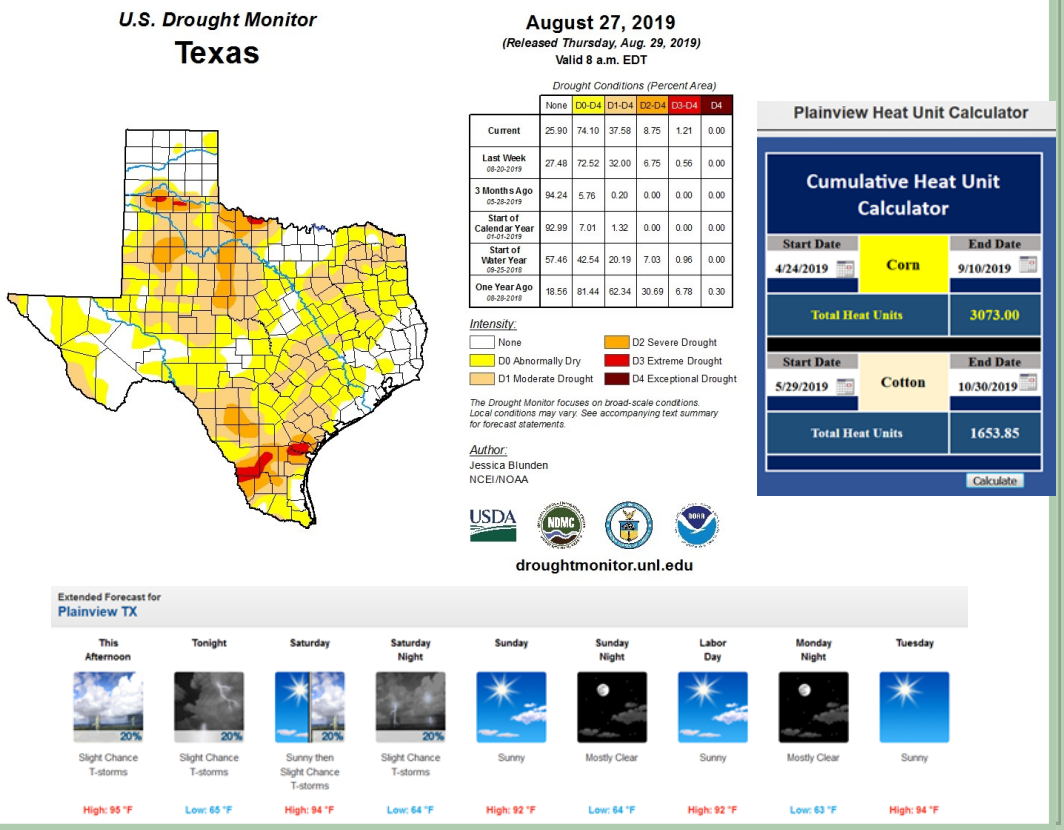
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Plains Pest Management News

AUGUST 30, 2019

General Status

On the pest front, not much has changed over the past few weeks except for a largely inconsequential increase in the Lygus population in cotton. This increase may or may not be economic with several factors to discern through for each field economics and treatment threshold. We are still treating for Banks grass mite and sugarcane aphids in corn and sorghum as they reach threshold on our re-plant grain fields, and the suspected to be troublesome migration of bollworms has not arrived yet. Crop stages have changed drastically over the past week. The vast majority of cotton has slammed abruptly into absolute cut-out of 3.5 NAWF or less with substantial drought or natural fruit shed. Older corn has desiccated past economic insect concerns, while younger corn and sorghum pollenate and begin grain fill. Harvest has started creeping in for our earliest grain and silage fields. Some corn for grain has been harvested and silage cutters are hard at work, often moving through some of our re-plant, younger fields that have no chance of being supported via irrigation alone. I made note of a combine cutting early planted, dryland sorghum this week. I have limited and varied reports of these early yields. They range from not too bad to less than we had hoped for.



Cotton

Smaller statured plants held as much fruit as pumping capacity without rain could hope for in this southern Swisher field.

All but 2 of our program cotton fields reached cut-out (3.5 NAWF) before the average last effective bloom date for cotton in the Plainview area of August 24th. Only 1 had not reached cut-out before the absolute last probability possible effective bloom date of August 27th and this field was at 3.8 NAWF on that date. Fall weather is still in play but, this should mean our late and stunted starting cotton crop this year should not be 'late' or experience unusually poor fiber quality issues as a result of a shortened season. We even had a few fields sporting open bolls this week. Unfortunately, most fields reached cut-out rather harshly in high heat under limited irrigation pumping capacity. All season long our fields have had pretty good fruit retention with fields holding as many bolls as we could hope for given situations. As most fields have not received any or too little helpful rains, the 'cut-out' fruit shed was rather harsh.

