

Blacklands IPM Newsletter

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Status

First we were too wet, now we're too dry. Corn is water stressed and cotton planted last week needs a good rain to come up. Wheat is doing well and drying down quickly, harvest has already begun in some parts of the county.

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News and Articles

The 2017 Hill County Pasture Tour will be held Wednesday, May 10th and provide 3 CEUs. Call the office for more details.

According to the USDA, the [2017-18 wheat crop](#) may be the smallest ever on record.

AgriLife extension cotton and weed specialists released this article [detailing drift symptoms on cotton](#), and how it relates to yield. The yield losses from a drift event don't always directly relate to visual injury symptoms. The article includes a chart showing cotton stage, drift injury ratings, and subsequent yield losses that can be expected.

Wheat

The storm that blew through the southern part of the county dropped some large hail and could have damaged some wheat heads.

Most fields are nearing harvest, with heads bent down. Yields may depend on the control of rusts earlier in the season; several people report that this year's rust problems were the worst they have seen in the past 25 years.

No head diseases or late insect pests have been seen or reported. Many producers will begin to harvest next week, and some have already started.

I've seen a few fields that have patches of dead wheat (below). The wheat appears to have died in the middle of grain fill, which is when we had several weeks of heavy rain. These patches are in low spots, and the wheat most likely died from the roots being submerged in water for too long.



Corn

Corn is starting to hurt for rain. Some southern parts of the county got about 3/10 of an inch on Wednesday, but it isn't enough to make much of a difference. Most of the northern parts of the county were missed entirely by the rain. Unfortunately, there isn't any more in the forecast for the next 10 days.

Because of the excess moisture in the past month or so, the root systems are fairly shallow, even on older corn. They aren't deep enough to reach the moisture we still have farther down in the soil. On top of that, high winds continue to increase water loss from the leaves.

Leaves are starting to fold in (pictured below and very bottom), which is a physiological response of the corn plant to minimize water loss that occurs through transpiration.



Drought stress can also make the corn more susceptible to pest damage, such as from spider mites, and fungal pathogens, including the aflatoxin-producing mold aspergillus.

Currently, we are not in the stages of growth that are most sensitive to water stress, but impacts on yield may be a possibility if conditions persist.



Cotton

Most cotton planting was done last week, and could really use a good rain to help it come up in decent stands. Some seedling cotton could have been damaged by the hail that hit near Aquilla and West.

Milo

I was encouraged by a producer to share this story:

About a month ago, we were planting the sorghum variety trial with a local producer. Right next to the turn row was a large patch of Johnsongrass, which naturally we checked over for sugarcane aphid. Sure enough, there were several large colonies already established. Not really surprising, but it was the first colonies we had seen on Johnsongrass this year.

Last week I visited the field again to check on those colonies. I suspected that this field would be prime to get sugarcane aphids established early due to the Johnsongrass being only a few feet away from the first row.

There was not a single aphid to be found. I dug through the Johnsongrass and the sorghum alike for nearly twenty minutes and couldn't find anything. It appears the large natural enemy population (we had a boom early in the season due to bird cherry-oat aphids on the wheat) is still helping us out.

Perhaps if the ladybeetles, lacewings, and syrphid flies that were in the wheat could persist for a little longer (they've really run out of food for now in the crops), we may see some early control to prevent SCA infestations (pictured below) from gaining traction too quickly.

