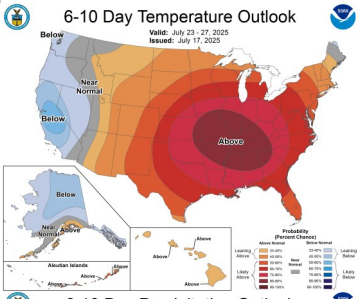
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

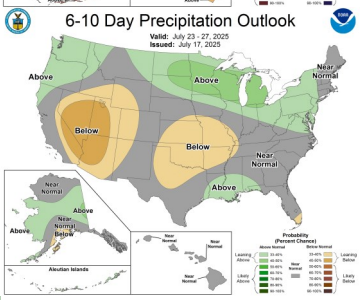
Plains Pest Management News

JULY 18, 2025

General Status

We still have a very high level of insect activity in all of our summer crops again this week making this year the most active pest summer we have had in quite some time. And it does not look like it is slowing. Yet we should be hesitant to call any of these pests area wide. While we are finding multiple pests across all areas and in every corner of our Plains Pest Management scouting fields across Hale, Swisher and some of Floyd, pressure remains on a field-by-field basis. On multiple occasions this week, we found threshold pests in our scouting fields adjacent and / or nearby other PPM fields with greatly reduced pressure. This certainly underscores the need for accurate and intimate field scouting. This season understanding pests/ crop/predator relations in regard to production agriculture and the economics of the situation with the ability to react quickly is certainly being highlighted.





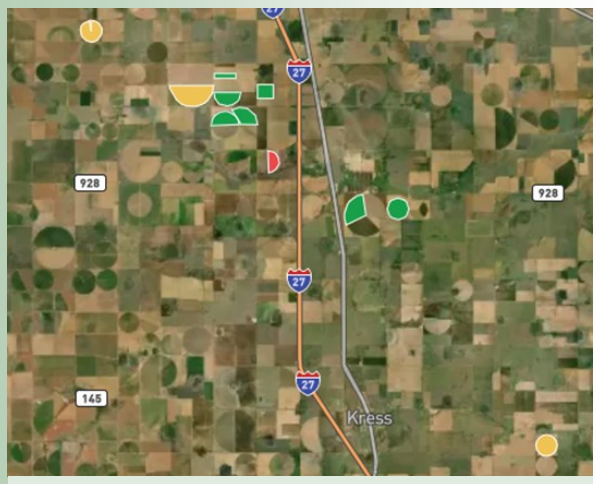
While we have multiple pests potential in all summer crops and treatments jumping out, weeds are ever-present and other crop management inputs also demand timeliness as the fields develop. At least rainfall has been helpful so far this year with limited irrigation system inputs. These beleaguered systems are certainly due for a rest period following several seasons for heavy use in drought conditions. As fields near peak water use soon, and rainfall chances slim, we hope they are ready.

As examples of multiple pests in multiple crops, here are some images from our data sets this week..Here are 2 colonies of Banks grass mite (Left) that increased to –3 leaf in corn. (Center) Fleahoopper in cotton, and (Right) headworm (FAW) in sorghum.

Cotton

This week our PPM cotton ranged in stage from ¼ grown square through 1st bloom. The vast majority of fields came in around ¾ grown square and should be sporting blooms by or before next week. Fleahoppers remain our main concern but are not alone. We had more fields reach the threshold for Fleahoppers again this week. These fields were mostly fields that were borderline with adult fleahoppers 2 weeks ago that stayed in field to reproduce and also had beneficial populations slow to respond to the plant bugs. These were all perfect examples why we never blanket treat pests and the need to scout each field separately. In most cases there seemed no reason for the differences in pest populations unless you were scouting each field intimately for the minute details. All of our PPM cotton fields had some level of fleahopper population this week, most, unless treated recently, had nymphs of various early stages. The thus far untreated fields that were a bit shorter on beneficial populations were much more likely to exceed the roughly 6% infested terminal threshold level and had a higher square drop percentage compared to those with a better beneficial population. Our highest fleahopper field held many freshly hatched nymphs and 55% terminals infested with a 25% fruit drop this week, up from 4.8% and 11% last week. Most fields that had been previously treated were recovering in fruit drop back down to 10-18% drop while most fields that have not needed treatment were hovering around 10-12% fruit drop.

