Lower Rolling Plains
Pest Management News

July 31, 2008
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Current Situation

There has not been much change from last week. The hurricane “Dolly” has circled all the way around us and has done very little to bring good rains to our area. More and more of our fields are blooming, but fields are already blooming up to the top (less than 4 nodes above white flower). The 100°F plus temperatures and the dry conditions continue to stress our crops. These conditions are also stressing fields which are irrigated. The water demands are stretching the capacity of the pivot-systems and drip-systems. Fields which are at peak bloom are using from 0.3 to 0.4 inches of water per day. This amounts to 2.1 to 2.8 inches a week. Fields with limited irrigation may have trouble holding onto its fruit. The cotton plant will shed the 2nd and 3rd position fruit before it begins to shed the 1st position fruit. Under these severe conditions it may be impossible to irrigate all of your acreage without losing yield. You may want to consider cutting back on the number of acres being irrigated. This may require irrigating a portion of a pivot circle or drip stations. Producers on the High Plains have switched off nozzles on the 1st and 2nd towers (next to the pivot) to increase water volume to the rest of the towers during periods of extreme hot and dry conditions. The number of nozzles that can be turned off will depend on the pumping capacity and the flow rate of the nozzles along the pivot system.

Insect Pests

Cotton Bollworms

Bollworm moth numbers continue to be low in the moth traps (refer to graph) and egg laying has been very light (no more than 5 per 100 plants). No worms were found in any of the program fields scouted this week.

Cotton Fleahoppers

In general, cotton fleahopper numbers have been low this past week in program fields (0 to less than 10 per 100 terminals) and square sets remain high (> 80%). But, in a single field in Jones county, the IPM scout reported cotton fleahoppers numbering 75 per 100 terminals and a square set of 69%. Scouting pre-flower, squaring cotton for fleahoppers is still recommended. But, scouting is no longer needed in fields with blooming cotton.

Photo credit: Tim McCabe — USDA ARS

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Cotton Aphids

Cotton aphids have been found in an occasional field and infestations within these fields are sporadic. Associated with these aphid populations are an abundance of natural enemies (lady beetle larvae and adults). In one field, there was 1 to 4 lady beetle larvae on each plant infested with cotton aphids. Generally, aphid numbers will decline when there are 0.2 larvae or 0.3 lady beetles per foot of row. Overall, there is an abundance of other natural enemies (spiders, big-eyed bugs, minute pirate bugs, and lacewing larvae) in our fields. They must be eating each other since our pest numbers are low.

Fall Armyworms in Grain Sorghum

A producer came into the office holding a styrofoam cup. As he handed me the cup, he said, “Tell me that these are not fall armyworms.” Unfortunately, the worms in the cup were fall armyworms. We went to his field, located east of Sweetwater, to see the damage these worms were causing to the young whorl stage sorghum (12 to 18 inch tall plants). There was from 1 to 3 larvae per plant and the larvae were from < 1/4 inch to > 1 inch in length. The leaves and whorls were ragged from the larvae feeding and the field looked terrible. Even though the field looked bad, larval feeding was not causing damage to the growing point. We will be watching the field for further damage, but for most situations like this an insecticide treatment is not justified. Unless the chemical is applied through a pivot system, it is difficult for ground and aerial applications to get enough chemical to larvae in the whorl. Grain sorghum can be treated aerially or by ground if the field is irrigated with a pivot system. The field should be irrigated immediately to flush more of the chemical into the whorl. Anyway, I mentioned this because we have an abundance of fall armyworms in whorl stage grain sorghum.

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Grower Meetings

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<tr>
<td>Scurry County</td>
<td>Nolan County</td>
<td>Mitchell County</td>
<td>Jones County</td>
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<td>Farmers Coop Gin – E Hwy 180 8:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Central Rolling Plains Coop Gin 8:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Producers Coop Gin 8:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Farmers Coop Gin Anson</td>
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Cotton Bollworm Moth Traps

Lady Beetle Life Stages

Egg cluster

Larva

Pupae

Adult

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