

AgFax: Southeast Cotton

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Here is this week's **AgFax: Southeast Cotton**, sponsored by the Southeast field staff of **Nichino America**, maker of **ET**[®] herbicide/defoliant and **Artisan**[®] peanut fungicide.

We welcome your comments and suggestions.

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OVERVIEW

As we closed this week's issue Friday night it already had rained over parts of our coverage area earlier in the afternoon. A line of showers was curling across the region through central Alabama, a large part of Georgia and the eastern sides of North Carolina and South Carolina.

Not everybody got the rain they needed. The western side of the Tennessee Valley in north Alabama missed show-

ers Friday afternoon.

Earlier this week we received an email from Mitchell Roof, retired South Carolina Extension entomologist, reporting that thrips "are gathering forces in maturing grain fields and are beginning to move into fields of cotton — if they can find some plants that have emerged."

Roof said this appears to be a year that will favor thrips production.

"If you don't get the job done with an in-furrow insecticide, prepare to go foliar with Orthene or some other systemic insecticide when one or more adults are found per plant," he added. "Sprays will be most effective when applied to seedlings prior to unfolding of the second true leaf."

CROP REPORTS

Mike Donahoe, Santa Rosa County Extension

Leader, Milton, Fla.: "We're planting hot and heavy. Between 80% and 90% of our cotton has been planted. It's coming up. Most of it looks good. The cotton I've seen is cotyledon and first true leaf. Last weekend it rained, and most everybody got some. It rained 3 inches in Milton, and other locations caught 1-2 inches. Some fields were getting dry, so that allowed growers to jump in this week and finish their cotton."

Joel Faircloth, Virginia Extension Agronomist: "Right now it's too wet to get in the field. We've received 1 to 1.5 inches of rain over parts of our production areas in the last week, and we're supposed to get another 2-3 inches today (Friday). People will be wondering where all this rain is when we get into July."

"Our late April-planted cot-

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ton is still struggling to get out of the ground, but cotton planted after about May 4 is out and actually ahead of it. I checked some Monday, and it had too many skips. But it looks great today.

"Producers have done a lot of pecking, and it paid off. Plants are still being challenged by moisture and cool conditions. They're moving slowly, so it's going to be critical to jump on thrips and make that first Orthene application on seedlings. Otherwise, we're looking at potential for delayed maturity. We're already delayed 2 weeks, maybe more, and we don't need anything else to slow down the crop.

"One thing I've noticed: even though it took 3 weeks to get cotton out of the ground, weeds have not been impacted. They're up, so in a lot of cases we need to be making that Roundup application with the Orthene. For some reason, very little of the Liberty Link seed made it to Virginia this year.

"Heat units are low. Folks haven't seen them this low since the late 1990s. For one period running up to May 18, we only had 92 this year. That's half or less the accumulation we had during that same period in the last 5 years.

"We had heat unit accumulations similar to this spring's in both 1998 and 1999, and those crops turned out okay. But the problem is that we grew more short-season varieties then. With good heat units since 2000, more of the longer-maturing varieties

have crept back into the portfolio. This year we're going to have to manage again for earliness. People who've started growing cotton since 2000 have no experience with that."

Dale Monks, Alabama Extension Cotton Specialist: "We're almost finished with planting and should be able to wrap things up early next week. Our main problem this season has been cold weather. North Alabama has had a lot of lows in the 30s and 40s, and it's been unseasonably cool in the rest of the state, too. April in central Alabama was really wet. Over a couple of weeks we got 12-14 inches of rain. Now we're dry in central Alabama. We need a good rain and may get it today (Friday).

"The most advanced cotton I've seen has been at 1-2 true leaves. Most fields I've been in had a good stand. Part of our delay also was due to delays with corn planting when we had so much rain in late March and early April. Overall, we're probably 2 weeks later on cotton planting than we typically expect."

Keith Edmisten, North Carolina Extension Cotton Specialist: "I am getting quite a few questions regarding stand health and replanting. We are close to the end of the planting period that we can normally count on maturing a crop. For most areas and producers, I would like to see any planting or replanting finished this week.

"There seems to be a lot of concern about the health of cotyledons. Remember: cotyledons are sort of like a booster to get the plant going and will normally wither and fall off. In less than optimum conditions this process happens more quickly.

"The 'battery' power from the cotyledons has been used up helping the plants survive and develop under these conditions. Pay more attention to the health of the new true leaf and the roots when making replanting decisions."

Charlie Burmester, Extension Cotton Agronomist, Belle Mina, Ala.: "Central and eastern sections of north Alabama got pretty good rains today (Friday) but the western end of the valley received hardly any. Some people in that part of the state need a rain to get a stand. The eastern side needed it, too.

"Some spraying has started for thrips, especially on older cotton that was planted a month or more ago. We're finding damage. With this hot, dry weather, a little aphid is showing up, and we're also seeing spider mites in some fields. We really don't want to find mites on early cotton. They once were a mid-season and late-season pest, but they've increasingly become an early problem, as well.

"Corn is looking rough, too. I'm in the western side of the valley right now, and corn could definitely use a rain."