

OCTOBER 9, 2020



Swisher field nearing harvest aid readiness this week

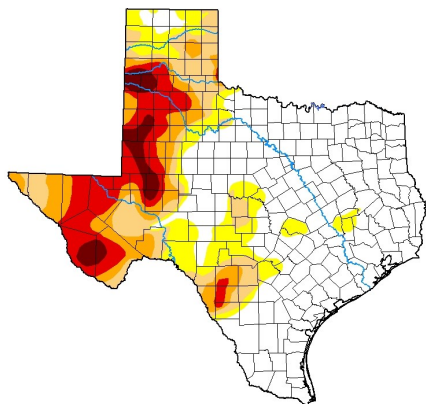
General Status

It has been a few weeks since our last newsletter. With little change or fresh pest issues to discuss in a waning season, beneficial newsletters are not likely, so they are not forced. The heat continues to accumulate, and the drought stretches. We have seen a limited amount of winter crops planted or emerged due to the lack of soil moisture. Even in irrigation systems, producers seem reluctant to invest large amounts of irrigation to establish winter crops without environmental support after this summer season. There are a few exceptions where established winter grazing is a must before a killing freeze, but even many of these producers are a bit reluctant to invest the expense of establishment on a large scale without moisture in the forecast. There is limited information about early season winter crop pests available today, but reports indicate it is taking inordinate amounts of irrigation to establish and actively grow these few fields so

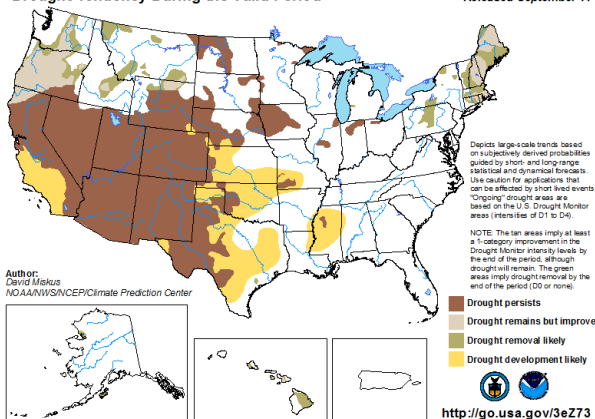
Plainview Heat Unit Calculator		
Cumulative Heat Unit Calculator		
Start Date	Corn	End Date
4/20/2020		10/9/2020
Total Heat Units		4273.40
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Start Date	Cotton	End Date
5/18/2020		10/23/2020
Total Heat Units		2404.65
Calculate		

far. Meanwhile our summer crops have continued development with grain field harvest steadily ongoing as fields reach maturity.

All but the latest fields are in the bin, but these latest are technically still at risk for a few pests. Cotton has continued development as expected and is right on pace for harvest to roll in earnest soon with a few strippers working select fields recently.



U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook
 Drought Tendency During the Valid Period
 Valid for September 17 - December 31, 2020
 Released September 17



Cotton

Our Plains Pest Management program cotton fields ranged from modules on the turn-row to a bit late 1.45 boll maturity level at 6.4 NACB (node above cracked boll) with 34.7% open. There are very few fields this late for us this summer and this latest one had a near late planting start, had a tough time establishing, has a borderline plant population, and was solidly irrigated by drip. These late fields have been enjoying this extended period of heat unit accumulation, for however long it lasts. Despite their lateness, I do not feel these particular are far enough behind to require a conditioning treatment for managed maturity, but if an area field is in desperately late shape, this would be an ideal time for such a treatment. A treatment now could open up the canopy and develop the last of the harvestable fruit with the last of the season's beneficial heat units without damaging harvestable fruit too soon.



On the 1—3 boll slice method for determining harvestable boll maturity, the top boll is a solid 2.5, while the bottom boll is a 1.45. Once bolls reach a 2.4, they are harvest aid ready.

Most of our fields are reaching harvest aid readiness this week with a 2.4 to 2.5 NACB uppermost harvestable boll maturity rating with the other standards for readiness similarly indicating that it is safe to apply harvest aids or nearly safe for a killing freeze. I estimate that within ten days from today, that 85% or more of our fields should have harvest aids on them. It is very tempting to 'let a freeze take' a good portion of our fields this year from an economic spending standpoint. From what I am noting in the field, this could very easily be the worse economic option in the long run. This is not necessarily from a boll maturity standpoint, but rather a leaf issue. The leaves on all of our fields are hardened off and difficult to deal with this season. If left to a freeze alone, these leaves could very easily stick and become an economic issue. In addition, a green stalk that is very hard to strip and create barky cotton is a very real possibility.

