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AgFax: Midsouth Cotton

June 25, 2002

Here is this week's issue of **AgFax: Midsouth Cotton**, brought to you by Valent U.S.A., maker of Orthene, Select and Cobra. -- Owen Taylor, Editor

OVERVIEW

Rains have been popping up across the Midsouth over the last week. Dry areas remain, but the region is picking up at least some moisture every day.

Donald C. Steinkraus, who heads the multi-state aphid fungus testing center based at the University of Arkansas, reported today: "We picked up the very earliest signs of the aphid fungus (Monday) in samples collected June 20 from Catahoula, La. A small percentage of aphids (2%) were found with an infective 'capilliconidium' attached to their legs. This is the earliest evidence of the fungus (and) suggests it is beginning to be active in Louisiana.

"Louisiana has usually been the first state where we find fungus. One Florida sample also had 2% fungus, again in the very earliest stage. No epizootics have been seen yet, and evidence suggests that they are a week or more off in Louisiana."

CROP REPORTS

Ralph Bagwell, Louisiana Extension Entomologist, Winnsboro, La.:

"Some areas got showers Sunday, and more isolated showers developed today (Monday), and they're helping a lot. Aphids are the main pest being treated this week. A few locations are being sprayed for spider mites. Tarnish plant bugs are present, but I don't know of any treatments. There are scattered, isolated worm populations."

Mike Sartor, Ind. Consultant, Sartor's Ag Consulting, Clinton, Miss.: "We could use some rain. However, cotton is holding on, and most of ours is doing real well. We have cotton that's just been planted as the river receded all the way up to some up at 16-17 nodes. It's fruiting well, too. Nodes above white flower are running 7-10, and the height-to-node ratio is good. We've put Pix on some.

"We're finding aphids. We've only treated them on some younger cotton to minimize stress on it. Where we've used Trimax for plant bugs it appears to be taking care of aphids. Spider mites have been showing up for 2-3 weeks, and we treated 1-2 fields earlier. They're a bit more widespread now. We're finding eggs and immatures under leaves. Showers would help minimize them.

"We're not finding as many Heliothis eggs as we were last week. I picked up some saltmarsh caterpillars in a couple of fields today."

Gus Lorenz, Arkansas Extension IPM Specialist: "Plantbugs are still a problem. Spider mites are building. They're particularly bad in the southern part of the state where we've missed some rain, but we're also picking them up through the Delta.

"I got a call from Woodruff County where they've dealing with mites and plantbugs, which is a tough duo. I'm sure there are more cases like that and figure some Capture is going out. In some cases where they can catch them on the field edges they may use Zephyr, but Kelthane is the main miticide where Capture isn't being applied.

"Grasshoppers are pretty bad in spots and feeding on cotton, which is a rarity. Cotton, overall, has perked up. But we're getting desperate for rain in places. With our weak root system we've got to consider irrigating many fields if it doesn't rain. The crop could head south if we hit a string of days with temperatures in the high 90s."

Bob Griffin, Griffin Ag Consulting, Jonesboro, Ark.: "We're treating almost all our non-Bt cotton with Steward or we're using Tracer at 1:80 and a medium rate of a pyrethroid. We've been treating plantbugs with Centric at 1.25 oz/acre.

"Cotton mostly looks good. We've got 3-4,000 acres blooming. We've just

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started irrigating our older cotton. We had spotty rains Sunday night, from zero to 1", and it was the first appreciable rain in at least 2 weeks."

Victor Roth, Roth Farm Service, Malden, Mo.: "A lot of eradication sprays have started up. We've got scattered aphids in just about every field. Some are at treatment levels. We put out a few treatments last week and are doing more now. There's a real possibility of them blowing up after Malathion. We have some fields with treatment levels of plantbugs, but we're waiting for eradication sprays, then we'll check to see if they helped. We're seeing a few red spider mites around in typical hotspots."

Ronnie Bibb, Jimmy Sanders Seed Co., Hollandale, Miss.: "We've got some real good looking cotton, and then we've got some on the fence. It's blooming, but without rain pretty soon it's going to hurt. That includes some early cotton with a good fruit load that has received only .5" to .6" of rain since March 24. Without rain soon it won't last long. We've also got some 8" cotton on heavy ground that's at 2 NAWF."

