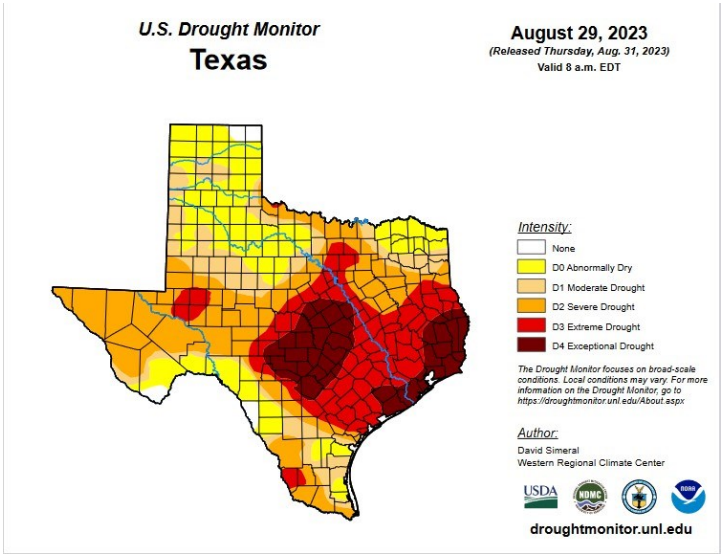
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Plains Pest Management News

SEPTEMBER 1, 2023

General Status

Not much has changed from last week, despite the move into September. Part of that is our late crop and part is the unrelenting drought conditions but mostly it is the unrelenting pest pressure. A few spotty rain showers passed through the area this week. Very few of us in Hale and Swisher received any appreciable amounts. Most received a trace up to a about 0.5" with most receiving a few hundredths. Regardless of amount, it was difficult to tell any moisture had fallen 24 hours later with very little gained for area crops. Things are usually starting to wind down around this time of year. Crops typically develop passed economic insect damage or we see pest populations drop as the days shorten. So far this year, the pests just will not slow, continuing to press most fields for us. Meanwhile most fields are late but we also have sizable minority of fields that have not even reached peak water use yet.



Lygus, bollworm/headworm, and sorghum aphid populations found in our fields this week still causing economic concerns and even some issues.

Cotton

SE Swisher field this week still blooming.

This week our PPM cotton ranged in stage from 4 NAWF to absolute cut-out. Only a few fields had reached a point where they were past economic insect damage with large bolls up to and no smaller fruit developing. More fields, typically our lushest and best irrigated, were still blooming out the top. Blooms set today have a very slim chance of developing into harvestable bolls, but in the majority of our fields we still have smaller fruit that can make but has not developed into larger bolls and are thus susceptible to a variety of pests.

S Swisher field this week with large bolls up top, and few, if any blooms and small bolls left to develop should be past most pest damage.

Historically, bollworms would be our largest and latest pest of note. This has not been the case for several seasons and not consistently in many years. Corn (a much more preferred host plant) is being planted later in the season through early summer and is attracting most of our 'native' bollworm population and we have not had the bollworm migration again this year yet. We are finding bollworm eggs again this week, with a bit more consistency across the area, but we are seeing very few worms develop and establish in cotton. We did find a few light populations of usually less than 1,000 worms per acre with damage so light it was hardly noticeable. A very respectable population of beneficials have greatly added to a limited bollworm and cotton aphid problem this year.

The all too familiar image of multiple Lygus on our drop cloths this week.

Lygus, however, are making nuisances of themselves at a level higher than we have ever noted this late in the year. Lygus are in every field, unless treated recently, and we are steadily trying to determine if they are doing economic damage this late or not. This determination is on a field-by-field basis. Bolls are susceptible to Lygus damage until about the 350-heat unit mark, which is still a bit off for several of our fields for bolls that can and should be harvestable. To add to the difficulty of this decision, many fields are experiencing the normal increase of fruit drop associated with absolute cut-out and we are determining if bolls are falling due to feeding damage or natural shed. We even have a few fields lush enough that the Lygus are almost only focusing on squares and the smallest of bolls, both examples of fruit that has almost zero chance of developing into harvestable bolls.

