

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, Centric and other crop protection products used in the San Joaquin Valley.

OVERVIEW

Oppressive heat settled over the valley this week and took a toll on cotton that already was stressed from its cold, wet start. But, as several of our contacts noted, plants that made a good start are quickly responding to these conditions. One PCA said his healthy stands were adding 1.5 sets of true leaves per week.

Mite treatments continue. Armyworms are being sprayed, too.

These reports were made Thursday and Friday.

CROP REPORTS

Rudy Perez, PCA, Western Farm Service, Firebaugh: "The cotton isn't holding up too good in this heat, and we're having to water early. We've sprayed some beet armyworms

in a few fields that were really struggling due to stress from Staple and thrips. Yellowstripes are being treated in several alfalfa fields.

"Mites are building, and we'll start miticide treatments tomorrow (Friday) on a limited basis. Mites are pretty much in every field, but they aren't bad yet. We're treating where we've got cotton with 1st or 2nd true leaves and that requires immediate irrigation. Those fields are getting Zephyr now, and we'll evaluate them again in mid June. We're also going to treat some of our earliest cotton that's at 4th to 5th true leaf with mites averaging about 25%.

"Last year we started sidedressing on April 14, and our first sidedressing this year is just beginning, so we're running a month and a half behind on our fertilizer schedule."

Gary Weinberger, PCA, Weinberger & Associates, Hanford: "The cotton is responding to warmer weather and starting to grow a little. We're watching armyworms. They're getting heavy in some fields, but if plants begin growing a little faster we may be able to avoid treat-

ing. We're trying to decide whether to treat mites before first irrigation or before the second. We're doing some irrigation a little earlier than normal where we've got quite a bit of seedling disease or alkali soils."

Mark W.F. Carter, PCA, Agri-Consultants, Los Banos: "We've had to water a third of our fields earlier than we normally would. There was stress due to small roots. Some fields were sidedressed before irrigation, others will be sidedressed after we water the 1st time.

"We're set up to apply Zephyr on a lot of fields next week. More mites are present than we've seen in the last 2 years. We've found a yellowstripe hatch in the hay. A few beet armyworms are showing up in cotton, but predation is knocking them out.

"I've done a lot of leaf counting today (Thursday), and our most advanced cotton is running 3-4 nodes. Nobody wants these 100-plus temperatures on stressed cotton. But cotton that's not stressed is growing like crazy. Those plants are adding 1.5 sets of true leaves every week."

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Dan Buchak, PCA, Gillespie Ag, Porterville: “We have some at 5th node now, but it’s a good deal shorter than we’d expect. Our in-furrow materials are holding. Mite and aphids appear to be under control.

“Armyworm and loopers are hitting here and there, but we may slip by without treating. We’re fertilizing and might start 1st irrigation next week. We’ve got plenty of morning-glory and will try Shark in a post-directed tankmix after irrigating.”

Jim Hall, PCA, Hall Agromonics, Fresno: “Our cotton is finally growing off pretty good. We did some things differently this year that we believe helped. One thing was to obtain cool germination figures on all the lots we had. Those with the best cool ratings were planted first, since we figured they would exhibit more vigor in cooler conditions. We found as much as a 15-20% difference in cool germination between lots of seed in the same variety. The warm germ ratings were all about the same, so they gave no indication about the cool germ. Seed companies supply the cool germ figures on request. They’re usually not on the bag.

“We boosted seeding rates a bit. Where we had lots with lower cool germ, we saved the seed until later when we figured it would be warm and cool germ wouldn’t be critical. We haven’t had to do much replanting, just single rows here and there.

“We were picking up a few mites in alfalfa before cotton was planted, to the point that they were defoliating spots. We’re now seeing pressure in cotton next to alfalfa. Based on the way mites have been working their way up the nodes on pima, we’ll have to treat some of that before 1st irrigation, which is unusual.

“A few early instar armyworms are turning up in cotton. I don’t see a treat-

ment situation yet. Numbers are low, plant populations are high, and we don’t want to disrupt beneficials.

“Overall, we’re building a strategy for earliness and attempting to minimize early costs. We’ve got pretty good moisture and will base the 1st irrigation on stress rather than a set schedule. We’ll be putting emphasis on protecting early fruiting positions and avoiding any over-fertilizing that would delay the crop and complicate defoliation.

“This isn’t a cookie-cutter year, that’s for sure. Growers are going to be nervous when they don’t see blooms on the 4th of July. I’m still optimistic, though. Those little cotyledon plants have a healthy green color and want to grow. I’ve seen plants really jump in the last week.”

Clay Houchin, PCA, Buttonwillow Warehouse, Buttonwillow: “We’ve treated a good deal of cotton for mites. In some fields, armyworms moved in quickly and compounded the damage already done by thrips. They ate into terminals and killed plants. We began applying Steward, and have been going with 4 oz/acre of Zephyr on a wide basis. The Zephyr is holding really well. I’m seeing almost no migration from the cotyledons up the plants.

“We’re treating most fields where we’re finding mites, especially in heavier soil. With the heat, plants will really take off after 1st irrigation. Mites are building, and we don’t want them to get too heavy this early.

“The first grower asked today for some Capture to treat lygus. I’m seeing lygus out there, but not at a point that concerns me. We don’t have a lot of pinhead squares. Some growers who don’t normally use it are now considering Temik for lygus and mites. But they’re also weighing their potential rotations to see if it really

fits.

“Growers who used it early haven’t had mite pressure, and we may be able to get by with one application of Zephyr on a lot of that.”

Pete Goodell, Extension IPM Entomologist, Kearney Ag Center, Parlier: “I was in cotton along Highway 99 today where lygus always seem to develop first. Lygus are there. It’s hard to say if they filtered in from roadside weeds or blew in from the hills. I was in fallow fields near there that have a lot of lambsquarter that was absolutely loaded with lygus. Also, I found lygus reproduction in cotton along the Fresno-Merced line. The field was packed with bigeye bugs, though, and is several weeks from squaring, so it’s not an immediate concern.

“We got maritime winds Thursday night that helped cool things down. Whether they helped relocate lygus from the foothills and weedy fields is something I can’t really say.”

Lowell Zelinski, Ind. PCA, Bakersfield: “We saw some stand reduction due to high temperatures. It’s not entirely unexpected with cotton already stressed, but not something you want to see. This has further thinned some stands that were already thin, but plants are dying randomly, so there are no large skips.

“With warm temperatures, the thrips level of damage is declining now that the cotton is finally outgrowing it. Armyworms are fairly widespread, and 10-15% of our fields required treatment.

“Mites are becoming fairly common. A lot of growers are moving toward 1st irrigation, so miticides are going out, primarily Zephyr. I’ve been sweeping alfalfa fields near our cotton in Kern County this last week and, surprisingly, lygus appeared to be fairly light.”