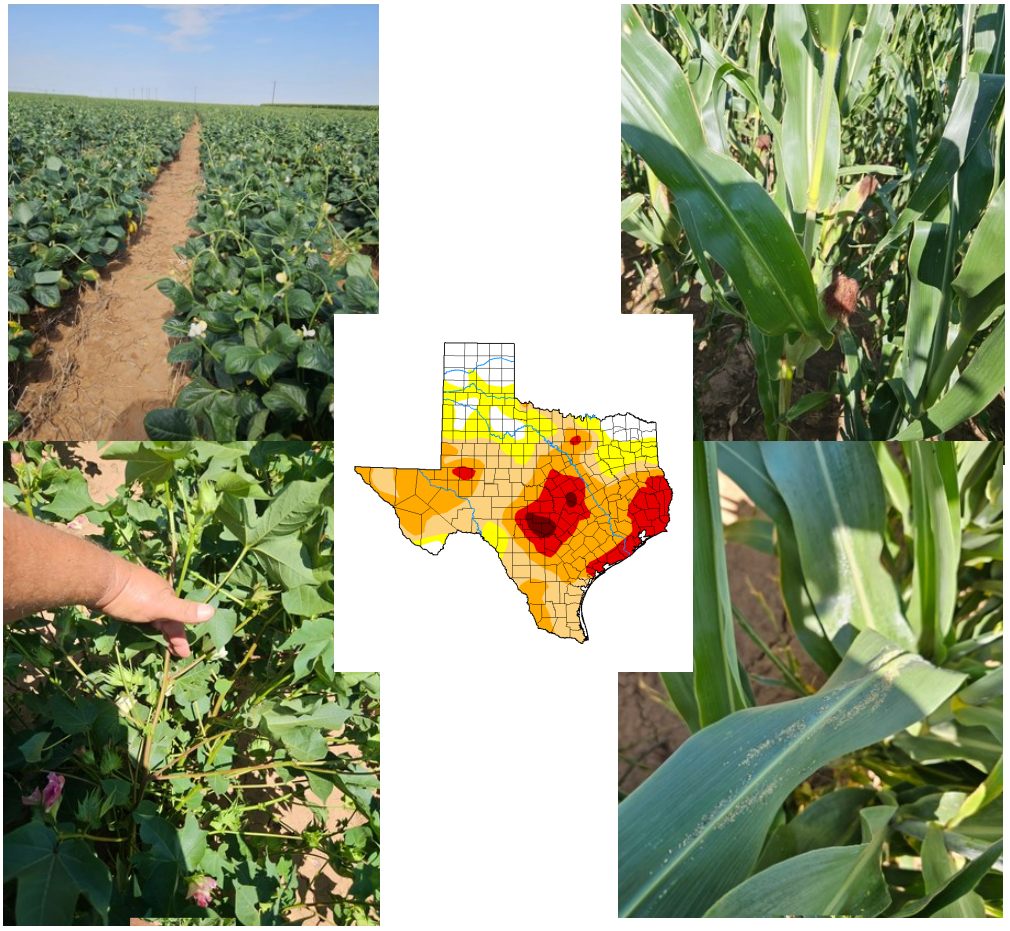
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Plains Pest Management News

AUGUST 18, 2023

General Status

It remains hot and dry with triple digit temperatures during most days for the past several weeks. It was also late June when most of our acres seen any moisture above a few hundredths. This has put an all-too-familiar need on our irrigation systems that they just cannot meet any longer. We have watched our primary summer crops slip behind bit by bit during our late and somewhat scattered 'crunch time' or peak water use. Meanwhile, we have a healthy and wide array of pests active in all of our major crops, prompting various treatments to maintain control and prevent yield and economic loss. So far, these treatments were not as widespread as expected, given the pest numbers, with a solid population of beneficials providing some relief and keeping some fields from reaching economic pest levels for a while. Still, we remain on high alert for multiple pests in cotton, corn, and sorghum, managing and saving as much potential from this 2023 crop as we can.