First open boll stage this week in southern Hale.

Bollworms remained a very rare sighting in our program cotton again, but Lygus increased in most fields with 1 Lygus per 4.5' to 9' row feet being fairly common. A few fields held even heavier populations of more than 1 Lygus per 2' row feet. With the 'natural' or 'weather' related fruit drop being so high in most fields, we made the decision that these possibly economic populations of Lygus were most likely only feeding on dime sized bolls that were already shedding. There was 1 field with Lygus at 1 per 1.92' row feet we did treat. In this case, the field is a smaller drip irrigated field with higher yield potential and was experiencing far less 'natural' fruit loss. Here, we felt the pest would be causing plenty of fruit damage and enough loss to warrant treatment.

The 'heavier' boll loads are rarer this year, but they do exist. Here is a phot of one in northern Hale.

We are still finding aphids in almost all fields at levels still below 2 aphids per leaf, pockets of increasing spider mites, with a few whiteflies and stink bugs in the mix. While increasing, the mites, whiteflies and stink bugs are all well below economic levels. The economic threshold for cotton without open bolls is about 50 aphids per leaf, while for fields with open cotton bolls, the threshold drops to 12 aphids per leaf to prevent any 'sticky cotton' issues. There have been some area cotton fields needing treatment for aphids. It is my understanding that most of these fields were treated for another pest earlier in the season with products that were harsh on beneficials causing an aphid flare.

Aphid spot checks have already begun for this southern Hale field. This field averaged 1.5 aphids per

As we move forward over the next few weeks, an increasing percentage of our cotton fields will show nothing but large bolls at the top of the plant and little younger fruit available to primary pests such as bollworms and Lygus to establish on or to cause any economic concern. Once fields reach this late stage, we can normally begin to relax the intensity of our field scouting and somewhat reduce irrigation to a boll-fill level. Please note: recent research conducted by Jim Bordovsky at Halfway strongly suggests these 'maintenance' irrigations stretching a bit longer into the early fall are proving very economical. As early as this next week, roughly 80% of our program fields may fall into this 'maintenance'/boll fill category. With aphids and open cotton in the mix, I recommend we at least continue to spot check for aphid flares and to make sure the mites, or stink bugs are not causing sticky or late feeding issues in our already 'set' cotton yields. For a full description of managing these pests late in the growing season, I recommend consulting our latest Cotton Insect Management Guide. https://lubbock.tamu.edu/files/2019/08/2019-Cotton-Insect-Control-Suggestions_ENTO090.pdf

Corn

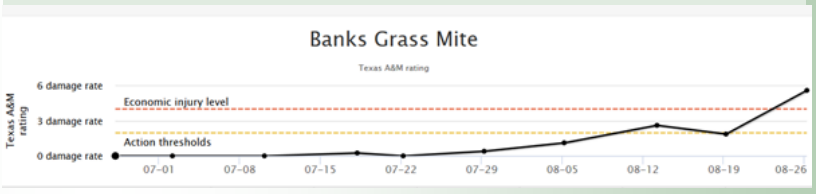
This week our program corn ranged in stage from blister to almost ready for the combine. All of our older corn fields are past economic pest damage and are hopefully not going to be lodging before ready to harvest considering the 'lazy root' they were hindered with that desiccated them so rapidly recently. No fall armyworms were found on the ear shanks in these fields with the already hanging ears. Most of our younger corn fields are in some level of dough stage. While very

Late corn in southern Hale this week.

few of these fields caught any substantial rain this week. The cooler temperatures we were blessed with for a few days aided greatly in allowing many beleaguered pivot systems to 'catch up' on the water needs of these fields. A few others were found to be a lost cause without moisture help this week and will be silaged to 'cut losses.'

Banks grass mites increased in the continued drought in all our later corn fields. A few breached our ET of 3.5 - 4 damage rating on our 0-10 mite damage scale in corn and required treatment. Please note that none of the available miticides can truly be utilized as a rescue treatment. IF the mites are threatening the field with quick population flares, we should get ahead of the population and prevent heavy damage up the plant which will cause yield reduction and lodging issues if allowed to develop too far. This is why 3.5 - 4 on the 0-10 scale is the action threshold. These miticides take a bit of time to corral the mites deep in the dense canopy rather than eradicating them quickly, which is, in truth, an impossibility.

