

MiteFax: San Joaquin Valley Cotton

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Here is this season's first issue of MiteFax. This marks our eleventh season. Our continued thanks to the California Cotton Team of Syngenta Crop Protection for sponsoring MiteFax. Our gratitude, as well, to the PCAs and Extension personnel who take time to provide the reports we compile each week.

We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Owen Taylor, Editor

OVERVIEW

Pests are being treated in a number of areas. The list includes mites, thrips and armyworms. We had one unconfirmed report of a field being treated for a combination of thrips, armyworms and aphids in the Tulare area. Treatments also have been made for mites in almonds and lygus in pistachios.

This season is being compared to the cold, wet start the SJV faced in 1998. If you would like to refresh your memory about 1998, go to our archive page on the web, agfax.com/archive, then click on the "MiteFax" link.

Most issues are available going back to 1997. Some of the type is a bit hard to read. In the process of transferring these documents to PDF format for the

archive, typefaces we once used were no longer in our system, so the software inserted generic fonts with letters that sometimes crowd the line. We apologize for the inconvenience.

The following reports were made Thursday and Friday.

CROP REPORTS

Nick Groenenberg, Indep. PCA, Hanford: "All our cotton has been planted, and it looks pretty good. We went with Quadris fungicide as a seed treatment on a lot of it, and that helped with diseases. But with it just sitting there and not growing, thrips are a problem. We don't have enough thrips, so far, to justify spraying.

"We've sprayed some fields for beet armyworms, though. I don't recall ever spraying them quite this early. If plants had been growing vigorously they might not have been a problem. We've sprayed pistachios for lygus. This isn't necessarily normal, but it happens sometimes."

Chris Morgner, PCA, Agri-Valley Consulting, Merced: "Our cotton is just coming up. We don't have any established enough to really do stand counts or start spraying weeds. We'll begin evaluating stands next week. Everything, I think, is pretty well planted. Most of our cotton got planted last week.

It's been an odd start. We had more heat units in March than in April.

"We're going to have to focus on a shorter season strategy, and we don't have room to make mistakes. This won't be a season when we can wait a week to see what happens. The mustard, I'm afraid, looks pretty healthy. We'll have plenty of good lygus habitat for a while."

Vern Crawford, PCA, Wilbur-Ellis Co., Shafter: "In terms of insects, this already is starting out to be a challenging year. There are some treatments being made for armyworms, for thrips and for mites. Where Temik wasn't used at planting or there wasn't an Orthene seed treatment, the leaves are being hit hard by thrips. Where they're treating, people are leaning toward softer materials to hold onto beneficials.

"The amount of acreage that's required replanting has not been as extensive as I would have thought earlier.

"We're dealing with mites in almonds, and several people already have sprayed Agrimec. Whether that's a predictor about pressure in cotton isn't clear. We've had one recent season with runaway mite pressure in almonds but hardly any mites in cotton."

Bob Hutmacher, Extension Cotton Specialist: "We're finding mites on cotton." **Continued on next page**

The Best Decisions Are Based On Knowledge

With the rough start everyone has experienced this season, the distribution of facts and comments in *MiteFax* is more important than ever. Syngenta Crop Protection is glad that we are once again able to sponsor this service.

We offer a full line of crop protection products for cotton, but our California Cotton Team also provides knowledge. If you have questions this season about how or when to use any of our products, please don't hesitate to contact your local Syngenta sales representative for more information.



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ton at Shafter on seed treatment trials we planted 4-6 weeks ago. Plants have been coping with thrips, but we at least thought thrips would be around to devour mites later. But when temperatures warmed up, the thrips flew the coop.

"Mite treatments are being made in Kern County. It's a little scary to be dealing with them this early on small, stressed plants. With this year's start, we already figure yield potential will be down, so we'll have to closely weigh every insect treatment.

"As the weather heats up, we need to reassess stands. An abrupt jump in temperatures will work against a lot of plants that have been stressed by thrips and disease. We could see additional stand thinning."

Galen Hiatt, Independent PCA, Fresno: "Cotton looks a little better than I thought it would, although there are a couple of fields I'm not happy with. We're running at least 3 weeks to maybe a month behind.