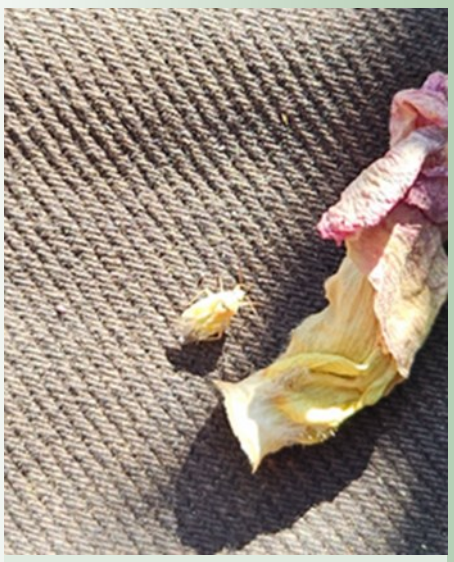


This week we have had Lygus in cotton and black-eyed peas, mites in corn and sorghum, and sorghum aphids in sorghum treated in our PPM scouting program.

Cotton

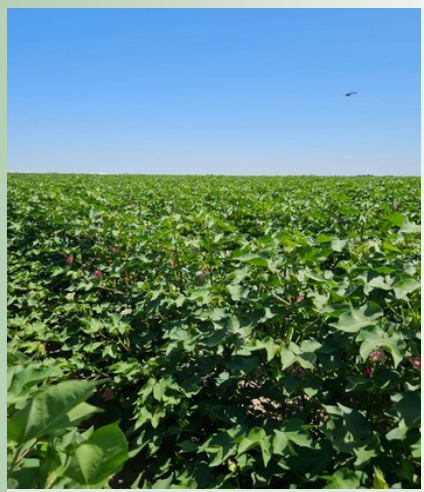
This week our PPM cotton ranged in stage from the very late planted and hopeful dryland at 9/10 grown square through absolute cut-out. The majority of our irrigated fields are splitting into two distinct groups. One group is about to reach absolute cut-out (3.5 NAWF) or has already reached it this week. The other is either later or better watered and is still hovering between 5 NAWF and 7.5 NAWF. With the average last effective bloom date for the Plainview area being August 24th (the absolute, 100% sure date has already passed), there are legitimate concerns about these fields running way late with a middle and upper crop that has no chance of making if it continues much farther. The majority of our pest issues were also in this lusher group of cotton fields. Treatment decisions in these fields need to be based upon damage or potential damage to realistically harvestable fruit and not fruit with none to little chance of harvest. Despite this consideration, we had a handful of lush fields we were forced to treat heavy Lygus populations that were damaging harvestable fruit.

NE Hale field at 3.75 NAWF this week.



Adult Lygus from a SW Swisher field this week found on one of our data sets.

Our heaviest Lygus population came in at 1 Lygus per 1.2 row feet with a sharp increase in boll damage and makable square drop but other treatable populations came in around 1 Lygus per 2-3 row feet. The Lygus population increased across most of the area with almost all fields in our program, regardless of stage group, had some level of Lygus pressure this week, with most coming in below ET around 1 Lygus per 6 to 12 row feet with minor damage. Alongside one of our treated Lygus issue fields was a population of stink bugs doing notable damage or bolls. While this stink bug population was sub-economic alone, it did influence our Lygus treatment option toward a broader spectrum insecticide. Please consult our Managing Cotton Insects in Texas for treatment options for all pests: https://lubbock.tamu.edu/files/2022/07/managing-cotton-insects-in-texas.pdf



SE Swisher field at 7.5 NAWF this week.

Assorted Lygus nymphs

Assorted loopers and Lygus nymphs on a Swisher drop cloth today.

Bollworm egg on a cotton leaf.

