

AgFax: Midsouth Cotton

Introduction:

Here is this year's first issue *AgFax: Midsouth Cotton*. If you also want to receive our weekly rice or soybean reports, fax a request to: 601-992-3503. AgFax is available by e-mail, too. To switch to the electronic edition, send a request to: owen@agfax.com.

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Crop Conditions:

Too much rain or not enough. That, combined with cloudy conditions and persistent winds, has gotten the season off to a rugged start in many areas. Thrips pressure also is a problem on a wide basis as at-planting treatments wear off in some cases or have not been effective in certain cases due to weather conditions.

Insect Reports:

Ralph Bagwell, Louisiana Extension Entomologist, Winnsboro, La.: "We've seen a smattering of just about every insect you could name for this time of the season. A few thrips are out there and cut-

worms have been a problem in a few locations. We're also finding large numbers of the black or burrowing bug, primarily in reduced tillage fields, but we don't know if it's a problem yet. I'm suppose to check one field where it might be having an effect, but that's been the only one that's come to my attention, so far. Thrips have been treated in quite a few places, especially where there were no at-planting insecticides. But we're also getting to a time when at-planting treatments are wearing out. We're starting eradication treatments next week, so some situations with thrips will be covered by that. We're 95%-plus planted."

Mark Tackett, Terral Agri Service, Oak Grove, La.: "Between 6% and 8% of our cotton will be replanted, mainly in spots. Thrips are extremely heavy in everything except the cotton because we used systemics. Our early cotton is going to the fifth leaf stage. Wind has been a problem in terms of getting materials out and avoiding drift. We've been through periods where we shut down our sprayers, even to the point that we didn't apply atrazine on corn."

Gus Lorenz, Arkansas Extension IPM Specialist: "Between the cold, wet weather and strong wind, this is one of the worst looking starts in a long time. Cotton coming up has looked like death warmed over. Because plants aren't growing, roots haven't been taking up systemics, and some farmers have had to come over the top for thrips moving out of wheat and hammering the cotton. Gaucho in a lot of cases isn't holding up, either. There are a lot of disease problems across the state with some stand loss. Wheat across the state produced a uniform, widespread armyworm infestation. Cutworms have taken out some corn and cotton stands. Beanleaf beetles also are pressuring some soybeans. If this is any indicator of what the season holds, it could be a mess."

Tucker Miller, Ind. Consultant, Drew, Miss.: "Our cotton is 90% up with some at the second and third leaf and also with a lot of wind and sand damage. We're losing some cotton to this where it's been cut and dehydrated. The insect pressure isn't that bad this week. Last week and the week before,

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cutworms were bad, and we made treatments. It mainly was in stale seedbed cotton after burndown. Thrips are our main focus now. If we got a good treatment under it, it's holding. If not, we're spraying. With the cotton so beaten up anyway, we may have to spray quite a bit where thrips are jumping on weak seedlings. With this wind, we're still trying to get our Roundup out on Roundup Ready cotton. We're still in the window, but if it rains this weekend we could end up with a lot of 4- and 5-leaf cotton and be pushed to finish spraying."

Bob Griffin, Griffin Ag Consulting, Jonesboro, Ark.: "Between Jonesboro and Pine Bluff, I haven't seen anything that I'd call good looking cotton. We've been treating some thrips, but this cloudy weather has got to be a big factor, too. Some of my fields have got 10" of rain in 10 days. But I've also got fields that had 3" of rain in the same period, and they look just as bad. Where we're treating for thrips, it's definitely in fields where nothing was put out at planting. But we also have fields that had seed or at-planting treatments and are being sprayed for thrips. Cutworms were a problem, too, where we didn't apply anything at planting and had vegetation. We've had experiences where we put out pyrethroids at sufficient rates at planting but we had so much vegetation that treatments were needed after planting. I've got cotton that looks the same today (Friday) as it did 10 to 14 days ago, and none of mine has more than two leaves. It seems like we've had 20 mph winds for the last 40 days, too. I've still got good hopes for most of my fields, but it hasn't been a fun year so far."

Joe Townsend, Ind. Consultant,

Coahoma, Miss.: "Probably half my cotton is out of the ground, and 100% of my April cotton has been treated for thrips, regardless of whether it was treated at planting. At-planting treatments are wearing off quickly. In one 700-acre field, I found one thrips per 20 plants Tuesday, but that jumped to one per one plant by Thursday. A storm last Friday night sandblasted a huge acreage of cotton. We're still in the middle of replanting, and 10% to 15% will be replanted. Cutworms tried to eat the cotton as it came up. Seedling disease also is extremely bad this year. The wind has delayed Roundup treatments on Roundup Ready cotton to the point that some people growing seed under contract are pushed to make required treatments. Growers staying up all night waiting for the wind to die down so they can spray. The rain has kept our preemergence herbicides working as well as I've ever seen."

Jack McDaniel, Technical Services Director, Agro Distributors, Oak Ridge, La.: "We're in pretty good shape with 90% planted in N. Louisiana. Some spotty replanting is necessary due to the weather. We've been having above-average cutworm pressure. We've had to treat some fields that had a pyrethroid behind the planter, and a few were retreated. I don't know if this is an indication about what the season will be like, but I'm kind of holding my breath right now. Boll weevil traps put out by the eradication program have been pretty heavy the last couple of weeks, and everyone is anticipating the first pinhead treatments in Louisiana next week."

Blake Layton, Mississippi Extension Entomologist: "Thrips are the main focus right now. The dry,

warm and windy conditions have been ideal for thrips to move out of alternate hosts as they dry up. The other part of that is the fact that the wind and sandblasting can often be confused for thrips injury. If there's damage but not a lot of thrips, we need to closely consider whether a treatment is needed."

Craig Massey, Area IPM Specialist, Brownsville, Tenn.: "A lot of our cotton is still being planted. Earlier fields are experiencing heavy thrips pressure, and heavy rains probably worked against us. We had sheets of rain that probably pushed a lot of Temik below the root zone. We're dealing with a very diverse thrips population. We're finding more western and eastern thrips than ever before. Normally, we mainly contend with tobacco thrips. OPs are being applied. As wheat dries down, we could see more thrips. A few people have cutworms, too, and are banding pyrethroids over the top and in some cases tankmixing with Roundup. A few aphids are showing up on seedling cotton, and beneficials are lightly moving into the fields. This could be a challenging year due to the warm winter. It's going to be a season for intense scouting."

David Skinner, Ind. Consultant, Starkville, Miss.: "We've been treating thrips. At-planting treatments haven't been working. The Disyston may take more water than we've had. Temik held out for a while, but the cotton is no longer growing due to dry conditions, so it's not taking up the material. All my Delta cotton is up and growing. In the hills, a lot of no-till cotton has been planted in anticipation of rain, but we've got a lot of 5' and 10' skips where moisture ran out earlier."