TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

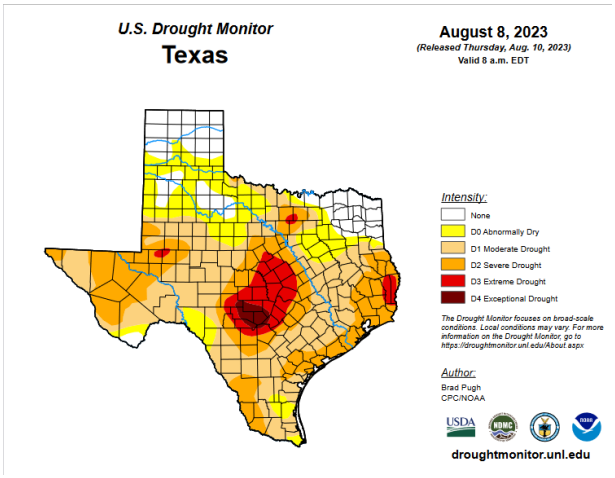
Plains Pest Management News

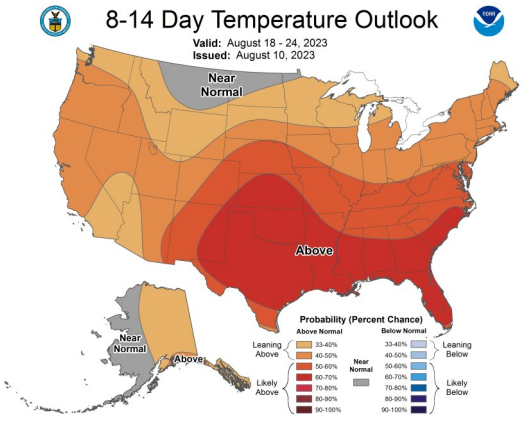
AUGUST 10, 2023

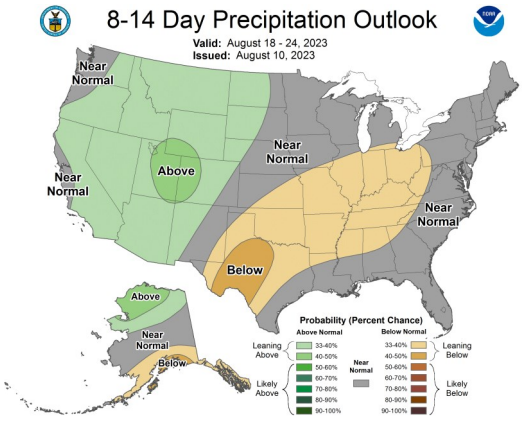
General Status

Boll load from a NE Hale field near absolute cut-out.

Dry and thirsty with overworked irrigation systems falling farther and farther behind. Most of our row crops are still at, just past, or coming into 'crunch time' or peak water use. There have been a few clouds that dropped some personalized rain in the area this week but most of us received less than a trace amount as a few drops fell most places. On the pest side, all of the pests populations we detected last week as increasing and on the horizon are still around. Some have increased, some have decreased, some new ones appeared, and some just moved sideways. For those pests that increased, we did have to treat a few fields to maintain economical control. Looks like we need to keep our shadows on the fields to stay on top of all the field work.



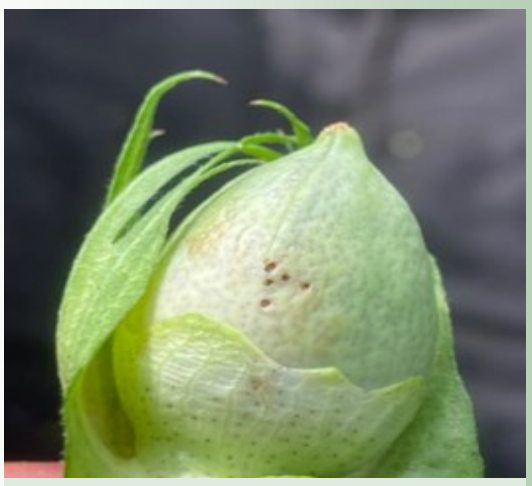




Cotton

This week our Plains Pest Management scouting program cotton ranged in stage from the hopeful dryland ½ grown square stage through 3.8 nodes above white flower (NAWF). Most fields were hovering around peak water use 6.2 NAWF through 4.1 with something of a cluster just over 5 NAWF and a few of the latest fields trying to turn rank and still coming in at over 7 NAWF. No field has reached the critical absolute cut-out yet but several are close with irrigation systems trying to set as many bolls as possible before the cut-out shed begins. once a field reaches this point, it sets all it possibly can with available moisture and stops developing new squares that have a chance of developing into bolls this summer (note regrowth develops new squares but they have not time to make). Generally, we like to target the reaching of this stage for around August 24th, the average last bloom date to effectively develop harvestable bolls, but we rarely reach that date with our lack of available irrigation capacity or timely rainfall.

