TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

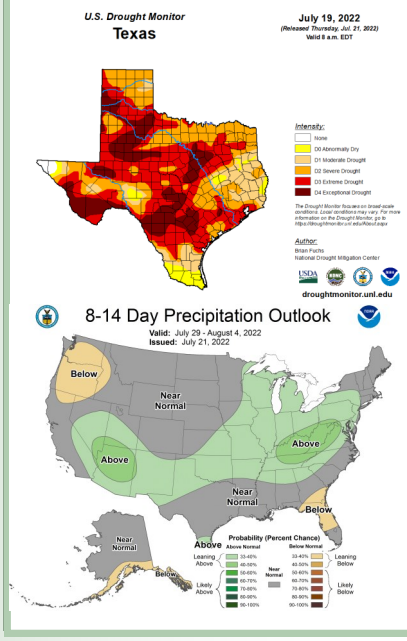
Plains Pest Management News

JULY 22. 2022

General Status

We felt that the days of 'giving the last rites' to fields that failed to establish or could not keep profit potential up under the extreme weather situations were behind us. While this should be true for just about any season we can think of, apparently it is not true this year. With most of our irrigations systems are already running at a strained maximum capacity, fields continue to fall behind, likely not obtaining even a 20% evapotranspiration rate. Much of the agronomic data collected from our field scouting program indicate the majority of our fields are about to enter serious drought stress. A few of our fields in these situations last week had a well go down or the irrigation system suffered mechanical or other issues. These fields dropped all profitability very quickly while they waited for repairs and the return of supplemental irrigations that could never come in time to save the fields. Fields dropped massive amounts of yield potential and, in many cases, stopped just about all vegetative and reproductive development before they were reluctantly abandoned too.

Even with all of the drought issues and ridiculous heat unit accumulation, there remain a good number of irrigated fields that still have yield potential and even a few we recommended light doses of PGRs for this week. These PGR fields were the careful exceptions but do represent some of the higher or at least best focused irrigation capacities in the area. These irrigation systems certainly look better than most field but will never be able to get ahead of the plants to build a bank of soil moisture. The ever-greedy cotton plants never save for tomorrow, typically using all the water applied to spend immediately on wasted vegetative growth. This forced us into the odd for the week roll of applying a touch of PGR in these cases to help keep the plant from getting rank and inefficient. Still, insects forced us into making treatments in a handful of other fields this week too.



Cotton

2 Fields of the same grower with differing irrigation capacities

Our PPM cotton ranged in stage from a late large matchhead square stage to a barely respirating and drouthy 4.3 NAWF (nodes above white flower). Most of our fields came in around a 6-8 NAWF range with a large group of these just entering the 1st week of blooming. Fleahoppers turned out to be our biggest concern again this week with a couple more fields requiring treatment. We also had many fields that increased in fleahopper numbers but were past fleahopper economic concerns and did not experience an increase in fruit loss to the pest. Fields entering the second week of blooming that express a very consistent bloom pattern should not have to worry about fleahoppers any longer. Both of our fields that had to be treated this week were in the first week of blooming where blooms were not consistent, or not blooming yet, and had a sharp increase in square drop due to the fleahopper feeding.

Lygus found in field this week.

Lygus also popped into our counts in a very big way for one late field. For whatever reason, Lygus adults moved into one 2/3 grown square stage field at a rate of 1 Lygus / 5.6 row feet and a fruit drop of 11.48%. Both were below economic levels, but a sharp increase from none found and a 6.3% fruit drop for this field the week before and with about half of our other fields only holding no Lygus at found at all and the other only up to 1 / 18 row feet or so. We will be watching this field closely as egg lay is likely ongoing. I expect there are more fields Lygus are moving into and focusing on in the area.

Fruit retention remains strong, but the number of fruit sites seem light.