This same issue has influenced most of our harvest aid choices this year to get these fields where we need them. High volumes of ethephon, even 42 oz. per acre, are preparing the bolls well enough it is not knocking leaves off the way we normally expect. Many fields are not responding to adding the desiccating PPOs with the ethephon the way I would like either. It seems to be taking some level of defoliant with the ethephon to knock leaves off to a level we are used to seeing. Defoliant alone do not seem to condition the plant and stalk well enough without the inclusion of some type of desiccant in the mix too. While the one-shot harvest aid has been proven a myth seen only as often as unicorns, no one really wants to plan two harvest aid treatments for more than a handful of fields before working a killing freeze as the needed killing treatment. Three-way harvest aid mixes, ethephon with defoliant and a desiccant mixed, are more expensive but are the level of treatment it is taking to prepare our 2020 fields to the level of readiness that a two-treatment mix usually does. Hopefully we plan to only make this three-way mix treatment that still needs a second killing treatment later, to a handful of our most ready fields. As we get closer to a predictable freeze date, we hope a more palatable treatment can be settled upon that will still allow the field to be ready shortly behind a killing freeze. We are trying to make these decisions now on a field by field basis for the bulk of our program acres.

On the cotton pest front, we are only concerned about cotton aphids and stink bugs as fields mature out. We have been making quick spot checks for these pests as we quickly check fields for harvest aid readiness. I have not noted any cotton aphids in sometime and only spotted a few stink bugs in passing. These pests are in the area and should be scouted for until harvest aids are applied, or killing freeze occurs. Thresholds for cotton aphids while there are open bolls in the field is 12 aphids per leaf while stink bugs clustering on unopened harvestable bolls in numbers should initiate boll dissection to determine damage level per boll for an economic treatment level. Please reference our Texas A&M AgriLife Managing Cotton Insects for specific threshold recommendations and treatment options, <https://extensionentomology.tamu.edu/resources/management-guides/managing-cotton-insects-in-texas/>.

Corn & Sorghum

We have just a handful of late planted sorghum and corn still in the field and susceptible to pest issues. In our corn our fields are in full dent and starting to form starch lines. Banks grass mites remain active in field and they have been joined by a few two-spotted mites (not the new red mite). Combined, both of these mite species are well below ET with populations diminishing gradually. Thanks to lack of moisture, these late season fields have experienced much less disease issues than were



**Replanted southwestern Hale sorghum
this week.**



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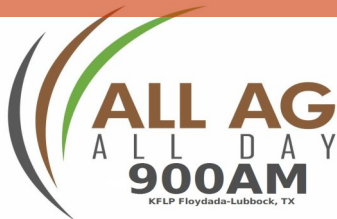
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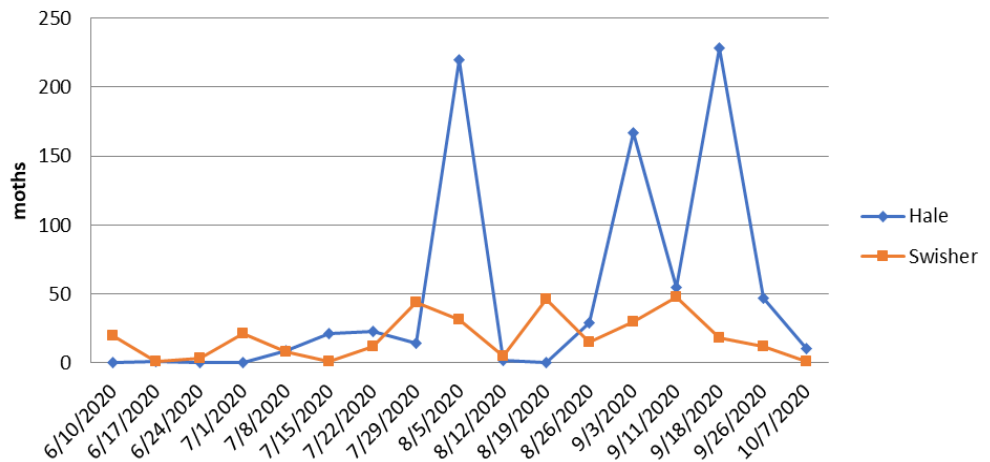
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expected or normal for corn this late. In our late sorghum fields, the sugarcane aphid is surviving well after crashing completely in our earlier planted fields. While these aphids have been a major concern, the population has hovered below ET with about 8-12% of our plants infested for several weeks now. We are not noting very many new plants becoming infested over this time and we remain hopeful a lagging beneficial population will eliminate the threat. We are watching our inputs carefully on these fields as a killing freeze date looms near, sometime soon and it is not known if some of the fields will be ready. A few weeks ago, we noted a high in the bollworm/headworm/earworm moth trap catch numbers. This high only resulting in a slight population blip noted in our late corn ears or sorghum heads with beneficials working well on the worms.

2020 Adult Bollworm Moth Trap Catches



The 2020 bollworm population was one of the lightest on record for the area.

Blayne Reed