



TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

SOUTHERN BLACKLANDS

PEST MANAGEMENT NEWS

WILLIAMSON AND MILAM COUNTIES

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Index:

- General Situation
- Grain
- Cotton

GENERAL SITUATION

More thunderstorms hit the Southern Blacklands last weekend bringing with them some high winds (reported in excess of 60 mph), hail (various size and intensity) and rain. Areas that received the most damage as a result of the hail include San Gabriel, North of Buckholts, and Granger, again. Rainfall accumulations ranged from 1.5 inches to over 5 inches from these storms, with most areas receiving around 2 inches. It was not all rosy for the areas that missed the hail, where high winds caused moderate to significant damage to corn and some cotton. Most fields of corn suffered varying degrees of "green snap", with reports of up to 50 percent of the stand being affected. In addition leaves were shredded and stripped from the plants similar to what hail damage would look like as a result of the winds. Even the cotton crop suffered broken stalks and lost and shredded leaves. However, as the week is progressing, the cotton is beginning to put out new healthy leaves from the terminal.

GRAIN

The biggest news this week in grain is in corn where most fields have symptoms of "green snap." This is a result of the strong winds that accompanied the recent thunderstorms this past weekend which caused stalk breakage. Information that I have seen on this condition indicate that corn plants are more prone to snapping during the rapid elongation stage of growth between V8 and tasseling which we are currently at.

Breaks in the stalk usually occur at nodes (along nodal plates) below the ear. When soil moisture and temperature conditions are favorable corn plants elongate rapidly but stalks are brittle. Stalk brittleness is greatest in rapidly growing corn under high temperature and high soil moisture conditions. There is speculation that rapidly growing plants because there has been little time for plants to develop lignified tissues at the nodes.

Vulnerability to green snap damage varies among hybrids. However, all hybrids are at

May 11, 2006

risk from such wind injury when they are growing rapidly prior to tasseling. In addition, the use of growth regulator herbicides such as 2,4-D or Banvel is also associated with stalk brittleness, especially if late application or application during hot, humid conditions occur. Once the crop tassels green snap problems generally disappear.

As I was out inspecting some of the corn to determine the cause of stalk breakage, I quickly found adult **Mexican Corn Rootworm (MCR)** beetles. Most of these beetles were found on top of the stalk where it had snapped and they were feeding on the liquid material that was seeping from the stalk. In other words, it is time for producers to begin inspecting for the adult beetles in fields where corn has been grown for multiple years. I expect adult beetle emergence to continue for approximately 10-14 more days and peak and that will be when these beetles will be at their peak. The adult beetles feed on pollen, tassels, leaves and really prefer feeding on corn silks. It is possible for the silk feeding to lead to pollination problems, but that appears to be more of a problem during dry years compared to what we are currently experiencing.

The important factor of knowing staying updated on the current population of MCR beetles is that fields of corn that have high numbers of MCR beetles this year are likely to have high levels of the MCR that can cause potential economic loss to the corn crop next year if planted on the same ground and if proper management strategies are not implemented, specifically the use of effective insecticides/transgenic technology that control the MCR, delayed planting and crop rotation. So, if you have any potential of planting corn in 2007 in a field where corn is currently growing, then you should monitor those fields over the next two weeks for MCR beetles. Grain sorghum is growing with very little problems at this point.

COTTON

Cotton ranges from still in the bag to approaching one-third grown square stage. **Thrips** levels have begin to come down as a result of insecticide applications and less migration pressure. A lot of the cotton has suffered varying degrees of damage as a result of thrips injury over the past two weeks. However, the good news is that

fields that the majority of the cotton is at or past the 6th true leaf stage as of now and these fields are withstanding higher levels of thrips with no injury occurring.

Aphid levels are relatively light this week. I have seen some aphids starting to begin colonizing cotton again this week, but levels remain low.

Beneficials insect levels are light as well, but we are starting to see some minute pirate bugs show up in some fields of cotton. In addition, on occasion some lady beetles can be found in fields.

Cotton fleahopper levels have remained low thus far. I expect some of the wild hosts of the fleahoppers are late developing due to the dry spring conditions and as a result the population of fleahoppers are still building up on these wild hosts. As the host plants begin to mature, I expect fleahoppers to begin migrating into cotton, which is likely to occur within the next 10 days based on experience.

When deciding on whether or not to make a fleahopper insecticide application consider number of fleahoppers present and percent square retention or percent blasted squares. Do not spray just because the cotton is beginning to square. Also, make sure that there are enough developing fruiting sites present to justify an application. It is not justifiable to treat cotton if plants are averaging only one fruiting site per plant. I think we sometimes “pull the trigger” to early on fleahopper applications. As you know, weather and even varieties play a factor in how a well the cotton fruits up early in the season. Some years, no matter how much one sprays, it is difficult to maintain a square set above 80% during the first 2-3 weeks of squaring. Generally, under cool and cloudy conditions, square set generally declines, and increases under hot and sunny conditions. If the cotton is just starting to square with less than one fruiting node per plant, more damage may be tolerated to allow a greater percentage of plants in fields to begin squaring. However, once the cotton is averaging one or more fruiting nodes per plant and fleahoppers are present and percent square set is below 80%, consider making an insecticide application in a timely manner. Percent square set can decrease from 90% to less than 50% in less than a week’s time under heavy levels of fleahoppers; therefore, it may be advantageous to treat for fleahoppers when counts

