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MiteFax: San Joaquin Valley Cotton

May 24, 2002

Here is this week's issue of *MiteFax*, sponsored by the California Cotton Team of Syngenta Crop Protection. We welcome your comments and suggestions. New subscriptions to MiteFax can be requested on-line at agfax.com/subs.

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Overview

More heat is needed to help this crop move along, especially after the weird downward shift a few days ago that included rain and hail in parts of the valley. Mites are being treated to some extent. More cotton is moving toward first irrigation.

We include degree day summaries from Bob Hutmacher that illustrate the yo-yo weather effect this year.

Our contacts this week continue to comment about the excellent condition of other crops, including tomatoes, alfalfa and tree crops. Two of our contacts also noted limb breakage in young, heavily loaded almond orchards.

The following reports were made

Thursday-Friday, May 23-24.

Crop Reports

Nick Groenberg, Indep. PCA, Hanford: "Miticide sprays are going on. Our treatment level is about average for this point in the season. There are mites around but nothing bad. Thrips have been present, but when warm weather hit last week the cotton grew right past them, and we haven't treated any. We're finishing herbicide treatments now."

Dale Deshane, PCA, Supervised Control, Bakersfield: "All our early miticide treatments with Zephyr look good, even on the really short cotton we sprayed. We still have thrips hanging around some cotton. It looks ugly, but we're not treating. There's a little curling, but plants still have plenty of leaf area."

"We're finding a little armyworm in the pima fields, but we haven't sprayed any yet. We see where they've hit, then the predators get them. Sweeping started in some of our early fields south of Bakersfield. Lygus counts are zeros, mostly, with an occasional 1. With hotter temperatures in the forecast next week, though, we

anticipate some movement out of drying vegetation.

"There seem to have been more herbicide-miticide combinations going on to reduce application costs. So far, we haven't seen anything not working good, and there haven't been indications of phytotoxicity.

"Some people are watering. Others are getting ready to start next week on sandier ground now that we're anticipating warmer weather. On our early cotton we're seeing three squares on a plant and a lot of squares on the sixth node."

Rudy Perez, PCA, Western Farm Service, Firebaugh: "We still haven't sprayed anything but probably will in a week or so. The majority of our cotton will be sprayed before we water. Mite are in there. They're running 10% to 35% in terms of leaves with mites, but at that higher percentage there aren't many mites yet, just a distribution of them. But that at least tells me we can't go to irrigation without treating. Thrips are heavy enough to make some of the cotton look ugly."

"The cotton is starting to move a

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MiteFax: San Joaquin Valley Cotton is published by Looking South Communications, 142 Westlake Drive, Brandon, Miss. 39047. Phone: 601-992-9488, Fax: 601-992-3503. Editor: Owen Taylor, owen@agfax.com. MiteFax is transmitted via fax or e-mail each weekend during the cotton growing season. It is free to growers, PCAs and others involved in SJV production. ©MMII Looking South Communications.

little. We lost a small amount to dampening off, but none of my growers have replanted, although one may take out a field because he's not pleased with the stand. Overall, the early pima looks pretty decent."

Dan Buchak, PCA, Gillespie Ag, Porterville: "We're moving to first irrigation, and cotton is at fourth and fifth leaves. Some guys did light Zephyr treatments just to hold down mites and get through first irrigation, then we'll see what we have to do with other pests after that. There were no major problems with mites, just small populations that we needed to deal with while we could get in there by ground. It was mainly where growers didn't use Temik or Thimet."

"We're doing our Roundup Ready applications and treating some BXN cotton, too. We had a pretty good rain the other night, including some hail, but I haven't heard of anything being hurt by it. The rain was a little too late to help our dryland grain growers. They needed it a long time ago."

Jerry Anderson, PCA, Anderson Consulting, Dos Palos: "In the last three weeks we've been treating mites. Two-thirds of our cotton has either been sprayed or has recommendations for treatment. There are a lot of thrips, but we're not counting on them for much help, based on what we've seen so far. In just one week in the Dos Palos area we went from 20-30% mite levels to 70-100%, so we started applying Zephyr."

