

Blacklands IPM Newsletter

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Status

Seedling corn, sorghum, and some soybeans are up and in good stands around the county. Some low spots that held moisture, or got hit by hogs, have been replanted. Fields are still a little wet but high winds are helping to dry them out.

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Weather

Some places in Hill County received over 2.5" of rain this past week. Temperatures were mostly warm but with a few colder mornings Wednesday and Thursday. More rain is expected this weekend, just like clockwork this year. However, we will remain warm and windy so fields should be drying down rapidly.

Wheat

Most fields were treated for leaf rust a few weeks ago, so rust levels remain low and on lower leaves. Some fields were hit harder or did not receive timely sprays, and will suffer some losses. Stripe rust has popped up in just a few places due to the few cold nights, but will recede as we warm up again. Other diseases remain sparse.

Fall armyworms can now be spotted chewing on leaves and cutting some stems in a few fields. When you scout your fields, observe the leaves and stems for signs of chewing damage. An insecticide spray for armyworms may be justified when, on average, 4 medium to large worms can be found in one square foot. Take 10-20 square foot samples throughout the field to get a good estimate of the numbers. Armyworms spend the hot part of the day under the dead leaves on the soil surface, so be sure to comb back the bottom leaves while searching for them. A spray should be made before 2-3% of the stems have been clipped off. The best time to spray is early morning or evening, when the larvae are most active and feeding on the plants.



Fall armyworms usually pop up in fields after a rain, which makes good conditions for egg and larval survival. In their smaller stages, the larvae don't eat much and can be picked off by beneficial insects. However, when larvae get over a half inch long, they start to really chow down and can cause a lot of damage. (Photo by Pat Porter)

Aphids and other insect pests remain in low numbers, most likely due to our continued high populations of ladybugs in the fields.

Wheat



This wireworm was found in a wheat tiller. They are not considered pests of wheat, but many of our insect populations have an early start this year and are eating whatever they can find (i.e. wheat).



Hessian fly populations can also be found in some varieties.

Corn

Early season corn pests can reduce stands and cause wilting. We've had a warm, wet winter so it will be very important to scout fields for unusual damage. The excess rains and wet ground might cause the corn seed treatments to run out early.

Wireworms feeding on the young stalks or roots can cause stunting or wilting in seedling corn. Other pests that can cause wilting include white grubs and chinch bugs.

It could be that armyworms and corn earworms also infest corn earlier this year due to the weather.

Sorghum

Danielle Sekula in the Lower Rio Grande Valley has reported sugarcane aphids on sorghum plants 3 weeks earlier this year than ever before. The warm winter may have allowed more aphids to survive on the Johnsongrass. Early infestations in the Valley could lead to early infestations here, as aphids travel on the winds from the south. Thankfully our ladybug populations are pretty high and may be able to suppress aphids for a short time in the early season.

The seed treatments on sorghum may run out early as well, so scout regularly for seedling problems.