Cotton planting has been in high gear the last couple of weeks. Field conditions are wet in some areas, particularly Scurry county, with recent rains this past weekend and early this week. Cotton in general is off to a good start, but some fields have been replanted. Wheat harvest has been delayed by the wet conditions. But, grain yields of fields that have been harvested are generally above average.

**Cotton Insects**

We have a few insects that could become a problem to our seedling cotton. **Thrips** and terminal leaf injury should be monitored as soon as cotton emerges and until cotton reaches the 5 to 7 true leaf stage. Thrips infest the underside of the leaves and the plant terminal. Feeding by thrips cause a silverying of the lower leaf surface and cause the leaves to curl upward. Using a knife or the end of a pencil to uncurl the leaves and to open the terminal can help in finding the adult and immature thrips. The **treatment threshold is when the average number of thrips counted per plant is equal to the number of true leaves present at the time of inspection**. But in all practicality, as Rick Minzenmayer, IPM extension agent for Runnels and Tom Green counties, put in his newsletter, “Treatment is recommended when slight leaf curling is observed and thrips are readily detected on plants”. Cotton that was treated with Cruiser® or Gaucho Grande® seed treatments should provide protection for 3 to 4 weeks. Scouts are finding a few thrips, but not at damaging levels, to date, in the scout fields. If a foliar treatment is required then Orthene® 90S @1.5-3.0 ozs./acre, Bidrin® 8E @ 2.5 ozs./acre, or Dimethoate 4 E @ 4-8 ozs./acre are recommended insecticides for thrips control. The timing of treatments are very important, because research has shown spraying foliar treatments after significant thrips damage has occurred does not, in general, result in increased yields.

Cotton aphids may become prevalent on seedling cotton. Their color can be from light yellow to dark
green to almost black and are found feeding on the underside of the leaves and in the plant terminal. Leaves may become shiny from honeydew and extensive feeding can cause leaves to turn downward. Insecticide applications may be needed if, on average, there are more than 50 aphids per leaf. Natural controls from weather and natural enemies (Lady Beetles, Lacewing larvae, etc.) may prevent aphid populations from causing much damage and may cause a sudden decline in aphid numbers.

The weedy conditions in fields, field margins, fence rows, pastures, and ditch banks have been ideal for the possible development of other occasional pests (different types of armyworms, saltmarsh caterpillars, cutworms, and grasshoppers). All of these insects can reduce plant stands within and along field borders. Typically, populations of these pests are not evenly spread across the field and may be found in “hot spots”. So, inspect all areas of the field and field margins. The “hairy worms” crawling across the roads are the saltmarsh caterpillars. Their preferred weed host is the pigweed, but will feed on many broadleaf weeds and crops. They may migrate into the field margins and begin defoliating seedling plants. Also, beet armyworms and yellowstriped armyworms could develop early. Cutworms may not be readily seen because they feed mainly at night and hide beneath the soil surface, mostly in the seed furrow, during daylight. The cutworms damage cotton by chewing (cutting) stems at or near the soil surface. Chewed plants will fall over and die which causes skips down the drill row. In areas like this, cutworms may be found at either end of the skip, near the next healthy plant just under the soil surface. Depending on the species, the larvae stage feed about two (2) to four (4) weeks. For all of these caterpillar pests, we do not have any economic thresholds established and control becomes a matter of judgment based on the number of skips and distance between skips in the field.

The weedy conditions may also contribute to buildups of both lubber (Jumbo) and other grasshopper species that can be destructive to plant stands. There are no established economic thresholds, but field observations indicate that lubber populations of one per 3 row feet in the field or two (2) per square yard in vegetation around the field may cause economic damage. And for other grasshoppers, treatments may be justified if there are twenty (20) or more grasshoppers per square yard in crop margins or 10 or more per 3 row feet in the field. Scouts have seen some grasshopper damage and I have heard of individuals making insecticide applications.
With all of the different cotton varieties and transgenic traits that are being planted now, it becomes important to keep track of which varieties are planted in each field. We have conventional varieties without any Bt or herbicide resistant traits, varieties with only herbicide resistant traits (Roundup Ready, Roundup Ready Flex, and Liberty Link), and varieties with a combination of Bt (Bollgard, Bollgard II, Widestrike) and herbicide resistant traits. Now would be a good time to map out or make a list of which varieties are planted in each field. This will help prevent spraying fields with the wrong herbicide and help keeping track of which fields to scout for lepidopteran pests.

**LOWER ROLLING PLAINS NEWSLETTER**

The 2007 edition of the newsletter will be written weekly from June 15 through September and as needed the rest of the year. The newsletter provides information about insects, weeds, diseases, and crop management suggestions for cotton and other major crops in Jones, Mitchell, Nolan, and Scurry counties. The newsletter is available for free if sent by e-mail, but due to increasing postage rates the newsletter by mail will cost $10.00 per year. Newsletters are, also, available at web sites for the Lower Rolling Plains IPM (http://lrpipm.tamu.edu), Texas Pest Management Association (http://www.tpma.org), and the Nolan County Extension office (http://nolan-co.tamu.edu). Please complete the enclosed subscription card and return to Ed Bynum, 100 E. Third St., Ste 305, Sweetwater, TX 79556.
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