

# MiteFax: San Joaquin Valley Cotton

## Overview:

What a difference a year can make. Yes, it's been cold. And the wind has been blowing. But compared to 1998, nobody is really complaining.

Our contacts this week estimate that the crop is 14-21 days behind what they would consider normal. But with cotton planted during last month's warm spells, plants generally came out of the ground quickly. While cold weather has slowed growth, dry conditions have held off seedling diseases in most cases. Stands are generally uniform, and the majority of the SJV crop was planted within a relatively narrow window.

Some replanting has taken place to replace early stands damaged by cold and frost. But that remains a relatively small part of the crop.

A few fields in the southern valley have been treated for mites. Aphids also are evident, mainly in areas where they historically are a

problem. Several of our contacts also noted above-average aphid pressure in other crops this spring.

Pete Goodell, IPM Specialist, cautions a wait-and-see approach when dealing with early aphids.

"In most cases, they aren't going to be an economic factor," says Goodell. "With good conditions, cotton can outgrow minor problems. If you go for 10 days without seeing populations decline, then you have to weigh your options. But aphids at this point certainly have to be handled with kid gloves. Treating reduces the beneficial population. You also go through an early round of selection, which could leave you with a more persistent population through the rest of the season."

## Mite Report:

Warren Hutchings, General Manager, Calarco, Inc., Corcoran: "Most of our cotton is in the cotyledon stage. We've spotted some aphid on cotyledon cot-

ton, but it's no real concern right now. We're seeing both oakbird cherry and cotton aphid. Stands look good. We're in great shape."

Nick Groenenberg, Independent PCA, Hanford: "We aren't finding pests in the cotton. Cotton, overall, looks good, but on the tougher alkaline soils growers are having problems because it's so dry, and sprinklers are going in some fields. I've seen a little dampening off, but nothing of any real concern. Last year, planting was a bear. This year, it went really well. Most fields were worked up well, and everything went right."

Pete Goodell, Extension IPM Specialist, Kearney Ag Center: "I'm not finding anything in cotton. I had one call today (Friday) about grasshoppers in the Lost Hills area of Kern County. They were coming out of drying rangeland and the grower had Sevin bait out, but the insects were in such large numbers that they were overwhelming

Continued on next page

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it and eating into the first couple of hundred yards of the field. They weren't old enough to have wings, they just hopped along."

**Chris Morgner, PCA, Agri-Valley Consulting, Merced:** "For the most part, stands look pretty good. Most is at cotyledon, but the earliest plantings on April 14 are up to first true leaf. There's been a little dampening off. We haven't had any pest pressure. When you look, you see things, but nothing that merits concern. A few immature grasshoppers are evident. A few fields here still might be planted in cotton behind sugar beets, which are being harvested now. With the shorter season varieties available now, that's an option some growers could try."

**Ron Vargas, Extension Farm Advisor, Madera County:** "Cotton is just starting to emerge from the ground. We haven't heard of any problems. If we have some decent weather now, it will help. On the calendar, we're about 10 days behind normal. But most of the cotton came out of the ground in about 7 days, compared to when it takes 10-15 days in some seasons. So, warmer weather can catch us up pretty quickly now."

**Steve Lenander, PCA, Technicare, Bakersfield:** "Stands look pretty good. Everything planted before the warm spell has been replanted, and it's in good shape now. We had to replant maybe 10% of the acreage. In two or three locations, our growers are irrigating because it's dry."

**Bob Ritchie, PCA/Manager,**

**Simplot, Delano:** "Cotton is up and growing. Guys who waited and didn't try to plant in the cold weather are in good shape. But there was quite a bit of replanting where it was planted in late March and early April. Some of it looked okay, but it went through a frost. There was concern that the plants would be affected, so they replanted. All of the cotton is out of the ground except in a couple of cases where growers have had to water it up. No pest pressure is out there."

**Dale Deshane, PCA, Supervised Control, Bakersfield:** "As of today (Friday), we've treated three fields for mites. We applied Zephyr at the four-ounce rate. Mites primarily are coming off alfalfa, but in one case they are blowing out of cheeseweed from open desert. We also had three fields in the Lamont-Arvin area that were treated for darkling ground beetles. We applied Lanate by ground on a band. Normally, this isn't something we treat, but the grower was beginning to lose lots of his stand. Our oldest cotton is just putting on its first true leaf, but there's still a lot of cotyledon cotton out there."

**Rudy Perez, PCA, Western Farm Service, Firebaugh:** "We aren't treating anything. But one field in the area was treated for mites. I saw the machine running and pulled over. I thought the guy was applying Staple. I've been trying to plan some treatments, myself, and it seemed a little early. I asked the driver what he was spraying, and he showed me a Zephyr

container. A little replanting is underway. Some water is going where fields are getting too dry to keep up with the growing cotton. I just wish the weather was a little more consistent so we could begin to see some steady progress."

**Vern Crawford, PCA, Wilbur-Ellis Co., Shafter:** "Cotton stands, in general, look pretty good. Growth has been slow with all this cool weather, but a warming trend in the forecast could help bring things along. One grower is getting set up to irrigate because his ground is about dry and he wants fields to be ready if we do get into the 90s next week."

**Dan Buchak, PCA, Gillespie Ag Service, Porterville:** "I found one mite egg, but a western flower thrip was running around on the leaf, so the egg probably didn't last too long. One grower had a few aphid to jump on board, too. We're finding high numbers of ladybug beetle larvae in alfalfa, so hopefully they will move into cotton. Most of my growers applied Temik. Our most advanced cotton is probably pushing the two-leaf stage today (Friday). No seedling disease is evident. So far, none of my guys have had to replant."

**Steve Wright, Extension Farm Advisor, Tulare County:** "A few cotton aphids are showing up. We're getting calls from scattered areas. No treatments are being made that I've heard about or seen. A little replanting is going on, but it's mainly due to problems like planting too deep. All in all, things have gone pretty well."