TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

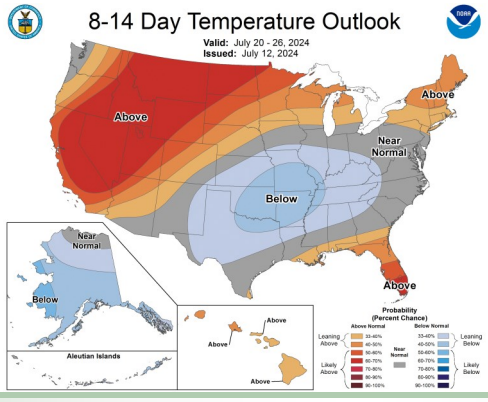
Plains Pest Management News

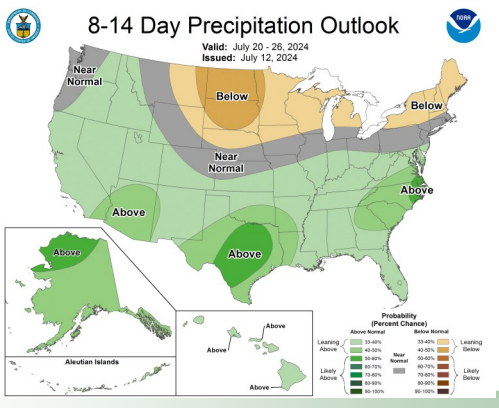
JULY 12, 2024

General Status

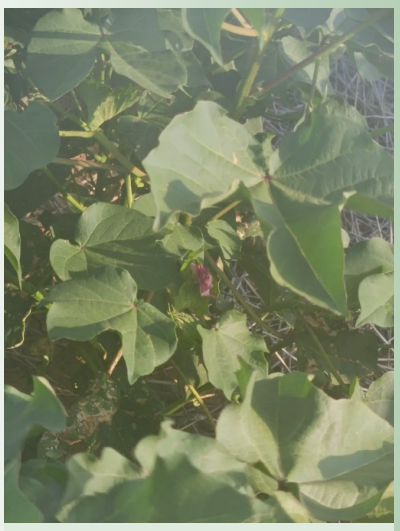
Last weekend and earlier this week much of the Hale & Swisher area received some rainfall from the chances that were available. The Plainview area and south seemed to catch the majority of the moisture, but there were several waves that were very scattered and localized giving momentary relief to some fields and leaving others parched and windblown. Whether or not fields received moisture recently, amounts were limited, and soil moisture is falling behind crop use quickly with surviving irrigation systems firing up to full capacity across both counties well before peak water use for most fields. With this round of rain, central Hale County received a pretty large swath of hail. I am truly surprised this is the first PPM fields, on any in Hale & Swisher that I am aware of, to receive hail this year. It did us no favors. I do not see any reduction in plant per acre population in any cotton field with most plants having an alternate growing point, but an immediate loss of 40-90% of squares and practical set back of 3-4 weeks of development. That is quite the setback for July cotton just a few days from 1st bloom. Weed control looks to be largely successful with plenty of investment of time, sweat, stress, and expense but trouble areas do exist. On the pest front, one pest moves a bit more to the shadows and another moves forward this week.

A central Hale cotton field following hail this week.





Cotton



Dime sized boll hiding under a bloom tag this week.

This week our PPM program cotton ranged in stage from a hail damaged and regrowing matchhead square through 8 NAWF (nodes above white flower). Almost 30% of the PPM cotton fields have blooms and about half of those are far enough along to be measured in NAWF with all coming in at 8 to 9 NAWF and a few dime sized bolls showing. With just a few late stragglers, the bulk of the remainder of our fields are between 2/3 grown square and 9/10 grown square and should be blooming within a week to ten days.

Fleahoppers were again our main focus this week. Early in the week we did find several fields requiring treatment. By mid-week, the problem eased considerably with three findings from our scouting efforts. Either the longer residual chemistry that is soft on beneficials we chose for our treatments are working well, beneficials are winning the struggle and keeping Fleahoppers in check in untreated fields, or we were in a rare field with little to no pressure to begin with. Hopefully, this pressure continues to ease but this would not be typical. So far, it has not been replaced with Lygus, although several of our treated fields had a mixed population that were causing additional square drop. Of the fields we had to treat early in the week had fleahopper infested terminals in the range of 18%-35% with an increase in fruit drop from the week before. Our fruit set, or conversely our fruit drop, has been phenomenal so far this year with most fields still holding on to 95% of fruit unless Fleahoppers or hail has damaged them.

Lygus and fleahopper adults, Porter.

Nabid, a key plant bug predator

We did find a few cotton square borers again this week, but at a very low level. With area roadsides and hay crops being cut and managed, with the addition of a drying our of the environment, we should remain vigilant for plant bugs. Fields can be passed economic fleahopper damage once blooms are consistent on plants and easy for the small true bugs to find.

A late planted corn field faired better in the hail than the cotton.

Corn and Sorghum

This week our corn ranged in stage from V2 through blister stage but in reality we have several late planted corn fields just emerging. The majority of our fields are just starting to tassel. The Banks grass mite population increased rapidly this week in our older corn with all fields having some level of pressure. This was below threshold but our damage ratings on the Texas A&M AgriLife 0-10 scale ranged roughly from 0.8-2.1 with 3.5-4 being threshold. Not very many mite specific predators were found and there was plenty of evidence of fresh mite colonization in most fields with small colonies establishing higher on the plants before moving to the lower leaves to fully establish and I feel we are catching them in an early stage of population development. This development is progressing very rapidly and needs to be watched carefully. I expect that inside of 2 weeks, we may very well be treating a few fields under the predicted hot, and dry conditions. No other pest of note were found in our corn, including ear feeding pests, but our local fall armyworm and corn earworm numbers are consistent.

