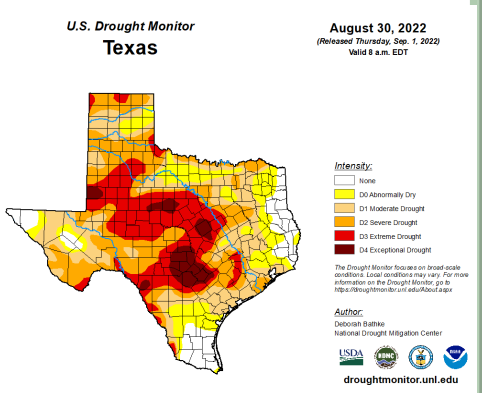
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Plains Pest Management News

SEPTEMBER 2, 2022

General Status

It's hard to believe that we might need a boat or at least a mud sled to get through the area to scout our thrice baked surviving summer crops this year, but it has happened. From various sources and impressions, over the past few weeks we have received roughly somewhere between 4-inches up to 8-inches, depending on where your field is in Hale and Swisher. Plenty of areas are still notably drier than others, but most have at least equaled the amount received in the last 12 months in the past few weeks while other areas have tripled the amount over the same timeframe. I maintain that all surviving fields have received some benefit from this moisture, and it could have fallen at a worse time, but it certainly could have come at a better time a few weeks earlier when most fields were in peak water use. Today only the latest of the summer crops and a potential wheat crop are getting the largest benefit. Meanwhile, we hope all of the open fields will soak up most of the moisture for later use and that a few of the playa lakes will bring some future recharge. We will rarely turn down a rain in West Texas. Despite the moisture, pest activity is dropping as the crops mature out and bolls pop open. At the same time, there remains a sliming minority of what I am referring to as lusher and later fields that pests and beneficials alike are 'crashing' for, causing some borderline calls to be made as the finish line nears. Regrowth in most 'drier' fields has already begun with junk squares jutting from newly developed branches and sucker heads in older sorghum. both might hamper harvest in their own way.



If you are looking to take advantage of the moisture and plant any wheat in the next few weeks, you may want to check out an article we put out this week dealing this some suggestions for managing wheat disease and early season pests carrying those likely issues: https://halecountyipm.blogspot.com/2022/08/early-wheat-planting-insect-and-disease.html

Cotton

We have been unable to get around very much of our Plains Pest Management scouting program cotton this week due to the rain and shape of the mud roads. Luckily, the majority have been cut-out for some time. The few of these we were able to visit had rapidly opening bolls, no insect activity found, and regrowth started. Admitting any regrowth issues will need to be dealt with at a later date, we focused on those slimming number of late and lush fields. All of these fields in our program are cut-out, but only reached that level last week and are still at risk for most late season pests, and will be again next week.

Bollworms, Lygus, and stink bugs remain active in these lush fields. Bollworms were again my primary focus for scouting but we still have not found any fields to treat this season. Moths remain active at a steady pace laying eggs in these fields and mortality from a beneficial population, weather, or just bolls maturing before eggs are lain are all working for our benefit so far. Most of these lush fields will remain at risk for worst case scenarios for worms at least one more week this year.

Stink bug on my drop cloth this week.

Lygus have mostly been controlled a few weeks ago for us in these fields, but they have increased in fields where we have not treated. Our highest population came in at 1 Lygus per 3.6 row feet, but the only fruit the Lygus seemed to be feeding upon were junk fruit with little chance of maturing in time. I would recommend a careful evaluation of the fruit any Lygus population is feeding upon this late in the season. It is not impossible that fields could need to be treated with the population that could be feeding on harvestable fruit, but we do not want to treat to save fruit that will not add to our crop anyway. There is a good chance that all of the junk fruit will be shed by next week and these Lygus could move to feeding on the harvestable bolls for another week.

Bollworm egg

Our largest issue was a manifestation of a couple of stink bug fields. We have 2 high yield potential fields where a variety of species are congregating around 1 stink bug per 3 row feet. Because common stink bug issues are relatively new to the High Plains, I am hoping to only utilize the drop cloths as a sentry to identify fields where stink bug issues are likely to be. Hopefully, this can prevent me from needing to dissect bolls from all at risk fields. Once I identify a location, then I am initiating the official boll dissection method for our official treatment threshold. It is proven that stink bugs can be in field and attempting to feed on cotton, but can often be unsuccessful in piercing through the outer boll area. Once a high enough percentage of harvestable bolls are truly damaged, then treatment would be required. However, in both of these PPM fields, the only stink bug feeding I could identify were on junk bolls, much like the Lygus damage from other fields. More than half of the stink bugs we found in these fields were nymphs. I

would assume that the younger nymphs will not be able to feed on the older bolls until they mature. We will have to monitor the stink bug situation, but stink bugs can damage fruit with 100 more heat units of development beyond Lygus and bollworms. Our lusher, high yielding fields will be at risk for stink bugs for a few more weeks at least.

Cotton field that will remain at risk for all major late season pests for a bit longer.

Sorghum & Corn

One of our PPM blooming fields in southern Hale today.

Our older sorghum has reached black line and is ready to dry down for harvest. Unfortunately, it has begun sucker-heading that could prove difficult if these heads make grain before a combine can grab the yielding heads. In our later sorghum, we were unable to scout all of these fields this week. All of our late fields can be considered 'lush' and are attractive to most insects still. All are currently in various stages of bloom. These fields are currently at risk of sorghum midge, sorghum aphid (SCA), headworms, and stink bugs. In all of these fields we were able to scout this week, all had borderline sorghum aphid populations, with growing colonies in spots with 17% to 45% plants infested levels and the ET remaining at 30% post boot. We have recommended treatment for those over the threshold but I am noting a serious beneficial population that is slowing the increase of the aphid population to a small percentage of population growth we have all witnessed from this aphid in the past.