Multiple Lygus feedings to a small boll with a chance of developing this week.

We have made the determination to let some fields of Lygus go because they are not hurting the field economically, and treated others with similarly high populations because we determined they were hurting the field economically. I can admit that this late, in some fields, we have opted for cheaper, broader spectrum insecticides to solve this ridiculously late issue. So far, we have gotten away with it without flaring aphids.

Stink bugs continue to show in some area fields, and we have noted some boll damage through use of the boll dissection method. Nothing has shown to be an economic problem alone yet but some have been close and alongside Lygus populations helping us make our decision to treat the field a bit easier. Stink bugs should be able to damage bolls almost to the point where they crack open, so we will need to be scouting for this pest through harvest aid season.

Corn

All of our older corn fields have either been silage or have the combine on the way. Our youngest fields have quite a ways to go. As of early this week, they were around VX to green silk stage. Spidermites are the main concern we note for these fields this week. All of these colonies were still Banks grass mite and still increasing in damage rating. None were economic yet. Our highest pressure was rated at an increased 1.89 on our 0-10 mite damage rating scale with 3.5 being threshold. Mites, especially BGM, would typically be crashing fairly hard this time of year. We strongly believe this is linked with the amount of morning dew we usually have in our fields in late August through early September aiding in the transmission of mite fungal diseases coinciding with corn maturity and dry down. This season, we have only had one day with this usual dew clinging to the plants through mid-morning and we have many area late corn and sorghum fields still providing excellent host plants. Hopefully, this will change soon as night time temperatures continue to slip to the cool and cold side while still providing a long enough season to develop the crops.

A late Central Hale corn field this week is in peak water use and is very attractive to earworms.

We are noting heavy bollworm/earworm egg lay in this late corn. All of our fields have either the VIP Bt trait or are non-Bt, where these worms should not be an economic issue. 2-trait Bt corn that is this late might present a problem once the worms lose their cannibalistic traits in those fields. A plan to control worms in this situation probably should be formulated.

View from our oldest sorghum in NE Hale this week. Old and treated to stop them mite damage can be noted on the lower leaves.

Sorghum

Our program sorghum and silage sorghum ranged in stage from VX through late dough. Most grain fields are from late bloom through soft dough and no silage field has gotten to a consistent flag leaf yet. An uptick in fall armyworm damage in whorl stage fields was noted this week but remains far below ET. Some headworm activity was found in several soft dough fields also, with most of the worms being fall armyworm but this remained far below ET also with most fields holding less than 0.1 worm per head. The sorghum aphid, formerly known as the sugarcane aphid, remains our largest threat. So far, we have had to treat about half of our sorghum fields of all type.

Freshly hatched ladybug larvae try to make a dent in a runaway sorghum aphid colony in an UTC from one of our efficacy trials this week.

Aphid populations continue to follow the trend of being higher in lush fields and struggling in drought stressed fields. A healthy beneficial population is working on this pest, decreasing them in dry fields and aiding greatly in holding them low in treated fields, but are not at a level that can control the aphid alone, if the aphid is in full reproductive capacity.

FAW from a sorghum head in SW Swisher this week.

Mites, all still the BGM, are steadily problematic alongside the aphid. We did not have any field reach ET for the mite this week although the did move up the plant in the more drought stressed fields. This was not a case of the mites actually increasing in number, but rather advancing up the plant as lower leaves desiccated from drought. I urge producers that if this mite population needs treatment, please preserve the beneficial population. Without them, the sorghum aphid could and likely will be unstoppable.

BGM mixed with SCA in SW Swisher this week.