"I have some cotton in the 4th true leaf now, but you wouldn't easily recognize that fact. It has black root, weather-related stress, along with thrip and Staple damage.

"We planted our cotton in 3 periods, and the bulk of it went in during the last period a little over 2 weeks ago. The earliest cotton definitely has more black root. The last cotton we planted starting popping out of the ground in 6-7 days

"All our cotton has Temik under it and, so far, I haven't found anything to treat. I am picking up quite a few armyworm moths in traps and seeing some armyworms in older cotton and tomatoes. We have the parasitic wasps that work on armyworms, so that may help. I'm finding their cocoons, but I don't know to what extent they're out there."

Dale Deshane, PCA, Supervised Control, Bakersfield: "This season has started with a blast. We began spraying mites 3 weeks ago next Tuesday. South of Bakersfield we had some cotton planted in March that seemed to emerge with mites on it. Around edges we found 100% pressure, but even 100 yards into

the field we still measured 30%. We tried to wait, but they began drying up plants.

"The week after that, armyworms hit, and we treated several thousand acres. You could walk down the row and find 20-30 plants in a row with 1-3 quarter-inch worms. We've been using Steward, and it worked well by air.

"Some of the later planted cotton looked decent, and it was trying to push out a terminal. But by last Friday the thrips were drying up the cotyledon leaves and turning the terminals black, and we went with Dimethoate on several thousand acres. Overall, the Temik fields and most of the Orthene-treated seed have been holding up. But we're getting some worms now and a trace of mites in some of our Temik fields. In fields in southern Kern County we're finding 'mother plants,' the ones with the whole plant covered by mites.

"In the Buttonwillow area, we've sprayed thrips. We're finding armyworms, too, and we may have to treat if they keep building. Tarweed has a heavy influx of lygus now, too. I saw my first whitefly in melons at Mettler this week. This, in fact, may be a little later than normal, due to cold weather.

"Some of our Pima in heavy, black ground has not grown to any extent in a month. It was getting mites and thrips. We went by ground with Zephyr and Dimethoate and added a material called Greenstem, which is supposed to enhance root development. This is our first time to use it. Plants appear to be putting out new feeder roots. They were looking so bad that we figured this was worth a try."

Jerry Anderson, PCA, Anderson Consulting, Dos Palos: "The weather remains variable, and we're not getting much heat. All of our cotton is planted now, I think, but it's not all up yet. A little of our oldest cotton is getting its 2nd true leaf, but the bulk is reaching the 1st leaf or is still at cotyledon stage. Replanting has been in spots.

"In a couple of fields the thrips have been working on the cotton a little. I had

hoped after warmer weather this week they would back off, but we've got another cool day today (Friday). We can find 10% levels of mites here and there, but mostly they're zeros. One spot hit 40%, and we're monitoring it.

"We aren't finding many lygus in alfalfa, but we're picking up yellow-stripe and beet armyworms in the hay. Our last really bad year with worms was in the mid 1990s. At least now, we've got newer materials that could help if worms are a problem again."

Miguel Romero, PCA, Britz Fertilizer, Tulare: "The weather is really working against us. We've had all the cool weather and just got from .25" to .75" of rain in some fields. There a lot of sick seedlings out there.

"Cotton planted 4-6 weeks ago is growing slowly if at all. Some plants are barely pushing 1st or 2nd true leaf. This cotton should be 6-8" tall by now, and instead of temperatures in the low 80s today it's cloudy and windy again.

"I'm talking with growers with some problem stands about whether to come back with cotton or go with an alternate crop compatible with the herbicides they've applied. A lot of growers are exasperated and confused. We've had successful yields the last 2 years, and now we're digging up plants and trying to judge if roots are viable. It's a touch-and-go, field-by-field situation.

"I was told that a neighbor's field was sprayed for thrips, armyworms and aphids. I went into it several day later, and it was obvious about thrips and armyworms. I didn't see any aphids but found what looked like aphid casings.

"So far, I haven't treated any cotton, but treatments have been made on both sides of Highway 99. The next big thing will be how warm it actually gets and what affect it will have on this really sick cotton. We need warmer weather, but if it heats up too fast and too much it will finish off some of these marginal plants.

"I've got to say, this doesn't look like a fun year."