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AgFax: Midsouth Cotton

June 12, 2001

Plant bugs are the big concern through much of our coverage area this week. Most locations received at least some rain last week. Herbicide work is going full blast as many growers try to make up for weather delays. The following reports were made Monday afternoon and today.

Crop Reports:

Steve Schutz, Ind. Consultant, Coushatta, La.: "We got 4-5" of rain and up to 9" in places. It scalded some cotton, but most fields dried out okay. We've had a big plant bug problem and couldn't spray for a week or more because of the rain. We're considering 2 treatments back-to-back 10 days apart. We'll probably go with Dimethoate, then switch to Orthene right before bloom. We're finding some worm eggs. We're consistently finding stinkbugs and also getting a lot of square shed that I think is due to plant bugs and cloudy weather. But we're also losing some sizable ones, and that might be due to stinkbugs. We're finding stinkbugs in cotton more than corn, and that includes our early sweet corn, which normally picks up the insect first. We

started with 8 oz. of Pix instead of the usual 4-6 oz. rate and will go to 12 oz. on the second round instead of 8 oz."

Reynold Minsky, Ind. Consultant, Lake Providence, La.: "Cotton looks beautiful. I don't know how it could look any better. Plant bugs are awfully high in most fields. We've treated an average of twice with Orthene and some Bidrin. Some aphids are out already. We put a little Centric on a band for plantbugs and aphids on non-Bt cotton to go a little easier at this stage on beneficials. Worms were running as high as 30% on non-Bt early in the week. Eggs are averaging into the 20s. They're budworms, we know, because they're not surviving on Bt. We've had a heavy flight over the last week, and we're treating refugia with Tracer plus Orthene or Steward. We're finding stinkbugs but not heavy enough to treat by themselves. We've got 2-3 blooms on our oldest plants."

Mike Sartor, Ind. Consultant, Sartor's Ag Consulting, Clinton, Miss.: "Cotton is fruiting well and has plenty of moisture now. We're spraying for plant bugs quite readily, especially around corn. In 100 sweeps, we're picking up as many as 12-25. We're also finding a few aphids on in-

dividual plants in some fields. Colonies are just beginning. You can really tell where rain delayed us from making plant bug treatments last week. No blooms yet, but cotton is at 10-12 nodes, and we expect to see first blooms next week. We've gotten 1" to 4" of rain lately and needed it. I'm picking up adult stinkbugs, greens mostly, especially near corn. Treatments for plant bugs are picking them up. Normally, we don't see stinkbugs until July and into August. Among the plant bugs, we're picking up some identified as rapid plant bugs."

Allen McKnight, Delta Ag Consulting, Greenville, Miss.: "We've hit pretty much all of our cotton for plant bugs in the last few days. They were getting tough. In the south Delta, we've had rain after rain and have had to do everything by air. Our biggest cotton is at 10-12 nodes. We need dry weather from Miss. Hwy. 12 south. We got 2-3" there last week. There still are a few thrips on smaller cotton but not at rampant levels. Plant bugs have been running 8-12% and up to 24% in spots. We've mainly been applying Bidrin."

Gus Lorenz, Arkansas Extension IPM Specialist: "We've got a bad bud-

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worm outbreak in south Ark., and a large part of the conventional cotton probably will be treated this week. There's also a cotton fleahopper outbreak in NE Ark. They're as thick as one per plant. Folks are treating in a big way, mainly with Orthene and Bidrin. It seems partly related to where weeds in no-till fields and on edges were sprayed with Roundup, especially where cutleaf evening primrose was heavy. Some traps are still catching high levels of beet armyworms in places where they were heavy last week. Saltmarsh caterpillars are evident in SE Ark., and a lot of egg masses are reported. Plant bugs are being treated in about 30% of the fields in non eradication areas. Cotton is growing great."