On the pest front, if you can name a pest of bloom stage cotton, we have likely seen it this week, the irradicated from the region boll weevil aside. One of our main concerns last week were bollworms moving in from the eastern area. Beneficials looked to have helped us hold the threat down from hatching eggs for at least this week and the egg lay pressure seemed to slip. So far, we have only found bollworm eggs in some extreme northeastern fields or very near denting corn. Our highest egg lay came in around 3,000 eggs per acre and highest population of small bollworms at less than 800 per acre. As corn matures and moth traps not near corn show increases in moth activity, we are likely to see more worm activity later this month, probably around our second full moon of the month, a notorious time for moth activity.



A small bollworm was found trying to enter this dime sized boll under a bloom tag on this NE Hale this week.

Lygus nymph in a field beside I-27 on the Hale/Swisher line this week.

Lygus turned out to be our biggest threat this week. Most fields remained similar to last week with about 2/3 of the fields having Lygus found at all. Fields near recently mowed highway medians, bar ditches or fresh cut alfalfa had a heavy influx of Lygus that promptly laid eggs and began damaging small bolls and large squares forcing treatment for a this handful of fields. Our highest numbers came in around 1 Lygus per 2 row feet with a sharp increase in fruit drop. When assessing this new drop, we need to consider fruit load and water availability of the plant for fields nearing absolute cut-out as much of this drop will be lost naturally anyway. Our fields we recommended treatment on were all above 4 NAWF and most above 5 NAWF.

Other pests continue to pop up on our fields. Foliar feeders, such as cabbage loopers and true armyworms continue to be found in our non-Bt fields with regularity. Most remain below 3,000 per acre with no fruit damage found, but a few increased to around 8,000 per acre, but still with no fruit damage. The threshold for these pests is around 50,000 per acre or 6% fruit damage, similar to the bollworm, if they are feeding on any bolls or harvestable squares.

True armyworm (top) and looper beside Lygus damage along the Hale/Swisher

Corn

Corn entering dent in SW Hale this week.

Our PPM corn came in from V9 through early dent this week with most fields coming in in dough to late dough. Our biggest threat this week continues to be spider mites, and we are still only dealing with the Banks grass mite in our fields with no sign of two-spotted mites or the 'red mite' yet. We have not treated any of our fields yet, but mites are increasing rapidly, and we are in a 'race' between mites, beneficials and the finish line of past economic insect injury for about half of our older fields. All fields held some level of mites on our 0-10 damage rating scale with 3.5-4 being threshold. Most fields came in between 1.9 and 3.2 with a few older silage corn fields creeping just above the base threshold at 3.67. With harvest just 3-4 weeks away, and a moderate to good and increasing predator population battling the mites, this is a tough call to justify treatment. In some of the near critical fields, we noted a sharp increase in the six-spotted thrips population and a few mite fungal disease victims. We are hoping they will lend a hand but we are going to be double checking these fields earlier next week to see if treatment is clearly justified yet.

Small BGM colony at –1 leaf in SW Swisher mite hot spot this week.

Large BGM colony at –5 leaf in same SW Swisher mite hot spot. Note black and white predacious thrips in top left of photo and dry, dead, swollen mite carcasses from fungal disease beside live mites through colony.

Diseases in most fields are detectable, but not much over that anywhere we have scouted with a one or two fields sporting notable ear smut that is slightly above average for the area.

Six-spotted thrips

Sorghum

Our PPM sorghum ranged in stage from V8 to soft dough with most fields at a large VX to 10% bloom. All of our fields have some level of sorghum aphid, the pest formerly known as the sugarcane aphid, increasing in them. We have not had to pull the trigger on anything yet, but some are mighty close. Most fields have between 60% and 100% of plants with some level of aphids on them. We then have between 1% and 18% with colonies on at least 1 leaf per plant with over 50 per leaf with ET being 20% for whorl stage sorghum and 30% post boot. It remains astonishing to see this aphid's reproductive capabilities, but this still seems tempered by beneficials this year compared to when the aphid first arrived several seasons ago. Still, we do not need to let this aphid get ahead of us or they are really hard to stop. We also don't want to treat too early, with too much season left for them to rebuild. We are fairly sure we will be treating most if not all of our acres at some point, but we are also trying to time that treatment for max impact so one treatment will carry us for the balance of the year while preserving predators for all other pests species that are either in field or possible.

Sorghum aphids from the Hale/Swisher line this week.

Our youngest sorghum in N Hale has a long way to go yet.

Spidermites (BGM) are still an issue for most fields and remain high in select fields. This week, our highest fields came back as almost identical to last week with no increase, nor no beneficial headway made. We have a true battle ongoing in these fields similar to corn, but with the sorghum aphid and corn leaf aphid allowing the predators to work around multiple pests. We will see soon if they can continue to keep pace.

We will be taking our 10 DAT data from our 2023 Mite Product in Sorghum Efficacy Trial data early next week. Please look for our data sharing soon.