Most of our cotton fields have a pretty light fruit drop, or conversely good fruit retention rate and beneficial populations of Nabids, big-eyed bugs, and lady beetles of several species are growing. This likely has helped keep the number of fleahopper sprays down and probably added to bollworm control too. Of the several fields we found with bollworm eggs last week, only a handful of

fields held worms or eggs at all this week showing mortality had to be high from both the environment and predators. The number of fruiting sites per plant does seem light compared to previous seasons and I am not sure if serious pest and, in particular, plant bugs issues arise, plants will be able to grow and make up lost fruit this year.

Bollworm egg on leaf.

Corn & Sorghum

We had another fairly uneventful week in our grain crop fields again this week with the only pest of note being the Banks grass mite (BGM). In our pollenating to early blister corn, their numbers creeped upward but stayed below economic levels with a 2.5 rating on the 0-10 damage scale. In our blooming sorghum, this same species of mite increased rapidly from a 0.5 or detection level up to a 3-3.5 level threatening economic levels closely. We did note an increase in the mite specific predators that could aid greatly for these fields. While these two fields are still below ET for the mites, I am getting multiple reports from our outstanding independent crop consultants, company representatives, and regional entomologists of severe difficulties in controlling BGM in our area this year with layby treatments not being enough to hold the pest at bay this year and rescue type treatments not bringing satisfactory results. I can state that we have a field research project to address this issue this year, but our site does not have the pressure to initiate our treatments yet. Our older data on mite efficacy could be extremely helpful at this time. That can be found among our research results on our Annual IPM Report, found here: https://hale.agrilife.org/ipm-2/

PPM corn in the heat this week.

Our late planted sorghum is currently at V2-4 this week. The only activity noted here was some surprising fall armyworm feeding. While this was light, it should be concerning as if a heavy population FAW were to start on sorghum this small can decimate a stand quickly.

Severe BGM damage (7.5 damage rating) from an UTC research plat a few years ago.

What are all these moths fluttering in my field?

Garden webworm adult

Smartweed borer adult

I have had multiple calls per day over the last couple of weeks about the moths currently fluttering about our cotton fields. With Bollworm moth trap numbers being relatively high, many were fearful they were a mass of worms about to strike. I am happy to report they are not bollworms. In fact, we have seen this species before, in notable numbers for about the last ten years. These moths are garden webworms and smart weed borers. They are relatively harmless to cotton with the larva only seeming to desire to feed on pigweed. That being stated, gardeners and horticulturalists should take note of this population. While these have been in our area for several years and we have not had any economic issues I am aware of, this is an exceptionally high population. I would assume it is called the 'garden' webworm for a reason.

Both of these moth species will be much smaller than the bollworm (corn earworm). The garden webworm larvae can be about the same size as a bollworm larvae until the bollworms reach their upper instar levels. The color pattern can appear similar too, but the webworm's larvae have a set pattern of black-dotted stripes running along their side above a lighter green line. Bollworm can come in just about any color but their pattern of spots will be evenly distributed around their body. Garden webworm larvae are also much more agitatable, responsive, and even down right feisty when disturbed.

Webworm damage to pigweed.

Garden webworm larvae

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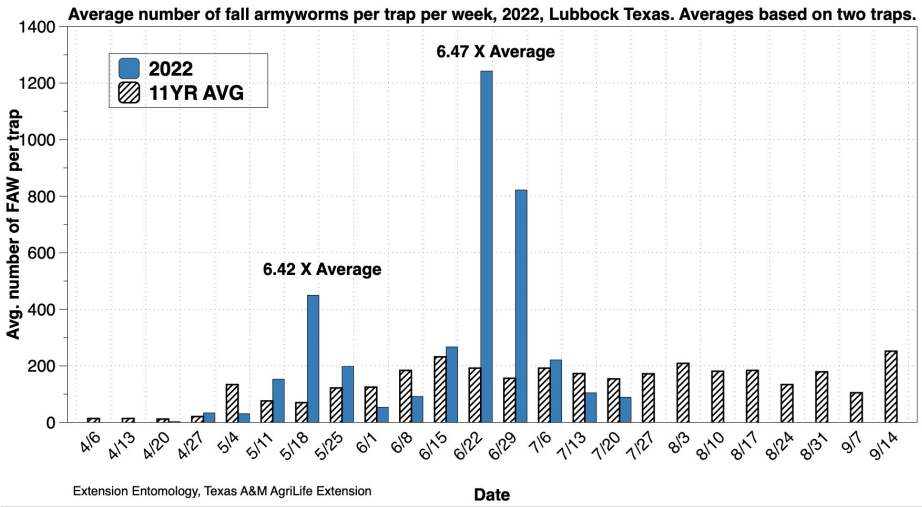

