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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.

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OVERVIEW

Aphids are still building in places. The fungus is knocking down populations in south Georgia, as we reported last week, but it's not a factor yet in most of our coverage area.

At closing Friday night we checked the Cotton Aphid Fungus Sampling Service web site and found no reports in the Southeast of early or full-blown epizootics. The following states had at least one confirmed fungus sample:

Alabama: a trace of fungus turned up in Lee County.

Georgia: fungus was confirmed in fields in 4 counties: Mitchell, Tift, Terrell, and Macon.

North Carolina: one confirmed sample in Cumberland County.

South Carolina: three fields in

Hampton County and one in Bamberg County.

The next shoe to drop has more to do with the weather than insects.

Hurricane Danny is expected to make landfall sometime Sunday. On Friday night it was battering Cuba.

The predicted path at this point was still a bit fuzzy, but the projected route generally has Danny touching the coast somewhere between Pensacola, Fla., and Mobile, Ala.

CROP REPORTS

John Burleson, NC Ag Service, Inc., Swan Quarter, N.C.: "We're seeing some aphids around. That's been the biggest thing in the last couple of weeks. This week, though, they really busted out, and several growers had to spray. We were trying to let beneficials take care of them but could only wait so long. The crop is late, anyway, and doesn't need anything else holding it back.

"We're starting to make Pix applications on a regular basis. Cotton has begun growing pretty aggressively in places. We're just now getting consistent temperatures in the 90s, and the soil is wet. We're receiving 2-3

inches of rain regularly. A lot of these rains are popping up in the afternoons. The ground already is saturated, so cotton is water stressed. Everybody is doing their direct spraying, cleaning up weeds where they can."

Ron Smith, Alabama Extension Entomologist (hot line, 800-458-3738): "Not much is happening in central and southern Alabama except that aphids are building. We've sent samples off. One was a zero, while the other showed 4% fungus, so we don't have any real crashes yet. Plantbugs have not developed in any big way. We've seen some worm activity in the last 10-14 days. It's real spotted, but a few conventional fields did sustain economic damage."

Barry L. Freeman, Extension Entomologist, Belle Mina, Ala.: "Farmers are making a big push to clean up the crop and apply growth regulators. We're seeing retention drop a little in places. Also, we're still battling spider mites. There are a few aphids in spots, but nothing widespread, and no treatments have been

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made, as far as I know. An egg and a worm is showing up here and there. It's nothing alarming but slightly more than we normally see at this time.

"We're in pretty good shape in terms of moisture. The last tropical storm mainly went up the eastern side of Alabama. The heart of the valley has been living off hit-and-miss showers, and most people are in pretty good shape. We're 2 weeks behind. Normally, these rains would be putting money in our pockets, but cotton is just starting to bloom. In 2-3 weeks we'll really need the rain. But every rain we've gotten has helped add a few more bushels to the corn crop."

Phillip Roberts, Extension Entomologist, Tifton, Ga. (hot line, 800-851-2847): "Only about 25% of our cotton is blooming, but we're hearing about stinkbugs in prebloom and squaring cotton. We really don't consider them a big pest on squaring cotton, but they can affect yields if they start feeding on bolls that are just a few days old. When sampling bolls during the first 2 weeks of bloom, closely monitor these small bolls.

"Typically, we don't sample bolls smaller than a quarter. But the boll will shed if it sustains damage at 3-5 days of age. When you see them falling off after that, they are full of jelly. I don't know how widespread this is, but 2 consultants called about it, and they're 75 miles apart. We at least need to be watching for this once cotton starts blooming. Normally, our first treatment for stinkbugs is in the third week of bloom, but this year we may find cases where there's a need for attention when cotton first starts blooming.

"Aphids are still lingering in a few fields but are crashing in a number of areas. They've cleaned up pretty good south of Tifton. But people in other parts of the state are asking when we can expect them to die. The fungus is out there, and I'd be hesitant to treat any aphids right now.

"Overall, we're in good shape for moisture. There still are areas where it's too wet to work. We're just wait-

ing now to see what (Hurricane) Dennis does."

Ames Herbert, Virginia Extension Entomologist (sripmc.org/virginia): "Not much has changed in the last week in terms of insects in cotton. Many fields still have spotty populations of aphids and mites. We have noted a definite pattern in the aphid pressure, with the highest populations on plants that were damaged earlier by thrips or other stress factors. We are seeing a gradual increase in the number of aphid mummies and in lady beetle populations. We are also seeing an increase in the number of lady beetle eggs. Those are the small clusters of tiny yellow spindle-shaped eggs on undersides of cotton leaves.

"Mite populations are still active, but high humidity and rainfall are slowing them down. We are just now seeing light levels of plantbug and stinkbug activity in cotton."

Bae Lamastus, Lamastus Ag Service, Jay, Fla.: "We've treated selected fields for plantbugs and are seeing some aphid populations building in general, but we haven't seen any yet that we would treat. Our cotton ranges from match head square to the second week of bloom."

Joel Faircloth, Virginia Extension Agronomist: "Rain came through last night (Thursday) from tropical storm Cindy, but it mostly went around our cotton production area. Our crop is about 7-10 days from blooming. There may be blooms out there, but I haven't seen any on the station or in any growers' fields.

"We're certainly behind from last year but probably not that far behind the 5-10 year average. Cotton is really starting to move with the heat and moisture, and it's picking up the nitrogen. Compared to a week ago, it looks like an entirely different crop. Folks are looking heavily at plant growth regulator treatments if they haven't made them already."

Jack S. Bachelier, North Carolina Extension Entomologist: "With good to excessive moisture in much of the eastern part of the state, spider mites have decreased significantly. In other areas, some cotton fields continue to be treated. The status of the mites in the coming week will probably depend upon rainfall. In areas that continue to be hot and dry, check for increasing mite levels. Spray only in the event of a widespread mite population and the beginning of lower leaf defoliation. Do not spray if a hand lens reveals the presence of the parasitic fungus or if rainfall is predicted.

"Plant bugs are now present in some fields, probably more so in areas with good moisture. Between now and until about a week after blooming begins, upper square retention should be monitored. With our generally late, lush crop, plants will probably be able to compensate less than usual for fruit loss. Consider revising the threshold downward from the standard 8 per 100 sweeps to 6 or 7, particularly if squaring starts on nodes 7 to 9.

"Several producers and consultants have noted stinkbugs in cotton, in one case 4-5 adults per 25 sweeps. High levels are generally being found again on field corn. This may point toward at least a moderate stinkbug year."

MOTH TRAP COUNTS*

	H'land	E'cam
	7/1-7	7/2-7
CEW	2.1	4.8
TBW	3.0	5.8
FAW	0.0	0.8
BAW	2.3	2.8
LCSB	6.1	na

* Average per night

Locations: **Headland, Ala.**, Wiregrass REC (Ron Weeks, Ext. Entomologist); **Santa Rosa County, Fla.** (Mike Donahoe, Ext. Leader); **Escambia County, Fla.** (John Curtis, Entomologist, Bayer CropScience).

Insects: CEW, corn earworm; TBW, tobacco budworm; FAW, fall armyworm; BAW, beet armyworm; LCB, lesser corn-stalk borer.