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AgFax: Midsouth Cotton

July 9, 2002

Here is this week's issue of *AGFAX: MIDSOUTH COTTON*, sponsored by Valent U.S.A., maker of Select, Cobra and Orthene.

-- Owen Taylor, Editor

OVERVIEW

The crop is making progress, and a number of our contacts continue to report great retention. But much of the region needs a rain to hold fruit already on the plant.

A bollworm flight is kicking up in Louisiana and the south Delta. The aphid fungus is reported on a wider basis (see Don Steinkraus's comments).

CROP REPORTS

Gus Lorenz, Arkansas Extension IPM Specialist: "It looks like aphids are crashing in many fields in south Arkansas. The numbers are bottoming out. Spider mites continue to build due to hot, dry weather, and they're moving off edges and across fields. Mites are a problem statewide but seem worse, maybe, in the southern half.

"Eggs and small larvae turned up in some fields in the last few days, and treatments are going out on a spotty basis. A lot of the egg laying is down in the canopy on dried blooms and square bracts rather than on top in the

terminals. This population will likely go for a while, and scattered fields are being treated in south Arkansas.

"We're mainly finding bollworm moths in the fields, but egg tests indicate a high percentage of budworms in the mix. We're recommending at least a tankmix with a budworm material rather than straight pyrethroids."

Ralph Bagwell, Louisiana Extension Entomologist, Winnsboro, La.: "We're on the front end of a bollworm flight, and I expect it to keep going to some extent for a couple of weeks. Most people have been reporting activity since the middle of last week, and some spraying has started. We do have a small area in Franklin Parish where kits show 70-80% budworms.

"Everyplace else, the eggs are running 80% bollworms, and the bollworms are plentiful. A lot of people are opting for a pyrethroid, and some are adding a little Tracer or Denim with the idea that they'll come back with one of those materials later, if needed.

"We still have spider mites, which we didn't anticipate after all the rain. Plantbugs are still present but not heavy. None are being exclusively treated, but something is being added for them when other trips are made. The aphid fungus is almost everywhere. Aphids are still out there, but we're at the point that treatments have stopped."

Tucker Miller, Ind. Consultant, Drew, Miss.: "We've had scattered showers in the last week, including 2" of rain in parts of Sunflower County. North of U.S. 82, though, it's dry. We're irrigating everything we can.

"Insects are mostly low. We started picking up 10% white worm eggs at Indianola and south of Greenwood today (Monday). North of there we weren't picking up eggs over the weekend. Plantbugs are low, with the exception of some edges around corn. When this corn starts drying down, though, we're expecting a good deal of plantbug and stinkbug movement.

"We have spider mite problems in more areas than I've seen in a long time. It's due to a combination of hot, dry weather, all this corn, and more notill production. We've sprayed edges quite a bit with Kelthane and knocked mites back pretty good. In a few spots we've treated a second time, and with pivots we're hoping to hold them back.

"Aphids are mostly gone, but we have a few spots on late cotton. They haven't built up enough to justify treatment."

Phil Gurley, Gurley's Agricultural Consulting Service, Kennett, Mo.: "We've got a dry, warm wind out of the north, and everyone and everything is dehydrating pretty quickly. We

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AgFax: Midsouth Cotton is published by Looking South Communications, 142 Westlake Drive, Brandon, Miss. 39047.

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need rain badly. Retention is surprisingly good, considering the tough conditions we've had. Some of this cotton is really trying to put on 5-lock bolls. Probably 65-70% of what I work is blooming. But the crop will throw a lot of fruit if we don't get significant rain soon. A 2" rain would give us a chance to still make a fair crop.

"Spider mites remain a problem. They're more widespread now, and we've been running Capture. Some of my growers really wanted to try Zephyr, but they couldn't get it in the gallon container. The price they were quoted on the 2.5-gallon container was a lot more than they wanted to spend.

"A few scattered worms are turning up. I heard of a treatment by the St. Francis River today (Monday). Plantbug numbers are going up, and we'll treat some fields now that the eradication program has shifted from blanket spraying to individual fields."