This hot spot in a northwestern Floyd late corn field rated a 6 on the 0-10 scale. The field averaged to a 5.63 damage rating.



Despite some increase in corn diseases, the BGM was our only corn issue of note found.

Sorghum

This week our sorghum ranged in stage from flag to late dough. Sugarcane aphids (SCA) and BGM remain our pests of concern again this week in sorghum with headworms still a rare find with only a few fields holding more than 0.2 worms per head. As more of our late fields reached boot and bloom stage, the already established but slowly moving SCA population flared and required treatment. Thankfully, it looks as though if the first treatment achieves good coverage, SCA populations are staying below ET with beneficials mopping up any survivors. This is a pattern of SCA flare and treatment we have been repeating for a month already, as sorghum fields reach these reproductive stages. Those fields treated a month ago are still holding so far with SCA now hard to find in field.

225 Broadway, Suite 6
Plainview, TX 79072

Tel: 806.291.5267
Fax: 806.291.5266
E-mail: Blayne.Reed@ag.tamu.edu

WEB

http://
hale.agrilife.org

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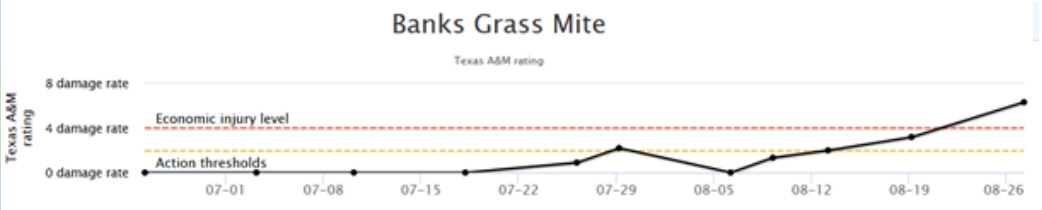
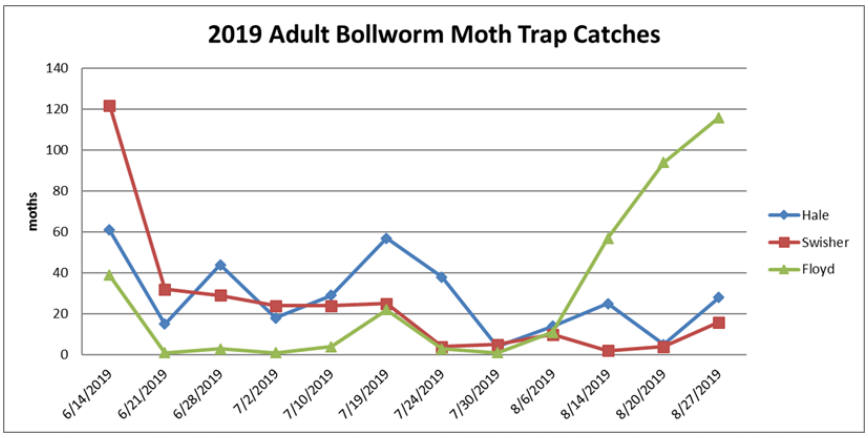
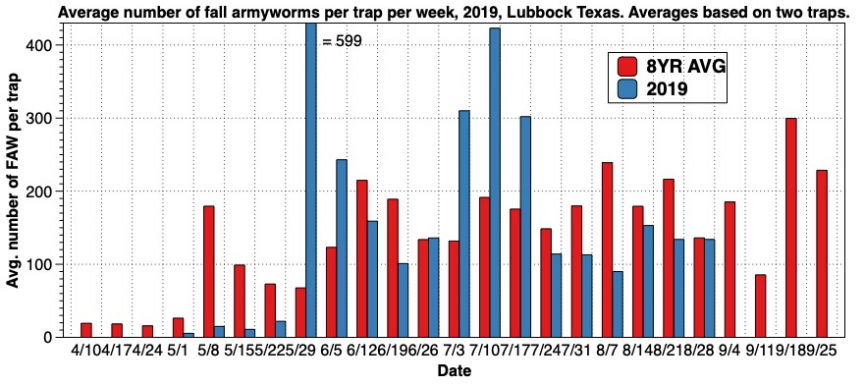


A northwestern Hale seed milo field that reached ET for BGM this week.

We had noted an unusually high amount of BGM in several of our older sorghum fields that had been contained by benefiicals once the SCA were removed. These populations have rebounded, likely as predators moved to richer hunting in the form of SCA or cotton aphids in other fields. A few required treatment for this pest this week to prevent yield loss and lodging issues in these seed milo fields.





Blayne Reed