

# MiteFax: San Joaquin Valley Cotton

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Here is this week's issue of *MiteFax*, sponsored by the California Cotton Team of Syngenta Crop Protection, maker of Zephyr and other crop protection products used in SJV cotton.

## OVERVIEW

Hotter temperatures covered the valley during the week, with some readings bumping the triple-digit point. The heat is a mixed blessing. On the whole, it beats those 60-degree readings early in the month. But it also adds heat stress to plants that already have underdeveloped and injured root systems.

We continue to hear about mite treatments on a wide basis. Worms also are being sprayed in some locations. Thrips may be easing off, though, as temperatures rise.

Our contacts continue to tell us that cotton in the northern valley looks pretty good, partly because it was planted later. In the southern half of the valley irrigation has started in some fields.

Pete Goodell released his lygus forecast for 2003. We are attaching it to this week's report.

These reports were made Thursday and Friday.

## CROP REPORTS

**Sara Savary, PCA Crop Care Associates, Fresno:** "Cotton is finally starting to grow, which is kind of nice. Most of it is pushing 1-2 true leaves. One grower is replanting a few spots. Another is taking out one field and putting it in beans. All things considered, that's a very small amount of replanting or stand loss.

"There's no pest pressure. We're making herbicide applications. Typically, this is when we'd be tankmixing Zephyr in most treatments, but we're not finding many mites and are debating about whether to add it as a preventive or hold off for right now. Mites are out there, but not very many, less than 10%."

**Mike Molatore, PCA, Western Farm Service, Mettler:** "The cotton is doing fine, especially considering the lousy, cold conditions we've had up until now. With this hot weather,

things are starting to take off. We do have fields that are being sprayed for mites and worms. Where I'm treating, the plants are small, and there's enough mite activity that we needed to do something.

"Armyworms are being treated in the area. I haven't had to spray any yet, but I'm watching some fields with the idea that they may require treatment next week. I'm also picking up loopers. We've got pressure from thrips but are hoping that plants will grow out of any problem since temperatures started heating up.

"Growers are fertilizing now to get ready for first irrigation."

**Tony Touma, PCA, Bio Ag Consulting, Bakersfield:** "This is the kind of year when being a cotton entomologist is going to be the most secure job in the valley. Every farmer will need one. It's kind of shocking now to see how much pressure we already have after such a low pest year through much of 2002.

"Some fields have 100% mites. I've compared our records from last year to see if there were things we

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might have done that influenced whether we have light pressure or heavy pressure, but I can't find any connections. We've got cases where fields had mites at 1% at this point in 2002 but are at 100% today.

"Thrips, though, really have been the thing that has put cotton a couple of weeks behind. Seedling disease also started showing up about 10 days ago, and it's taking a toll. One 300-acre field looked so damaged that I recommended that the grower disk it under.

"We got a batch of armyworms 3 weeks ago and treated 700-800 acres where plants already were sick. I think we're over the hump with them now. One of my growers south of Bakersfield has unplanted land around him with a lot of weeds. Two weeks ago I was getting 10 lygus per sweep — not per 50 sweeps but per 1. The hay is loaded with lygus, too.

"We're behind. It's May 22, and cotton looks like it's 2 weeks old."

**David Simoni, PCA, Western Farm Service, Hanford:** "We're finally making a turn toward warmer weather. Sidedressing has started on some cotton. We've got a lot of damage from thrips and have sprayed a number of fields. Miticides have been going out, too. I haven't written any recommendations to treat beet armyworms yet, but I know some applications have been made around us. We're finding aphids but haven't seen a need to treat.

"Mites, I think, will be a major issue this season, and we'll likely spray again soon. Temik is now breaking. Where we didn't have Temik, 70% of that cotton already has been sprayed for mites."

**Steve Wright, Extension Farm Advisor, Tulare County:** "These warmer temperatures will hopefully improve things. This has been a long,

slow start, and cotton has struggled. A few fields have been treated for thrips and armyworms. Plants simply weren't growing fast enough to withstand even light pressure.

"Fields are generally pretty weedy, too. As planting dragged out, quite a bit more Roundup Ready seed went into the ground. Growers want to buy a little more time on some of their acreage. Plenty of fields were being scratched 2-3 times, plus people were making herbicide treatments and spraying thrips, and there weren't enough tractors to go around. If they couldn't immediately cultivate, The Roundup Ready varieties gave them the option to come back later with glyphosate.

"Some cotton is being irrigated. It's 2-3" tall. There's concern that the root systems are just barely hanging on. With temperatures in the high 90s, a lot of these plants are going to croak if they run out of moisture."

**Rick Sandberg, PCA, Agri-Consultants, Cantua Creek:** "Our cotton is just barely out of the ground. A couple of fields probably are at 2nd true leaf in the Cantua area. We replanted 2 fields about 14 days ago that were planted the first time about 6 weeks ago. They were hit pretty hard by disease, and we figured they were going to die anyway. Total replanting amounted to 300 acres. That's about 20% of our early acreage. Overall, though, stands look good. They're just late. I've found only one mite in one field, so you can safely say our pressure is low."

**Bob Hutmacher, Extension Cotton Specialist:** "With this week's heat, we've got a lot of contrast. Those little plants that don't have much leaf area yet actually look pretty good. The older plants that have been beaten up so badly are looking even worse with the heat.

We've got to stay alert about water needs where root systems have been compromised.

"In the northern valley where most people planted later, stands look good. They've avoided seedling disease issues, cool temperatures and thrips. However, they are just in time for mites. We're finding them on cotton with just cotyledons or one struggling true leaf.

"Treatments were being made on the Westside Field Station and on farmers' fields around it. These weren't preventive sprays. Enough mites are present to justify treating. Thrips populations have declined a lot with warmer weather. A couple of PCAs who work in Fresno County have mentioned aphids. Worms are scattered but present enough in some places to warrant treatment."

**Justin Cordoza, PCA, Agri-Tech, Merced:** "We've finished planting, and the majority of my acreage was planted in May. It hasn't been in the ground that long, and the weather has warmed up nicely now, so we're at least a little optimistic. Maybe 300 acres have been treated for heavy mite populations, so far. This was cotton planted early and then got caught by cold weather. It just sat there, which gave mites a chance to jump on it.

"Mainly now we're focusing on herbicide recommendations. About 95% of our cotton is Roundup Ready. The most advanced is pushing 3rd true leaf. I'm finding low counts of yellowstripe armyworms in hay, but otherwise it's still pretty clean."