The PPM 1st bloom of 2025 from central Hale.

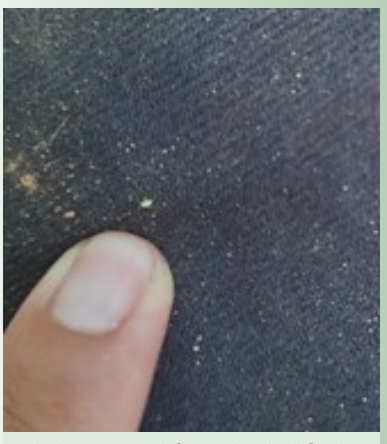


Cropwise Protector severity map from a PPM grower's cotton fields shows field –by-field fleahoppers this week. Fields in red and yellow are over ET. Green had some fleahoppers but were below ET.

Calculated Cotton Fleahopper Threshold Using Across Sampling Methods (% infestation)

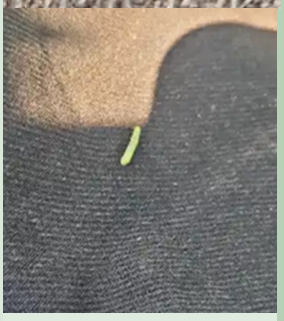
Control Cost ($/ac)	Market value ($/lb)	Economic threshold (80% EIL)	Control Cost ($/ac)	Market value ($/lb)	Economic threshold (80% EIL)	Control Cost ($/ac)	Market value ($/lb)	Economic threshold (80% EIL)
$10.00	0.50	5.90	$12.50	0.50	7.37	$15.00	0.50	8.85
	0.60	4.92		0.60	6.14		0.60	7.37
	0.70	4.21		0.70	5.27		0.70	6.32
	0.80	3.69		0.80	4.61		0.80	5.53
	0.90	3.28		0.90	4.10		0.90	4.92
	1.00	2.95		1.00	3.69		1.00	4.42

A general threshold of 4 to 7 cotton fleahopper per 100 plant terminal could be adopted.



Fleahopper nymph from a threshold field in central Swisher this week.

Lygus again increased in our fields, particularly near freshly mowed medians or cut hay. These Lygus were not at threshold alone but were increasing damage in fields with Fleahoppers that required treatment. Cotton aphids were turning up in several of our counts. None of our fields held barely more than enough aphids to notice the population but I have reports of fields in the area with colonies large enough to note honeydew collection in multiple spots across a field. We also caught a few small bollworms in our cotton. This was quite surprising given the amount of corn in the area and near these particular fields. These were small worms in non-Bt fields at populations of less than 800 per acre. The bollworm / corn earworm / sorghum headworm moth flights have been very high in all of our trapping efforts regardless of location. With so many moths in the environment, these worms in cotton might just be some 'spill over' egg lay from the nearby corn, which is under very heavy bollworm egg lay these past few weeks. Once these corn fields develop to hard dough and cease to be attractive to the bollworms, cotton, particularly lush cotton will be at high risk.



Lygus nymph and bollworm found in our data this week.

Corn

Our corn ranged in stage from V3 through R2 this week with most fields hovering around R1. There are no situation changes for us regarding the corn leafhopper, save a few fields are nearing development passed the presumed latest stages the diseases the hopper transmit would have time to develop into issues. The actual corn leafhoppers remain difficult to find in our fields. I cannot count the number of samples we have caught or have been brought in top our lab we have identified as not corn leafhopper. Even several I thought could have been the hopper were identified as negative later. But when disease transmission from just one hopper can start a very destructive cycle, and they are in the area, we must be vigilant. Our latest fields are probably looking at some automatic treatments very soon, hopefully not repeated and multiple treatments.

