

# MiteFax: San Joaquin Valley Cotton

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Here is this week's *MiteFax*, sponsored by the California Cotton Team of Syngenta Crop Protection, maker of Caparol® herbicide.

We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Owen Taylor, Editor

## OVERVIEW

After a cooling trend last week, conditions this week turned a good deal warmer. Temperatures into the mid and high 90s are expected this weekend on a wide basis. PCAs already are looking ahead to first irrigation on earlier-planted cotton, and squaring isn't far off on some of those fields.

Miticide treatments have started, and a couple of our contacts this week said they were finding beet armyworms.

These reports were made Thursday and Friday.

## CROP REPORTS

*Chris Morgner, PCA, Agri-Valley Consulting, Merced:* "Cotton is pretty

quiet. We haven't run across any pest issues, and I've got some cotton at the fourth true leaf, and it's actively growing. Three of my earliest fields could be squaring in a couple of weeks. We're spraying herbicides. There's still a good bit of Roundup Ready cotton, as well as an increase in Phytogen varieties.

"But weeds really aren't that bad right now because we haven't had a lot of rain. When we were putting seed in the ground we also were ordering Staple. But after cotton emerged and we saw how clean things looked on a couple of ranches, we canceled part of it. We had Treflan down for grass. We're making this call on a ranch-by-ranch basis. In a year like this the perennial weeds may be the only ones requiring much attention because they'll be the only ones with a deep enough root system to matter.

"In a couple of cases we're adding Zephyr to Roundup. Mites aren't a problem, but those fields are downwind from alfalfa or other historic sources, so we'll make sure we've got the material in place.

"We're already planning irrigation

in about 2 weeks on a few early fields. By the end of May we'll have more irrigation going."

*Vern Crawford, PCA, Wilbur-Ellis Co., Shafter:* "We're finding some sugarbeet armyworms today (Thursday), which kind of shocked me. Up until now, there hasn't been a sign of them. The systemics are still holding in the cotton I'm working. Down toward the Old River area I know of one ranch with 1,200 acres of cotton that didn't have any Temik, and it's webbing over with mites. We're spraying all our almonds now with Agrimec.

"Growers who planted real early have cotton pushing the fourth leaf now, and there's some pressure in Roundup Ready cotton to stay in the application window. We've got cotton that's possible 10-14 days from first square. It's hard to imagine how rapidly this crop is moving."

*Galen Hiett, Independent PCA, Fresno:* "Cotton looks great, overall. It's in the four-leaf stage in many fields,

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and we've just about finished our Staple program. The wind held us up to a certain extent, but shielded sprayers have helped minimize the delays."

**Bob Hutmacher, Extension Cotton Specialist:** "We're settling into what looks like a good spring for early growth. The heat has toned down a bit. It was a little scary to see those tiny plants a few days ago with temperatures in the low to mid 90s and 35 mph winds.

"It looks like many people will have to do their first irrigation at least a little earlier than normal. The crop got off to an early, fast start, plus the weather is drying things out. Water use is real low right now. But if plants don't have a good root system tied into deeper moisture, there could be trouble. Not everyone will need to irrigate early, but we've got to be aware of that root system and whether it's adequate.

"I've mainly been in Kern and Fresno Counties this week. There are mites out there. I found some mild thrip injury in places and then began seeing mites. There's no guarantee that mites will be an immediate threat, but conditions are lining up that might predispose things to mite activity.

"I've also seen a little worm damage on plants at the four- to five-leaf stage. That was around Pixley and in a couple of places between Lemoore and Huron."

**Mike Molatore, PCA, Western Farm Service, Mettler:** "Cotton is

growing good, and conditions have been perfect. Most guys have an excellent stand. Mites are starting to show up. I guess they know that it's almost May 1.

"We have one field of cotyledon cotton that's being worked over by a beetle that, so far, we haven't quite identified. It's not in terminals yet, but it is eating all the green matter on the underside of the leaves. We'll try some Ammo, knowing full well that a miticide probably will be needed 10 days behind it. Some of the cotton isn't up yet, so putting out a miticide now wouldn't be practical."

**Dan Buchak, PCA, Gillespie Ag, Porterville:** "We've got cotton up to two true leaves and are doing our first Roundup applications over the top.

"Mites are lightly showing up on cotton without Temik or Thimet. I'm not seeing an indication of damage. With the hand lens, I'm finding an adult here and there with two or three eggs nearby. Nothing in this area is being treated. Stands look decent, and there's very little seedling disease. One guy had problems last year with seedling disease. He used Quadris this year, and it looks like it's doing a good job."

**Rick Sandberg, PCA, Agri-Consultants, Cantua Creek:** "We're spraying Staple and also getting ready to start our applications in Roundup Ready cotton. Right now we're mostly looking for mites. We aren't treating yet. There are enough out there, though,

that we'll probably start our Zephyr treatments in mid to late May, depending on how things progress."

## PIMA SUMMIT

**A reminder:** If you plan to attend the Pima Production Summit on May 11 (at the Visalia Convention Center) you must pre-register by May 7.

Fax your request to Harry Cline at Western Farm Press at 913-514-3641.

**Include:** your name, address, fax and phone numbers, the number of people who will be staying for lunch, and the number of acres of Pima you expect to grow in 2004.