Applying treatments to our mites in sorghum research trial plots last week.

We are not finding any headworms in any booted field yet, but still note very mild fall armyworm activity in most whorl stage fields. All fields in bloom are susceptible to sorghum midge damage, and we are now past the average midge migratory arrival date, but we have not found any in our fields yet.

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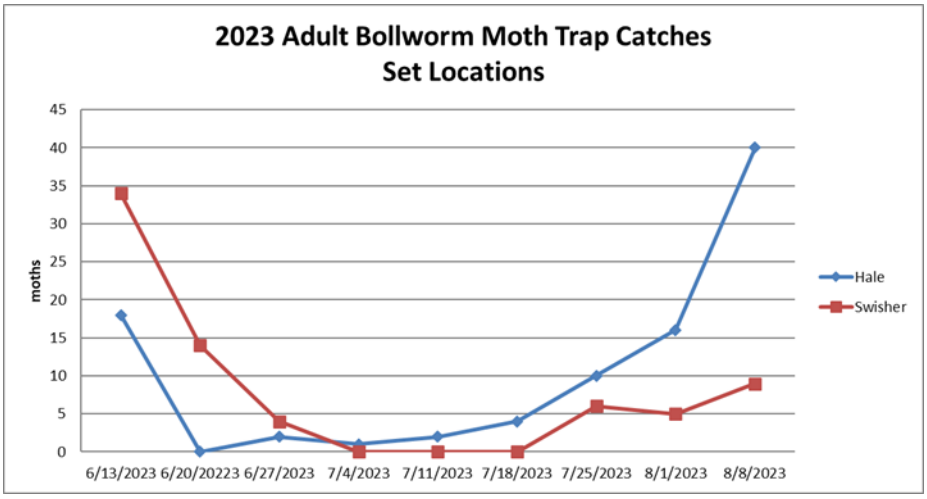

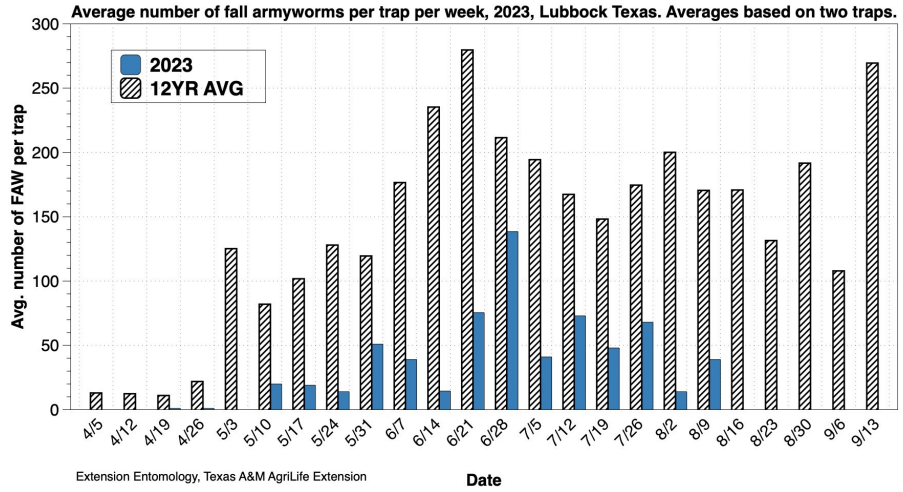

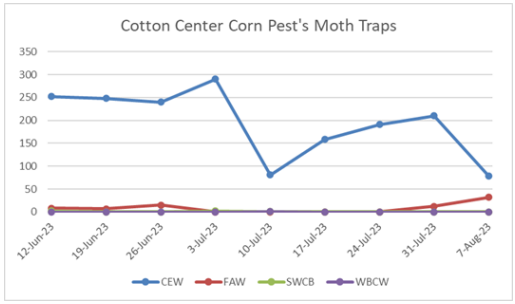

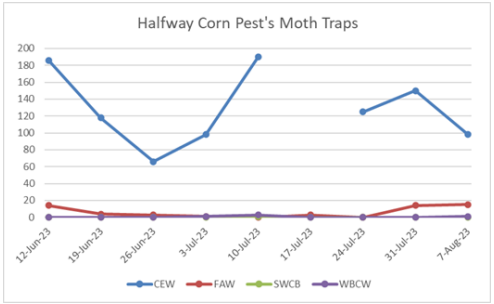

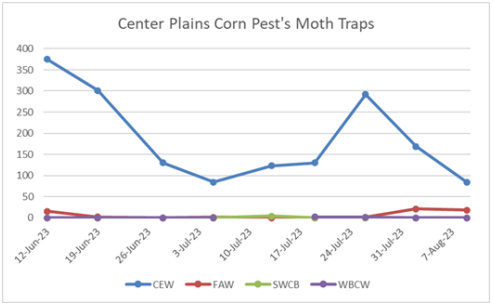

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