution to excessive growth behind heavy irrigations to ensure stand establishment. We will talk more about PGRs in the future, but I would like to remind everyone that these are synthetic plant hormones that help keep newly developing plant cells, mostly destined to be on the stem, short. They do not in and of their application alone increase yield or plant efficiency. However, a shorter plant has the potential to be more efficient and possibly a higher yielder if wasteful growth is limited if may other factors are met during boll set. I would also like to remind everyone to never apply PGRs to cotton that is already drought stressed.

Thrips should only be a pest factor for those later fields that have not starting putting on squares yet. In general, the thrips population was harder to find this week with other preferred hosts greening up in our pastures and grain crop fields or fields having been treated successfully. The hot, dry conditions earlier this season likely added to limiting the area's thrips population as well making this year a below average one for thrips pressure. Still these later fields should be checked for thrips until squaring begins. Later fields certainly do not need to be delayed farther by thrips damage. The ET for thrips in cotton remains at 1 thrips / true leaf stage.

Southern Swisher field sporting match-head squares.

Northern Hale field developing well.

Photo showing some of the 'common,' early, but non-severe square drop we are seeing this week.

Our main pest focus this week has been on fleahoppers. We are starting to find some pockets of fleahoppers but have had nothing nearing an economic situation. Or highest populations this week reached about 18% infested plants with 12.9% fruit drop, much of which could be attributed to weather issues that have begun to rectify. Most fields had less than 5% infested plants with less than 2% square drop, if any were noted. The ET for fleahoppers is 35% infested plants with substantial fruit loss caused by the plant bugs. This 35% infestation level is always subjective and field depending, but perhaps even more so this year with lighter than usual stands in field. If the plants are large enough, or you are using the drop cloth method, this equates to about 1 fleahopper per 1.5-2 row feet regardless of plants per acre establishment. The 'substantial' square loss 'line is also something of a moving target depending upon plant stage. Starting from pinhead square, we do not want to lose more than 5% squares while for grown squares we do not need to lose more than 20%.

Strider generated heat map of a Hale field's fleahopper population this week. We will need to watch this field closely next week.

Weeds continue to keep the pressure on. Photo from northern Hale this week.

225 Broadway, Suite 6
Plainview, TX 79072

Tel: 806.291.5267
Fax: 806.291.5266
E-mail: Blayne.Reed@ag.tamu.edu

WEB

http://
hale.agrilife.org

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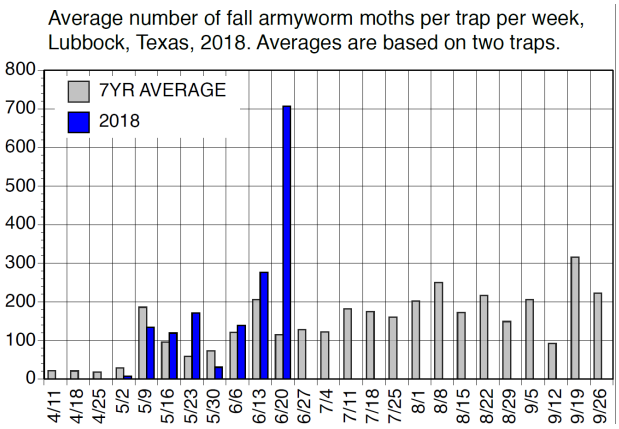
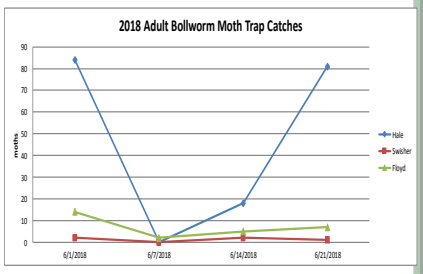
Corn & Sorghum

Getting a vegetative growth stage on

Our corn fields can be described as reaching a VX stage and just a few days to weeks to tassel. With tassel comes peak water use and many needs. This week this knowledge and preparing for the situation was the most pressing issue for our corn as we are still not seeing any pests of note. Our highest pest was a few appearing fall armyworms infesting only 0.02 % of the VX stage plants.

Our sorghum ranged from V1 to V8 with similar pest pressure with only the fall armyworms infesting about 0.9% of the whorls. This can and may change rapidly. Please not the fall armyworm moth captures Dr. Pat Porter is showing this week. We are starting to see some of these moths in the area and should expect them in any non Bt corn or sorghum soon. We will also need to watch our developing ears for these FAW closely over the next month or more.





Blayne Reed