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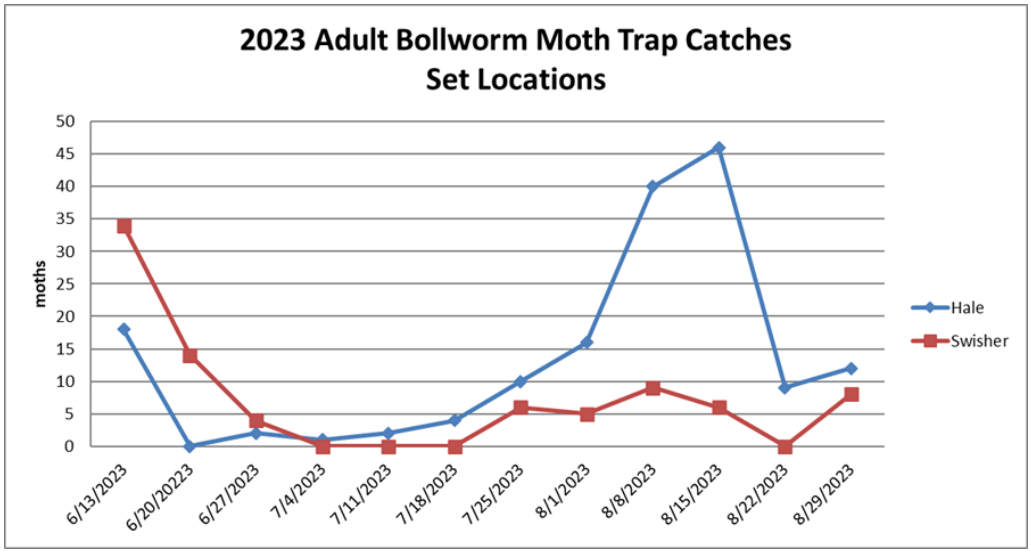

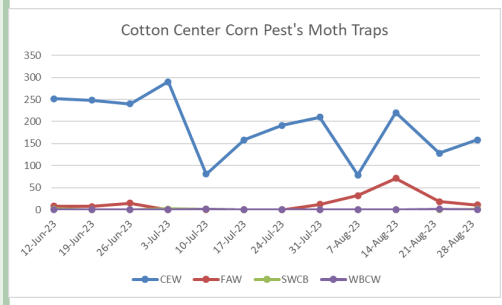

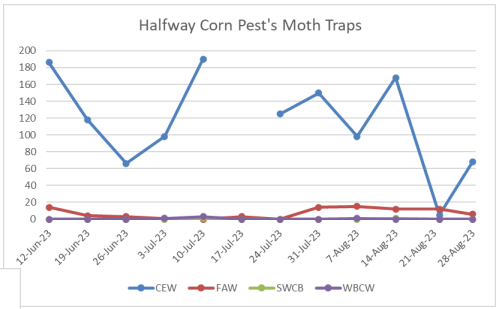

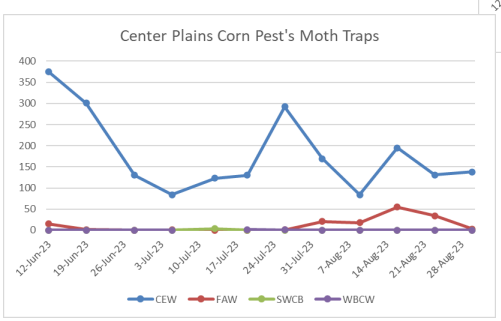

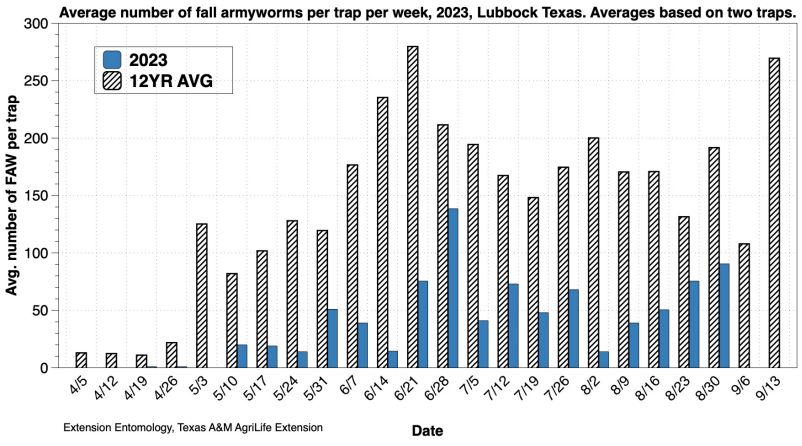

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