

MiteFax: San Joaquin Valley Cotton

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Here is this week's *MiteFax: SJV Cotton*, sponsored by the **California Cotton Team of Syngenta Crop Protection**.

We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Owen Taylor, Editor

OVERVIEW

Everyone is taking the weatherman more seriously these days.

Heavy rains in parts of the valley on Thursday, May 5, were followed by more showers in the early part of this week. Some locations recorded up to 3 inches of rain from the May 5 storm, and totals of 1 to 2 inches weren't uncommon.

"A prediction of rain is no longer seen as a blip in the planting schedule," one of our contacts noted this week.

Another said: "After everything we've been through this season, we just assume it's going to rain if it's in the forecast."

The eventual effect of this season's wet, cold start is becoming a bit clearer, too. We're hearing more comments about seedling disease, questionable stands and crusting.

Nobody sees a looming train wreck, but skips and thin stands will be a reality in places.

We drew a comparison last week to the 1998 planting season, which seemed more like an extension of winter than the beginning of spring. But it didn't rain nearly as much that year. A couple of people have noted in the last couple of weeks that better seed treatment programs and use of in-furrow fungicides may have kept this season from taking a bigger slide.

These reports were made Thursday.

CROP REPORTS

Dale Deshane, PCA, Supervised Control, Bakersfield: "We planned to treat mites in some fields last Friday (May 6),

but then that downpour shut us down. Today (Thursday) is the first day we've been able to treat a few fields for mites. That rain came hard and heavy. There were potato diggers working in Edison that got stuck before they could even get out of the field.

"We can't figure out the worms. A lot of looper eggs were showing up, but they didn't all hatch. For the amount of eggs we found it looked like we would be overwhelmed. Three weeks ago there were five and six eggs per plant in places. But a high percentage never hatched out, probably due to the cold weather.

"Of those that did hatch, about 80% of the worms were loopers and 20% were armyworms. That was in some of our March-planted cotton. But we haven't sprayed any. They cycled out. You can see where they took out terminal here and there, and in some spots plants look pretty ratty from all the chewing. But nothing hap-

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pened that really called for a treatment.

“All the cotton that was up before last week’s rain looks good. A few guys planted the week before the rain, and those fields are in trouble. We don’t know if they’ll make it. Some of it went under water.”

Scott Foth, PCA, Britz Fertilizer, Five Points: “Disease hasn’t been too bad. We’re finding an occasional dying plant. A lot of people went with Quadris in furrow, and that probably helped. Cultivation is going on, and Staple applications are in progress. A slight amount of cotton was replanted earlier, but we’re to the point now that replanting isn’t an option.”

Galen Hiatt, Independent PCA, Fresno: “All my cotton looks fairly good, considering the conditions. But it’s sure been a difficult way to start a crop. Last week’s rain did benefit certain areas that had dry beds. But it’s made it hard to time weed control and stay on top of nightshade.

“We knew that rain was coming, and we waited to treat so more nightshade would emerge. But then it rained again, and that delayed treatments. I think every field on the west side needs to be treated at the same time. Last year we were doing Staple work 2 to 3 weeks earlier.”

Miguel Romero, PCA, Britz Fertilizer, Tulare: “The cotton planted earlier is picking up a lot of loopers and flower thrips. In one field today (Thursday) I saw quite a bit of saltmarsh caterpillars. In the next field there were loopers, beet armyworms and

flower thrips. That field has 3 leaves and is pushing 4, so we probably will have to do something. This came about very quickly. I looked at quite a few fields Friday, then again Tuesday and saw nothing. And then today they were there.”

Bob Hutmacher, Extension Cotton Specialist: “Plants are very much responding to the warmer weather – in both a positive and a negative way. Plants that are in relatively good shape are perking up and growing. But the heat also is taking a toll on plants that were weakened. Between the higher temperatures and the wind, some of them aren’t going to make it.

“There’s a fair amount of seedling disease damage, after all, and some stands are being thinned out quite a bit. It’s not a devastating situation, but losses are present in a lot of places. What I’m seeing is mainly rhizoctonia. I’ve found it in Tulare and Kings Counties and on the heavier soils of Fresno County. It’s in Kern County, but to a lesser extent.

“On the balance of things, this warmer weather ought to be an improvement over what we’ve had up until now. Most people probably upped their seeding rates at least a little, and in certain fields the overall loss of plants has been less than people expected. I’m getting calls now about whether stands are too thick.”

Sara Savary, PCA Crop Care Associates, Fresno: “With all this rainfall and warmer weather, weed treatments are a priority. We’ve got

to get the glyphosate treatments set up on the GMO cotton. We are seeing a little mite, which is not unusual. They usually start building after the first cultivation, which we’re just starting. I’m seeing butterflies, as some other people have reported, but no larvae or eggs.

“My cotton is mostly just throwing out the first true leaf. All of our cotton that is planted is up. Due to the way things worked out this year, one grower is going to plant a little more.”

Jerry Salvador, Salvador’s Consulting Service, Tranquility: “Probably 80-85% of the cotton looks pretty good. The other 15-20% is having problems. There’s been some replanting – some late replanting, in fact – and there are growers who’ve decided to switch from Pima to upland varieties on the replant.

“We’ve had cases where people questioned the vigor of some of the Pima. I don’t know of any problems like that with upland. I’ve seen some fourth and fifth leaves on cotton toward the west side of the valley. In this immediate area we’ve got the first true leaves and are working on the second, and a few plants are a little bigger than that.”