Other cotton pests were much lighter this week, but not absent. We are still finding bollworm eggs in around 15% of our fields, still primarily on the eastern side of the area or very near denting corn with no other grain crop host plant option. Most of these finds still were fairly light, coming in with just 3,000 or fewer eggs per acre, but one lusher field came in at 11,825 per acre. No bollworm larvae were found in our field this week and our active beneficial populations in our area cotton are suspected to be playing a major role in this, likely alongside the high heat. Cabbage loopers and true armyworms continue to turn up in our non-Bt fields at levels far below economic levels with populations hovering around 4,000 top 8,000 per acre. In a few of the older cotton fields, we are picking up spider mites in very small colonies on the upper leaves, primarily in our southern-most fields but not exclusively.

Corn

Our oldest corn is close to being past insect damage.

Our PPM corn ranged in stage from V11 through dent this week. Our oldest field just needs one more good development week to be past economic insect damage and can start drying down for harvest while our youngest fields have a long, long way to go. Banks grass mites remain our largest and almost only pest concern in all corn fields this week with several fields slipping above threshold and requiring treatment. On the other hand, we had more fields turn the corner with mite specific predators emptying colonies enough to preventing treatment while the corn finishes maturing its last few weeks of development. All of the mites we are finding in our corn fields are Banks with no two-spots found, but we have seen some two-spotted mites in other area crops. Corn diseases seem to have stopped increasing the past few weeks in the high heat.

BGM increased well above the ear in some fields forcing late treatment this

Our youngest, corn has notable mites to watch as it develops this fall.

Sorghum

Our PPM sorghum ranged in stage from VX through soft dough this week. Our most troublesome pests in sorghum this week remained the secondary leaf feeders in the form of Banks grass mites and the sorghum aphid (formerly known as the sugarcane aphid). While we had to treat several fields for both of these pests this week, it was not as many as we expected. Again, notable populations of beneficials likely helped here also. However, none of these fields are free from concern. Populations remain in all of our fields and with most fields just in boot to early bloom stages and a long way from the finish line.

After being identical last week, some sorghum increased in aphid pressure while others decreased.

All of our sorghum fields held some level of sorghum aphid with some crashing lower and some increasing rapidly. It remains anyone's guess as to the root cause of the difference. Many have expected the 'tolerant' lines to have been the sorghum fields to have dropped but this did not bear out with what we were seeing where. The 'tolerant' lines, as much of our older research and data suggests, reach economic levels about the same time, but have a lighter population when they reach that level. My early suspicion is the presence of the a high number corn leaf aphids in fields where the sorghum aphid increased to over ET this week and an ability of the predators to focus on the sorghum aphid where they dropped in numbers. Either way, this population can rebound and move quickly and I recommend most sorghum field go to a 3-4 day scouting period for this aphid this week. We could yet need to treat all area sorghum for sorghum aphids before this late crop's season ends. For fields treated this week or for any pre-boot fields, I certainly recommend the products with the longest residual possible to avoid resprays if at all possible. We are very likely to have sources of reinfestation in the area with many dryland and even lightly irrigated sorghum fields under consideration for abandonment at this time. Any abandoned sorghum will likely not be treated and will be a source for reinfestation to all remaining fields.

BGM damage in NW Hale sorghum this week.

Banks grass mites are also in all of our sorghum fields. In just a few, they increased above economic levels and required treatment but remained steady in all others. In the fields where the mites increased this week, the sorghum aphid decreased or remained steady. We still have not found any sorghum midge in our blooming sorghum but did find one lone headworm in a dough stage field resulting in 0.05 fall armyworms per head. However, we are still seeing some whorl stage feeding from FAW at light levels area-wide.