"South of here 10 to 15 miles they haven't been as bad. We're set up to spray down there but are stalling as long as we can. As soon as we see them building we will treat, probably before first irrigation. By the end of next week we probably will have treated nearly all our fields for mites."

Vern Crawford, PCA, Wilbur-Ellis, Shafter: "Maybe we're going to have some growth weather now. The cotton is sure ready. The lion's

share is moving toward first irrigation or is in it now. Where people irrigated already, the cotton is really responding, which maybe indicates some other fields should have been watered a week or so earlier. When it gets warmer this weekend I think a lot of guys will speed it up."

"Thrips weren't much of a factor. My guys had Temik and Orthene. But I'm seeing other fields with a good deal of thrips injury that have never had a problem before now. I've looked at some cotton that's so deformed from thrips that plants have two squares but no discernible leaves. Cold weather has really prolonged thrips. I saw one field in northeast Kern County being treated for thrips this week, and it looked horrible."

"In our cotton, mites are continuing to increase as Temik runs out. As soon as we get through with first irrigation we'll treat with a miticide and probably sidedress with Temik, too."

Galen Hiatt, Independent PCA, Fresno: "It's as calm as it can be. We haven't found any mites. Cotton is growing, sort of. I don't think we'll see early squaring like we usually expect. I've got cotton that's up to eight leaves, but I'm having trouble finding squaring. I think the cold weather kept it from putting on squares where we expect to see them. Some growers have started sprinkling, and others are getting ready. Our weed work is done, except for going through a couple of fields with weeding crews to pick up areas that were missed."

Pete Goodell, Extension IPM Entomologist, Kearney Ag Center, Parlier: "We've had heavy mite pressure in plots at Kearney. We never have mites this early here, so it's surprising. There's also some thrips damage. One guy asked me if we're seeing a new species of thrips, since mite and thrips damage are showing up in cotton at the same time. My thinking

right now is that this up and down weather is favoring mites when it's hot and thrips when it's cold."

"When we get tempted to spray thrips this season we need to remember budgets. Based on comments about sticky cotton from last season, we've got to hold money back in case we're dealing with whitefly problems late in the season. That's got to be one of our points of focus this year."

Chris Morgner, PCA, Agri-Valley Consulting, Merced: "We had some damage from hail, but cotton is going to come through it. A few terminals were knocked out, but that was real spotty. I haven't seen much in the way of pest problems. We have a few hot spots with mites that we're watching. We used more Temik this year, and I think that's slowed them down in most of the crop."

"Overall, we need 7-10 days of hot weather to shift this crop into high gear. Most of my cotton is looking pretty good. The earliest fields are around six nodes, and we're finding a few pinhead squares here and there. It should be squaring in more fields by next week. We're still making some glyphosate and Staple treatments."

A look at this spring's yo-yo weather

Although the yearly totals since March 20th are only about 10-15% below average, there have been some extended periods with relatively low heat units. We have had a cool second half of April, and a generally cool May as well. This has contributed to some slower growth in this year's crop, and may also have contributed to slower plant recovery from early season injury from thrips and other causes.

Note that the prior year's data and long term average shown are for Shafter, while the second table gives 2002 data for Shafter, West Side REC and Los Banos. -- *Bob Hutmacher, Extension Cotton Specialist*

PRIOR YEARS DD60 at SHAFTER REC						
	24 yr avg	1995	1997	1998	2000	2001
3/20-3/31	29.7	17.7	74.2	31.6	31.5	67.4
4/01-4/15	64.8	53.2	47.9	8.7	105.2	18.3
4/16-4/30	84.3	78.4	122.2	109.9	60.1	85.5
5/01-5/15	128.6	64.2	179	59.3	107	187
5/16-5/23	86.9	70.4	100.3	30.2	104.7	141
TOTAL	394.3	283.9	523.6	239.7	408.5	499.2

DD60s 2002			
	Shafter REC	West Side REC	Los Banos
3/20-3/31	45.2	46.2	36.1
4/01-4/15	95.1	102.5	67.3
4/16-4/30	47.9	51.2	29.9
5/01-5/15	107.6	117.8	84.1
5/16-5/23	57.6	54.4	43.0
TOTAL	353.4	372.1	260.4