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AgFax: Midsouth Cotton

June 5, 2001

Much of our coverage area picked up rain over the last week, with some areas reporting 3" to 5" of accumulation. There remain some dry areas, but not as many as 2 weeks ago. Cloudy, cooler conditions have delayed some stand development. A little blooming has started in Louisiana.

Plant bugs are being treated in a number of places as cotton begins squaring. *Heliothis* eggs are turning up, as well. More than one of our sources this week noted that this could be a tough worm year.

The following reports were made late Monday and Tuesday.

Crop Reports:

Craig Massey, Area IPM Specialist, Brownsville, Tenn.: "We got from .5" up to 1.5" of rain in places yesterday (Monday) and a lot of areas accumulated up to 5" lately. Rain has still been spotty, with some fields getting just a sprinkle. We sure needed rain, but now we need sunshine. The rain has delayed Roundup work, and we've got some 5th leaf cotton that has yet to receive its first application. Be-

tween 30% and 40% of the cotton probably hasn't received the first treatment, so far. They're calling for more rain this afternoon and tomorrow. Growers are asking what to do, and I'm telling them if they can't treat this borderline cotton by Friday to forget going over the top. The majority of out cotton is at 4th and 5th leaf. We've got thrips, and I suspect they're western flower thrips. Some treatments are going on. They're showing up on no-till cotton. So are treatable populations of false chinchbugs and grasshoppers. It hasn't been a good year, insect-wise, in no-till cotton. A few yellowstriped armyworms are present in cotton, too. We're finding a few pinhead squares on 5th and 6th leaf cotton. Seedling disease has been fairly widespread, with a lot of wet weather blight (*Ascochyta*), especially where cotton on sandy ground got hit by southwestern wind."

(Note: Craig Massey and Mel Newman, Tenn. Extension plant pathologist, have supplied additional info on wet weather blight along with photos. We have posted all this on our web site at: <http://agfax.com/midsouth/blight>.)

Jon Tate, Ind. Consultant, Indianola, Miss.: "We probably will have some cotton blooming as early as next week and most of it blooming by June 25. We're getting plant bugs here and there, nothing general yet. We ran our first egg test kit today and it tested out 100% tobacco budworm. They're running 10% to 20% in some isolated fields but mostly are in the 1% to 3% range. In fields in the Holly Ridge area they're running 10%. At Lake Washington we were finding them in the 10% to 20% range, but that's all Bt cotton there. Last week in some traps there were a lot of bollworm moths but we can't confirm any bollworm eggs. We're finding eggs in stems and other places where you don't normally think of finding budworm eggs with this generation. We usually get a little egg lay around June 1, but it's normally not enough to test. We had trouble earlier with a few acres of saltmarsh caterpillars and are finding some yellowstriped armyworms."

Bert Falkner, Ind. Consultant, Land Service, Aberdeen, Miss.: "It's soaking wet in our area. It

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seems like we're catching up on all the rainfall we've missed the last couple of years. We've got cotton from cotyledon to 9th node, and it's fruiting well. Plant bugs are heavy, and we're treating them pretty hard right now, mainly with 1 pound of Orthene to 3 acres. Where we can get by with just treating the borders, that's what we're doing. We've sprayed more different kinds of pests so far than I can ever remember for this time of year. We've had trouble in both conventional and no-till fields with things like cutworms and grasshoppers. Despite the rain, we're in pretty good shape on Roundup treatments. About 80% of our acreage has received at least one spray so far, and that's all some growers planned on doing this year. I'm picking up 1% to 6% *Heliothis* eggs and finding a few yellowstriped armyworms."

Chuck Farr, Mid-South Ag Consultants, Crawfordsville, Ark.: "We're spraying a few later fields for thrips, but there's not much going on with insects. We're having more trouble controlling weeds. It's raining now (late Monday afternoon), and it's the fourth or fifth rain in the last 14 days. We're struggling just to get one over-the-top Roundup treatment on some of our Roundup Ready cotton. It's been too wet or too windy to cover everything. We had a storm Sunday that brought .1" to 3" of rain, and hail has really beaten up the cotton in places. Two weeks ago the cotton looked great, but rain and cool, cloudy weather have worked against us. Sunshine and some days with 90-degree weather, though, would help turn things around pretty quickly. Given a choice, we're still in good shape compared to how it might be. I keep reminding my farmers that you can't make a good crop when it turns too dry but you still can harvest a decent yield when things are wet and

weedy."

Lee Rogers, Rogers Entomological Service, Steele, Mo.: "We've got some thrips building a little heavier, and we'll have to treat several fields. We also will have to deal with fleahoppers and plant bugs in some of our older cotton. Where fields were planted in April and cotton came up, it looks good, but mid-May cotton is just sitting there. We were begging for rain a couple of weeks ago, then started getting it -- along with cloudy and cool conditions. A lot of the late planted cotton looks sick. The wheat is turning now, so thrips could start pressuring cotton more. Hot weather and sunshine right now would help us outgrow some of that. Traps are turning up very few boll weevils."

John Raymond Bassie, Ind. Consultant, Bassie's Agri Service, Cleveland, Miss.: "Because of the rain we've had, cotton is growing — and growing up. Morningglories are a big problem at the moment, and I'm past the point on most fields that I can spray overhead. We're using Caparol and MSMA and are considering adding Cobra in the tankmix. In older cotton we're treating for plant bugs. Thrips aren't a problem, even in a lot of cotton that didn't have a systemic at planting. Boll weevils are almost nonexistent. One eradication field man in northeast Mississippi told me he checked 728 traps and only found 2 weevils."

Grady Coburn, Consultant, Pest Management Enterprises, Cheneyville, La.: "It started raining yesterday (Monday) and we expect more today and Wednesday. We needed it, and most areas have received 1" so far. There are a few plant bugs in some of the older cotton. Thrips are just about behind us now. We're beginning to pick up stinkbugs in older cotton but haven't treated yet. We're seeing a

general but not treatable number of *Heliothis* eggs, mainly in refugia cotton. Our youngest cotton is at 5th node and oldest at 10 to 12 nodes. One consultant yesterday found a bloom. So far, fruit set has been pretty good except where we've had persistent plant bugs."

Ralph Bagwell, Louisiana Extension Entomologist, Winnsboro, La.: "In general, plant bugs are getting worse everytime I look. One consultant joked that they're getting so bad they've started eating creosote posts. For the most part, cotton is just getting to a point that plant bugs are a concern, and the general rains we got this week may help bring out alternate hosts. Treatments mainly are along edges and adjacent to overwintering sites. There's a general egg lay. In most fields you can find a few. Most traps would indicate it's bollworm but the egg lay characteristics might indicate they're budworms. Some younger cotton still has false chinchbugs. Different materials are being used but I can't say that any of them are working all that well. The main thing that would help now is more growth. We've got some cotton pushing 4 fruiting nodes and some fields that aren't long before blooming."

Gus Lorenz, Arkansas Extension IPM Specialist: "Bollworms are being treated in a few fields in southeast Arkansas on conventional cotton, mostly with Tracer. Beet armyworm trap counts are abnormally high in Miller County in southwest Arkansas and Woodruff County (west of Memphis). Numbers are running 250 to 300 per trap in some cases. There's been a good deal of beet armyworm pressure in Texas, and it may be moving up here. We've been getting a lot of these late season pests — like beets and saltmarsh caterpillars — early this year. The season has started out in a very bizarre way."