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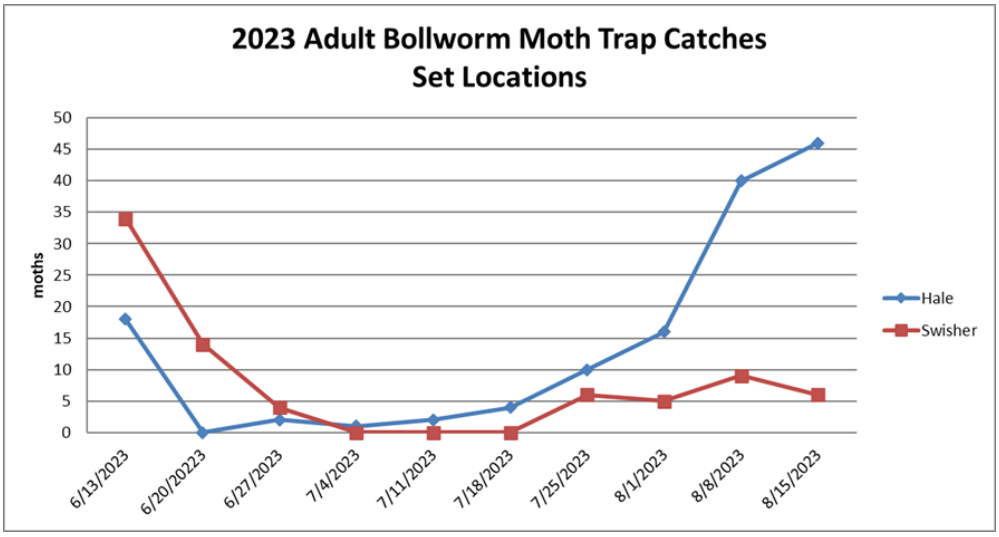

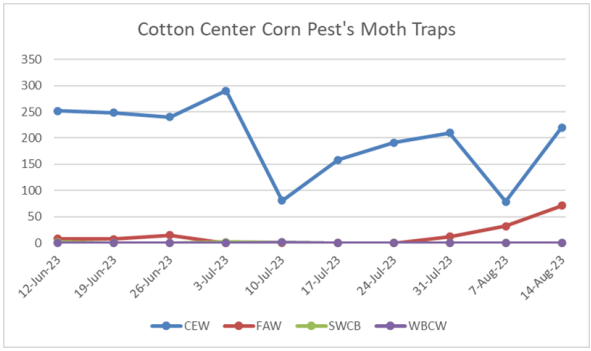

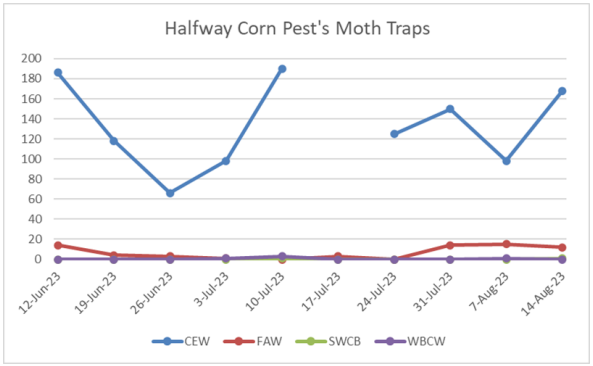

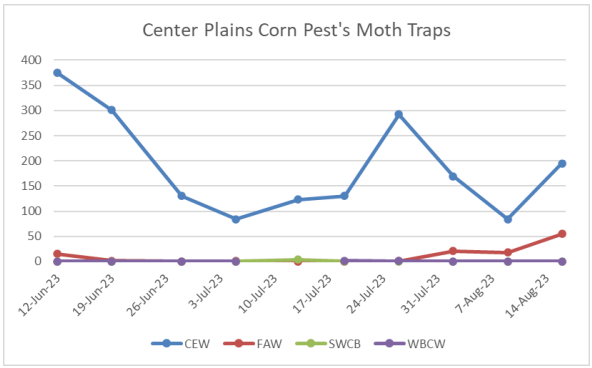

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