BGM were on several lowers leaf this week.

Corn leaf aphis in one of our beet bucket sorghum samples this week.

All of our sorghum fields are in currently bloom and need to be checked for sorghum midge daily. But we have not found any pest of significance yet, minus a few yellow sugarcane aphid damaged lower leaves that are well below threshold and a stray fall armyworm on a panicle. We have started finding some pockets of corn leaf aphids, which our excellent but excitable new field scout misidentified as sorghum aphid. These aphids should be of limited consequence and will actually act as a food source for beneficials to build and will help them prepare for the arrival of the more serious aphid pests that should be on the way. Corn leaf aphids will almost always infest the upper leaves or head of the plant while sorghum aphids and green bugs will begin on the lower leaves.

Figure 1: Corn Leaf aphid

Figure 2: Yellow Sugarcane aphid

Figure 3: Sorghum aphid

Figure 4: Greenbug aphid

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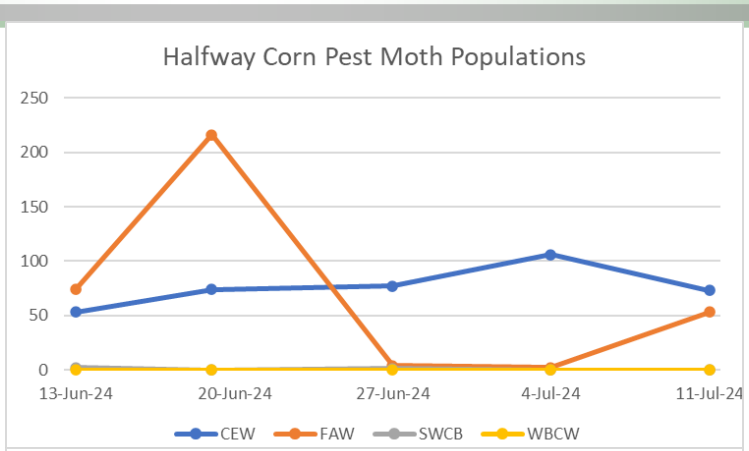

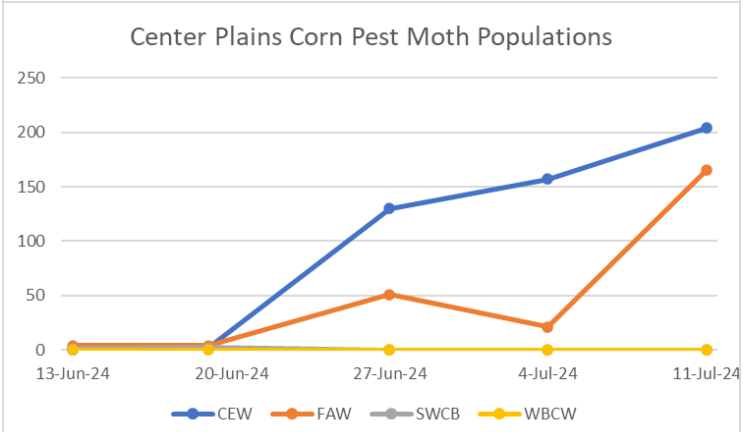

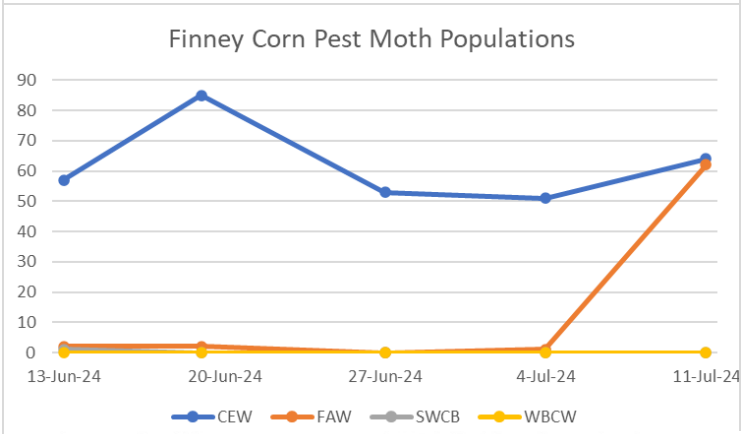

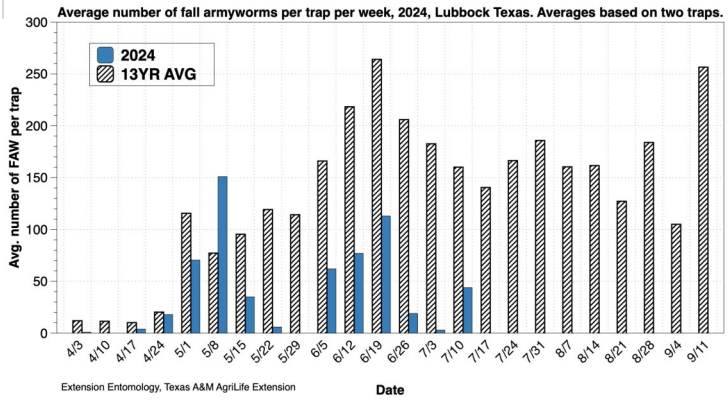

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