Bill Brooks, Crockett Farmers Co-op, Alamo, Tenn.: "I just came out of a field (Tuesday morning) that had almost a threshold of plant bugs and also have been in a 70-acre field at threshold. But this is a scattered situation. They don't seem to be in every field, but they are heavy where I am finding them. We're still battling thrips on cotton that had a hard time coming up after it was planted in middle and late May. Eradication sprayings started on some fields yesterday, I understand, where traps were turning up enough to trigger treatment. We got 1-1.5" of rain over the last week. Cotton is growing good, and it'll be time for Pix soon."

Ralph Bagwell, Louisiana Extension Entomologist, Winnsboro, La.: "Our main concern right now is tarnished plant bugs in some fields. Rainfall last week may have knocked some off. As of yesterday and today (Tuesday) we aren't finding the number of adults we had been, but we're still seeing immatures, and we anticipate adult numbers to come up again. Spraying has been underway since the rain broke late last week. We're also seeing squares coming off plants in a way that indicates it's mostly due to weather. Loss has been uniform across fields and gen-

erally across the state. We've had blooms now since the first week of June. Aphids are here and there and started building late last week, maybe due to plant bug sprays. We've been getting a continuous egg lay in non-Bt cotton for 10-14 days, but most attention right now is on plant bug control."

Roger Carter, Agricultural Management Services, Clayton, La.: "Rainfall last week ranged from 1" to 3.5" to 4". Rain tended to be heaviest where we already had ample moisture. One area that hadn't seen rain in 60 days did pick up 2". We're overrun with plant bugs. They don't want to slack up on us. We've shifted chemistry after control wasn't acceptable on our first treatments. Worms are coming into conventional cotton treated early for plant bugs. In the majority of acres they're running 10% worms in the terminals, though we've got a few hundred acres with 100% eggs and 50% worms in terminals. We don't have blooms to any extent and are letting them graze this week while we focus on plant bugs and cleaning up weeds. We're also seeing lots of brown stinkbugs in cotton."

Wade Worley, Ind. Consultant, Sumner, Miss.: "Plant bugs are our main focus. We're treating by air because rains delayed herbicide work, and ground rigs are tied up with weeds. Just about every acre has either been treated for plant bugs or is scheduled for spraying this week. In Leflore County we sprayed some of our older cotton for tobacco budworms. We're also dealing with thrips in some of our young cotton. Rainfall last week averaged 3". We had been dry, which encouraged some good root growth, but plants had pretty much exhausted moisture. With the rain, they've really started growing again, and we'll start planning Pix treatments with some plant bug sprays."

Craig Massey, Area IPM Specialist, Brownsville, Tenn.: "Maybe 10-15% of our cotton is still in the thrips stage after it got held back by too much

water or stressed by herbicides. We've documented now that 47% of the mix is western flower thrips in south Hardeman County. It's a tough one to control, and only Monitor and Orthene are recommended, and even with the higher rates you still can't expect 100% control. Some people have gone out with lighter rates of Orthene or Bidrin or other products and didn't get the job done. Plant bugs are starting to pick up. Up until now they've mainly been holding in wild hosts, but they're starting to increase in older cotton. They're mainly tarnished plant bugs. Some pinhead sprays have already been made where they're heavy in isolated areas. The main focus right now is cleaning up weeds. A lot of post-directed sprays are going out. Some fields that didn't have anything under them are getting woolly, and it's going to take a high dollar to clean them up. We're finding low percentages of bollworms and a few eggs. Grasshoppers remain active in some areas."

Claude Bonner, Ind. Consultant, Cotton Specialists of Ark, Inc., N. Little Rock, Ark.: "Plant bugs are pretty tough right now, probably the most severe situation we've seen in 5-6 years. It's pretty widespread, and we're treating quite a few fields. There's a little flurry of budworms and bollworms right now but not to the point that we're concerned. Some traps had high numbers Monday. We're trying to clean up weeds. Layby has started on a few fields. If we had caught one more rain we would have been out of luck making Roundup treatments on time. Plant growth regulators are beginning to go out, and fertilizer is being applied in some fields. Cotton has a pretty good fruit set and 10-12 nodes. It's moving along a little ahead of schedule for us. This looks like a fairly early crop for us."