To our worried relief, we found no sorghum midge, stink bugs, or headworms in the fields we have reached so far this week. Our adult moth trapping indicates that both the fall armyworm and corn earworm (headworm/bollworm) should still be actively looking for acceptable host plants, which these late sorghum fields will be ideal for the next several weeks, baring a great beneficial impact or other event to our aid.

Heavier infested SCA colony in central Hale today.

All of our corn is awaiting field conditions to dry before harvest can start. I have reports that many of the mite issues from the summer are starting to drop for the later corn with the higher moisture and cooler temperatures.

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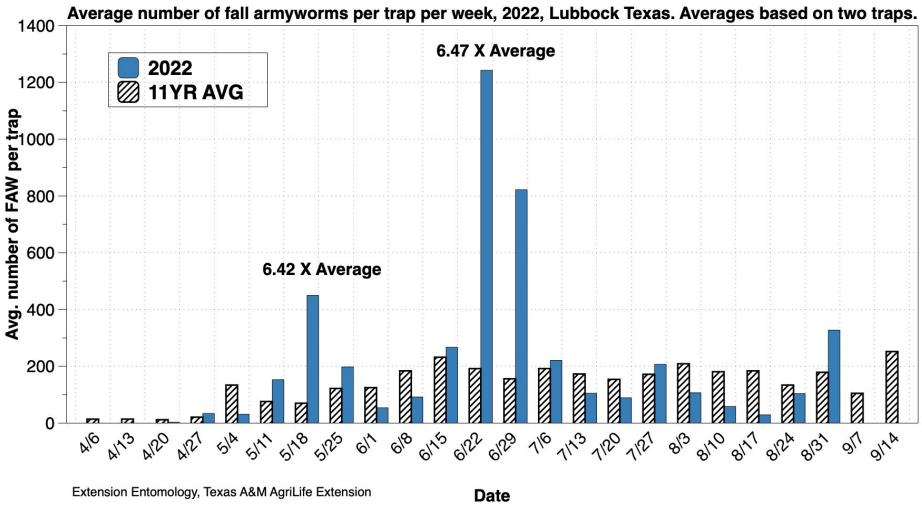

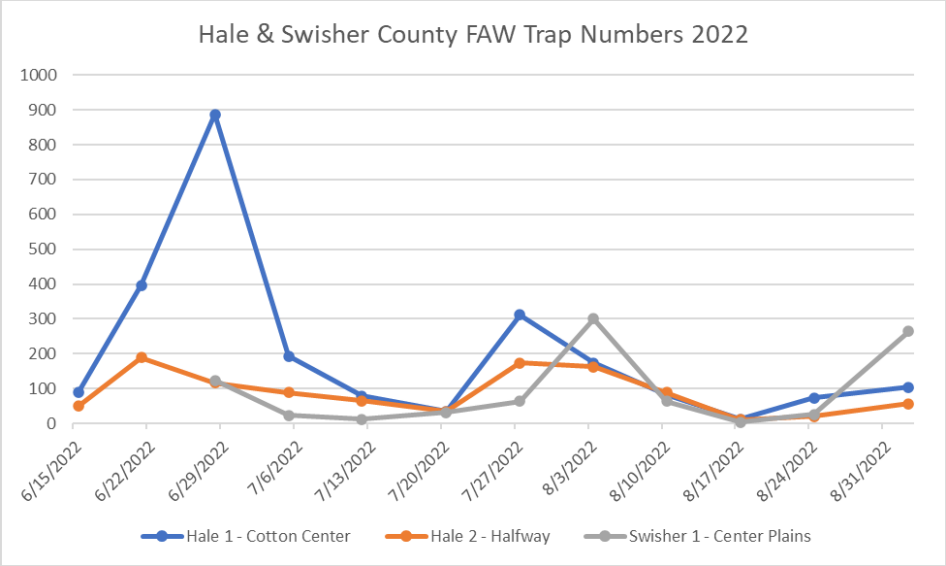

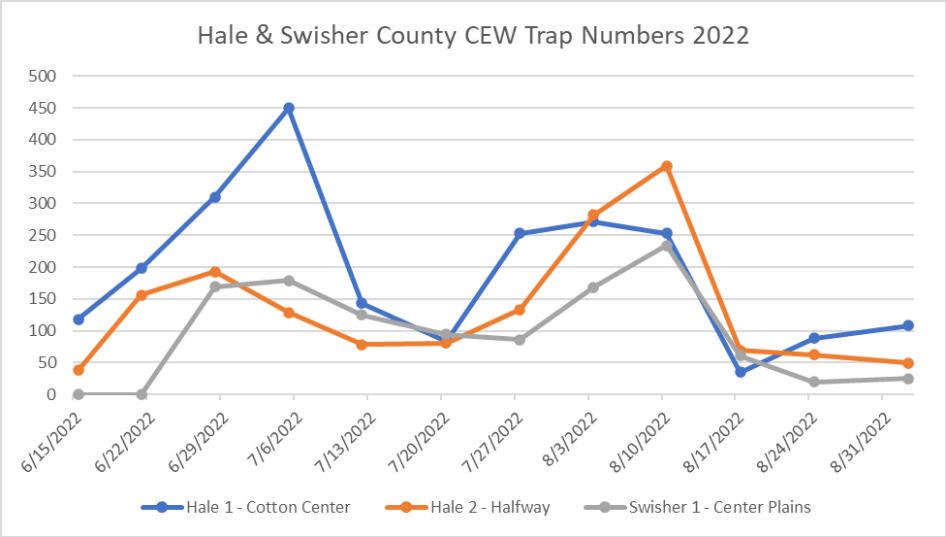

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