Chuck Farr, Mid-South Ag Consultants, Crawfordsville, Ark.: "Plantbugs have picked up again, and we're treating with Centric and some Orthene and Bidrin. Stinkbugs are increasing, along with aphids and mites. Overall, the crop looks good, but we're at a critical period this week. Little rain has fallen over the last 10 days, and dry conditions are affecting the crop. Fields that were running 8 nodes above white flower a week ago are at 6 to 6.5 today (Monday). If it stays dry we could be at 5 by early next week."

Keith Collins, Richland Parish Extension Agent, Rayville, La.: "Our cotton is a mixed bag. We got beneficial rains across the parish over the last 3 weeks, but some areas have received considerably more than others. The western part of the parish got up to 7" the week before last, while we have drier areas now that need rain again. A few folks are spraying for worms. Plantbugs have been off and on since squaring started, and a few mite treatments have been made in drier areas. A lot of cotton is blooming, and early cotton has a few small bolls."

Steve Schutz, Ind. Consultant, Coushatta, La.: "We could use a rain

everywhere. Fruit load looks good but it's not really balled up yet, and I'm afraid we'll see some shed when bolls start forming, due to lack of moisture.

"We've got worms, and we assume they're mainly bollworms. We've sprayed some Bt cotton twice. Normally, we spray when we hit 10% or more in pink blooms, and some of our upper bolls have been hit, so we decided to retreat. We're finding them in terminals, too. I'm seeing more damage than I would have expected. Populations are somewhat high, but not out of the ordinary. At first I thought this was conventional cotton, but the grower verified it was a Bt variety.

"So far, we haven't had mites, even in places where I normally expect them. We've treated a few fields for stinkbugs. Aphids were real bad earlier but aren't much of a factor now. A few plantbugs are coming back, and we're finding fleahoppers here and there. Worms remain the big thing overall."

Robert Wells, Cotton Consultant, Agrilience, Dermott, Ark.: "The main things we're dealing with are plantbugs and stinkbugs. They're not everywhere but are building in places. We sprayed a field or two for worms in the last week, but they've been surprisingly light, considering reports from south of here. Aphids are on some younger cotton, and we've treated a little.

"We're not picking up enough of fungus. Some people are behind on irrigation, and we may see more fungus develop as they catch up on watering. We got just over 1" of rain where spider mites have been the worst, and I can't find any there now."

Scott Stewart, Extension Cotton Entomologist, Jackson, Tenn.: "It's been pretty dry, and we need rain on a lot of our cotton. A few plantbugs and aphids are still out there. Stinkbugs are starting in some fields. I was just in a field that wasn't blooming, and it already had a lot of adults and nymphs.

"The grower had sprayed. Based on the number of squares and dead stinkbugs on the ground, they appeared to have been damaging it. They did a lot of damage in a small area. A few other

fields are being treated. It's unusual to see them like this in prebloom cotton.

"Aphids are around in spots. They aren't a concern but might build if it stays dry. A few spider mites are lingering."

Jack McDaniel, McDaniel Ag Service, Oak Ridge, La.: "We're starting to pick up some plantbugs. A pretty good bollworm moth flight started in the last day or two. A lot of people are thinking about spraying, if they haven't already started. They'll probably make some oversprays in Bt cotton to take out plantbugs and escaping bollworms.

"Aphids got heavy about 3 weeks ago. We treated in some spots, then started getting the fungus and populations fell off. But they're building again, even in places where we got a lot of rain, and we may treat some. Mites are out there, and we've mainly treated with Capture to pick up plantbugs or overspray the Bt cotton."

Don Steinkraus, University of Arkansas Entomologist, Fayetteville, Ark (and director of aphid fungus testing program, funded by Cotton Incorporated): "Our data today (Tuesday) is current to July 5 while we wait for new samples to filter in from the holiday weekend. We expect a good deal of samples to flow through the lab over the next 2 weeks.

"Based on Midsouth aphids evaluated, so far, we're in the early stages of epizootics in sampled fields in: Ashley County in Arkansas; Cato and Desoto Parishes in Louisiana; and Grenada, Montgomery and Webster Counties in Mississippi.

"We need to remember that there's no guarantee that aphids will soon crash in a given field just because the fungus is present in that state or even in that county. We continue to encourage folks to contact us if they want aphids analyzed. We'll send them a free kit. Contact us at steinkr@uark.edu or call 501-575-3187. Or, visit our web site at uark.edu/misc/aphid for our latest reports and links to related material."