A definitive Corn Leafhopper photo by Dr. Porter.

Corn in SW Hale nearing R2 and almost passed concern for the diseases the corn leafhopper transmit.

Our other corn pests were of mixed results this week. In some of our PPM fields, Banks grass mites doubled in population. These fields experienced mites increasing rapidly on our Texas A&M AgriLife 0-10 damage rating scale with our highest field rating coming in at 2.78. This is an increase from 1.01 for the field last week. This involves an increase in colony size and number alongside establishment farther up the plant. With this rating, this field had some notable colonies at -3 leaf but colony coverage below this leaf was skippy. For other fields, mite populations dropped from similar numbers the week before to a point that they were difficult to find surviving mites this week. In the fields where mite populations dropped, mite specific beneficials were more common. These include six-spotted thrips, predacious mites, and mite destroyer beetles. In fields where the population increased, these species were harder to spot, but other beneficials such as lady bugs and minute pirate bugs were feeding on the mites with some impacts. Bollworms, or corn earworms in this case, were in all fields. So far no feeding above tip feeding has been noted in our fields. Some light increases in diseases were noted. Slight increases in common rust and gray leaf spot were recorded in most fields and late season decline was found in some additional fields. These new additions were all post tassel and not a pressing concern. No major increase in symptoms were noted in earlier diagnosed fields yet.

This V3 corn in central Hale has a long way to go to be passed corn leafhopper danger.

Ladybug feeding on BGM in SW Hale this week.

Sorghum

Our PPM sorghum ranged from VX through 10% bloom. Our most notable pest in sorghum this week has remained headworms. These are fall armyworms in whorl stage sorghum and a mix of older fall armyworms riding the head out at boot and freshly lain and hatched bollworms on blooming heads. Neither were near economic levels with whorl feeding remaining below 5% foliage loss and our highest per head count for headworms was 0.1 worms per head (mix of small and large worms, species depending). Bene-

Boot stage sorghum in S Swisher this week.

Beneficials are currently increasing rapidly in our sorghum fields, building on the available corn leaf aphids and attacking the nearby young headworms. We are still seeing some fresh yellow sugarcane aphid damaged leaves, but this remains light. We have not found any sorghum aphids in our fields as of today, but we do have a report of a very light population to our west. We are on high alert for sorghum midge in our blooming fields, but have not seen any of these to this date either. Scouting for sorghum midge can be unique and somewhat technical. Here is a link to a video we made a few years ago: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4Flf4AdeNw. And a link to a video we made for how to scout for sorghum panicle pests (headworms, Lygus, and stink bugs): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Exki0Veiu9Y&t=5s

YSCA damage or Nutrient deficiency? Some of both actually, SW Hale this week.

Other Pest Notes

We are picking up a few bollworms and assorted species foliage feeders in our **alfalfa** this week. With the high number of moths in the area, lush fields could be at risk of surprise damage soon. **Grasshoppers remain an issue**, especially for production fields of any type near pastures. Larger adults are starting to move into sorghum, corn, and alfalfa. Some edge treatments will be under way soon, if some have not started already. Gardeners and horticulturalist should be on alert as well. It is no secret that **mosquitoes** are an issue with the rainfall. Here is a link to **managing West Nile** from Dr. Sonya Swiger, State Entomology Specialist Stephenville: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqru6TYazZo

Multiple CEW, a FAW, a true armyworm, and a cabbage looper larvae were turning up on our alfalfa sweep nets in E Swisher alfalfa this week.