"Plantbugs are spotty. Some fields aren't extremely heavy, but there are enough that they could hurt us. There are a few scattered aphids, too. We sprayed them where they jumped on some young cotton."

Scott Stewart, Extension Cotton Entomologist, Jackson, Tenn.: "Plantbug activity is starting to pick up a little. We're finding them pretty routinely in West Tennessee and are spraying more fields. In conventional cotton we're seeing a few eggs and small worms but nothing that concerns us. I've been in Middle Tennessee today (Monday) and saw 2 fields in Giles and Lincoln Counties where I think aphids should be treated because they're adding stress to cotton that's already stressed due to dry weather."

"In West Tennessee I've yet to see aphids that need treating. Spider mites are hanging around in drier spots, but a good rain -- which we need across our production area -- would probably solve that problem. Overall, cotton is getting bigger, and people are upping

rates where they're treating plantbugs. This cotton is getting too big now for banded applications."

Virgil King, III, King's Ag Consulting, Lexington, Miss.: "Rains have been spotty. As dry as it's been we really need a 2" through my area. Our cotton is holding up pretty good right now, going from 10th to 11th node with fair squaring up to some that's blooming. The water requirement for the cotton that's just squaring isn't tremendous, but we'll be in a crunch where cotton is blooming if we don't get rains soon."

"We're dealing with aphids. They're not across the entire crop, but we're treating on most farms, making recommendations on a field by field basis. Plantbugs are pretty much under control, and we've finished initial applications. We're paying attention to plantbugs in cotton that adjoins corn and making some border treatments."

"An area near Tchula has tremendous mite pressure. We started treating last week. That area has really stressed due to lack of rain. Showers would definitely keep the cotton growing and get us out of this mite problem."

"We're finding isolated spots with eggs and worms. We've sprayed a limited amount of acreage for worms that are lagging from the last generation. Growers are taking care of weeds. Some layby treatments are going out. Where we've irrigated and caught showers we're initiating Pix treatments."

Blake Layton, Mississippi Extension Entomologist: "There are enough aphids in some isolated fields to justify treatments. We're intensively scouting 10 fields along U.S. 82 -- with 5 in the Delta and 5 in the hills -- and these aren't showing a lot of plantbug activity. Some fields in drier parts of the state have mites, and it will be a building problem as long as it doesn't rain. We've gotten our Section 18 for aphid control. We're finding worm eggs in our 10 fields but nothing overwhelming. I haven't hear of many treatments for worms."

Terry Erwin, Morehouse Parish Extension agent, Bastrop, La.: "We've got cotton from pinhead squares

to blooming. Guys who had enough moisture to plant in April are doing pretty good, but the majority of our cotton started in May, and it's behind. We don't have a lot of insect pressure. Aphids are scattered. Plantbug numbers are low. We've had intermittent showers the last few days, and more is in the forecast today (Tuesday) and tomorrow, so we're optimistic."

Charles Denver, Consultant, Agrilience., Dermott, Ark.: "We haven't had much rain, just a tenth here and there. We're irrigating cotton and even trying to irrigate up some soybeans. We're starting to treat a few bollworms on non-Bt and have quite a bit of plantbug applications being made on Bt and non-Bt. A lot of our worms appear to be tobacco budworms, so we're mostly going with Tracer where we're treating them. Aphids are building, but we haven't found treatable levels. We don't have problems with mites, but that could change if it stays dry."

Roger Carter, Tim White, Walter Myers and Nate Wellborn, Agricultural Management Services, Inc., Clayton, La. (from June 23 Ag Report e-letter): "The majority of cotton fields have (mite) infestations that are near or above threshold... In actively growing cotton we will put up with a few, and in very droughty cotton, we are forced to put up with them because yield potential is low and farmers don't want to spend any money... Aphids are persistent on most younger cotton and are rebuilding on some older cotton..."

"Plant bugs are active near corn. We are only treating plant bugs where we have actively growing cotton..."

"Layby apps are being made on some cotton now. Direx+MSMA (are being used)... Roundup is the product of choice for most growers (in Roundup Ready cotton). Aim is being added to some applications where weed pressure is intense. Some Valor will be applied as a layby. For post-directed applications, most farmers have opted for Caparol or Direx plus either Roundup, MSMA or Cobra, depending on weed species."