

AgFax: Midsouth Cotton

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Here is this week's issue of *AgFax: Midsouth Cotton*, sponsored by the Midsouth staff of Valent U.S.A. Corporation, maker of Orthene®, Select®, Cobra® and other crop protection materials designed for Southern cotton production.

OVERVIEW

Aphids are building on a wider basis, and plantbugs are being treated, too. But most of our contacts this week characterized insect pressure in their areas as being mostly light to moderate. Several noted that herbicide and growth regulator treatments are their main focus right now.

These reports were made Monday evening and Tuesday.

CROP REPORTS

Allen McKnight, Delta Ag Consulting, Greenville, Miss.: "Insects in cotton are unusually quiet. Plantbug numbers are low and not worth treating. We're more concerned about getting Pix on most of the crop. With all this rain, the crop

is growing a little too fast.

"Most of our cotton isn't quite ready to start blooming. We're running 10-14 days behind the lower Delta where they have a lot of blooms already. It's loading up well but just growing too fast, and we'll put Pix on just about every acre this week. Last week some areas got 3-4" of rain and up to 7" in spots. At least 500 acres of cotton was drowned out in low areas next to where we check rice."

Ralph Bagwell, Louisiana Extension Entomologist, Winnsboro, La.: "People are treating pretty widely for aphids and plantbugs. Aphid numbers are picking up, and plantbugs are still with us. We're also finding a fair number of fleahoppers. Numbers started picking up last week, and they're still building some. There were fields last week that had to be sprayed just for fleahoppers."

"Cotton has perked up. But we've also found a lot of square shed, which we anticipated after sunny conditions replaced that long stretch of rain and cloudy weather.

Plants couldn't transpire enough, and squares trying to form in that time frame couldn't make it. This is a pretty uniform pattern of shedding across the state and shouldn't automatically be blamed on plantbugs."

Claude Bonner, Ind. Consultant, Cotton Specialists of Ark, Inc., N. Little Rock, Ark.: "We should have a few scattered blooms next week. The bulk of our crop is at 10-12 nodes and loading up pretty good, but we've also got a fair amount that's still struggling."

"Pix is going out, and we're starting layby on quite a few fields and post-directing herbicides on others. With all the rain, we'll have a weedier crop than anyone would like. There isn't much insect activity. We're treating some plantbugs."

"The first grower asked today when we should start watering. I'm seeing a little wilting on eroded slopes, but we do have some better fields that might require irrigation next week. We've got less than optimum root systems in a lot of fields and have to be sensitive to that."

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Joe Townsend, Ind. Consultant, Coahoma, Miss.: “We’re in the beginning of a strong aphid increase, and we’re spraying significant acreage. Along with that, plantbug treatments continue, and we’re on our 3rd round on some of our better cotton. We also sprayed our first worms today on some conventional cotton.

“This crop is requiring tremendous doses of Pix to stop it from going crazy, and some of it’s doing that, anyway. Cotton is showing weather stress and wilting. It lacks a normal root system and hasn’t seen any sunshine for most of the time it’s been alive.”

Trent LaMastus, Ind. Consultant, Cleveland, Miss.: “We’re spraying plantbugs every now and then. We’ve been going with Orthene initially where we had problems next to ditches or where they were coming out of corn. We’ve also had to apply some emergency doses of Pix and have added Orthene where we’ve got smaller counts.

“For a second shot, we’ve been coming back with Centric or Trimax. Aphids are starting to blow up on us now, too. We sprayed a couple of blocks of conventional cotton last week for worms. We’ve found brown stinkbugs in the cotton, running 5-20%. So far, we haven’t treated them directly.

“Weeds are everywhere. People are doing salvage treatments and running layby rigs. We’re just glad that insect pressure isn’t any more than it is. Everyone needs to catch up on herbicide work. Blooming started on June 13, and 15-20% of our cotton is blooming now. The older cotton that didn’t get waterlogged looks pretty good, a lot better than some of the later planted fields.”

Scott Stewart, Extension Cot-

ton Entomologist, Jackson, Tenn.: “We’ve had 2 good days of growing weather, and that’s already helping. We’re through with thrips and are looking at plantbugs now. They’re generally light, but numbers could increase as wild hosts dry down. Aphids are starting to come on a little, but not as bad as I’m hearing in other parts of the region.

“People are mostly watching both plantbugs and aphids. A few aphid treatments might have been made, but I think growers are holding back because there simply isn’t significant pressure from either insect. Even where they’re putting out Pix, I don’t believe a lot of insecticide is going out with the applications.”

Gus Lorenz, Arkansas Extension IPM Specialist: “Nematodes really worked on root systems while cotton was stalled out during all the wet, cold weather. Now that growing conditions are better and it’s getting drier, we’re seeing the effect. Even without nematodes, much of this crop has limited root development, and we’re not going to have a lot of room to play around with irrigation schedules this season.

“We’re also finding fruit shed, and much of it is environmentally driven. Losses of 25-30% are pretty common, and in these problem fields we’re dropping plantbug thresholds from 1 plantbug per 1 row foot to 1 plantbug per 3 row feet. Protecting that remaining fruit is now more critical.

“Aphids are building across much of Arkansas, and we’re not finding the fungus yet. We do have a pretty good population of beneficials, and they’re holding aphids back in places. But aphids appear to be more of a problem in a lot of fields where broad spectrum materials were used

earlier for thrips. Worms are in a lull. We’ve got more black root rot than I’ve ever seen. Cool, wet weather is black root rot’s friend.”

David Skinner, Ind. Consultant, Starkville, Miss.: “Most of my hill cotton was planted between May 28 and June 5, and it’s still small. Almost all my Delta cotton (in Humphreys County) is blooming. We’re just starting to find some aphids in cotton, and plantbugs are showing up in fields adjacent to corn. We sprayed 3 fields today (Tuesday), and they were all by corn.

“With the aphids, my Delta cotton is big enough that we can go longer on it and hopefully get the aphid fungus rolling in here by the Fourth of July. The only cotton we’ve treated for aphids, so far, was about 80 acres with small plants that couldn’t cope with the pressure.”

Dale Wells, Ind. Consultant, Cotton Services, Inc., Leachville, Ark.: “We’re putting out a little Pix and spraying some aphids and treating a few plantbugs. Aphids are just starting to build, and we’re trying to cut them off before they become a bad problem. Where we’re running hooded sprayers, we’re also applying something on a band for aphids, either Trimax or Centric.

“Cotton looks a lot better, but it’s still behind. It’s beginning to appear a little drought stressed. Areas south of us got soaking rains a couple of weeks ago. We either got no rain or only small showers. Pivots are starting up and polypipe is being rolled out in places.”