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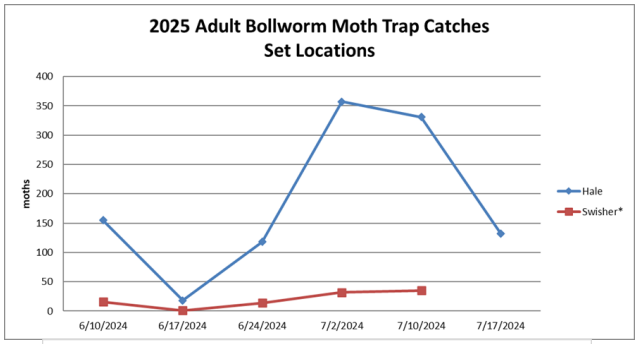
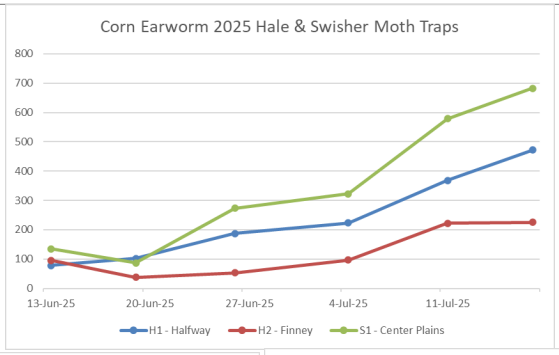
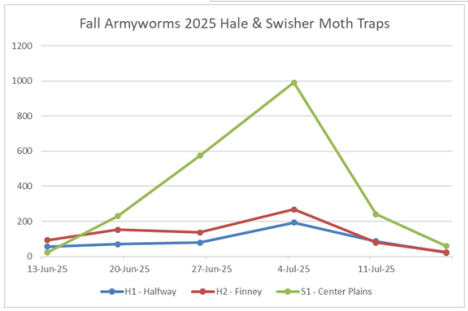
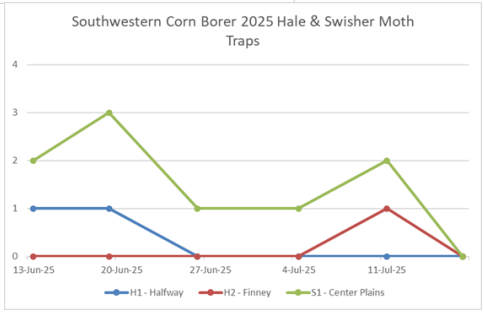
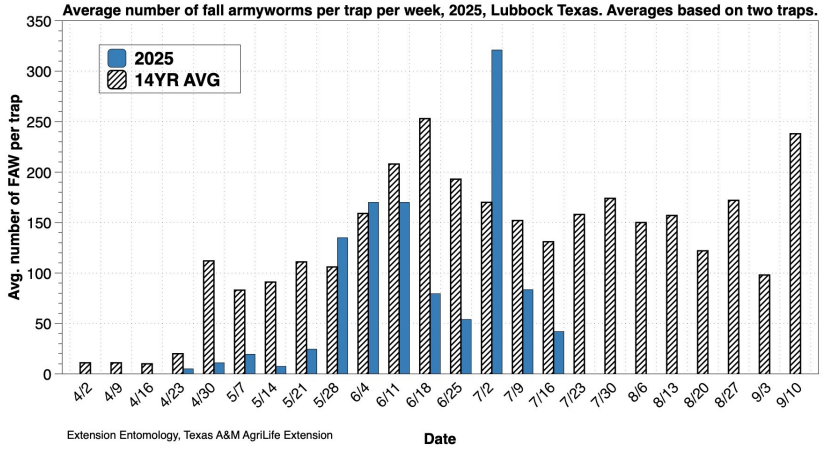
For our bollworm moth trapping, the Swisher trap was damaged this week and has no data. For our Texas Corn Producers corn pest monitoring, we still have not captured any western bean cutworms this year and no SWCB this week. Although numbers have been low for SWCB this year, they have not been zero and we need to take extra care in scouting for this corn pest this year. As a note, if trap numbers drop off after being high, there is a good chance eggs have been lain in field by that species and we should be on alert.











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