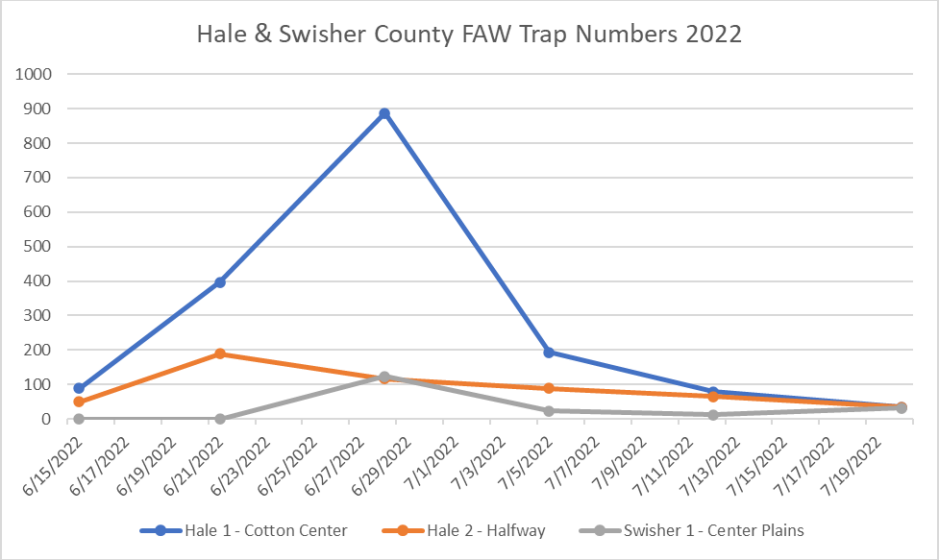

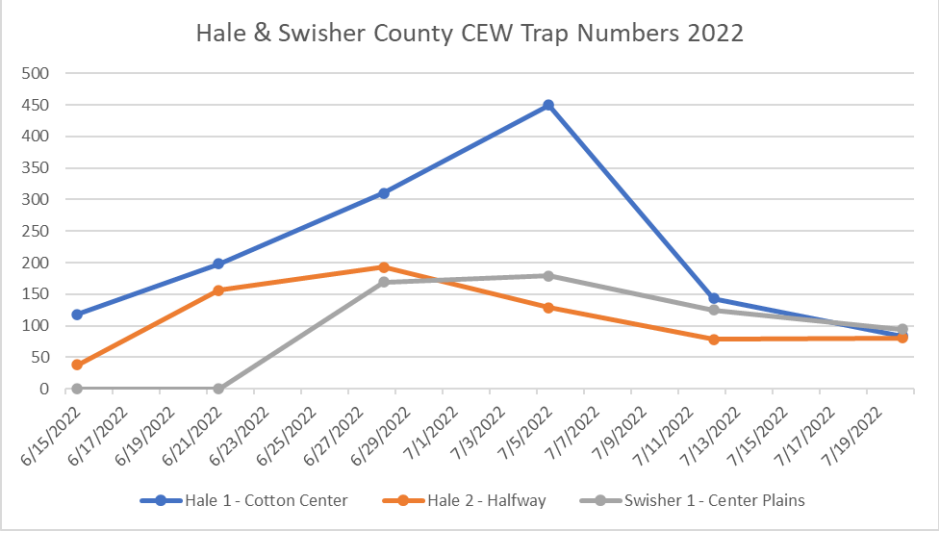

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