



The University of Georgia
Cooperative Extension
College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

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COTTON PEST MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER #3

COTTON SITUATION: The Georgia Weekly Crop Progress and Condition Report for the week ending May 22nd listed the crop as 56 percent planted with is slightly behind the five year average of 59 percent. It is DRY!

INSECT SITUATION: Thrips, thrips, and more thrips. Thrips have been much higher than normal in Georgia and other areas of the southeast and mid-south this year. We continue to receive sporadic reports of grasshoppers, false chinch bugs, and a species of burrower bug feeding on seedling cotton.

Thrips: Thrips numbers have been high to date and this appears to be the case in surrounding states as well. In addition to high populations, slow plant growth for various reasons has compounded plant injury symptoms. A vigorous growing seedling can much better tolerate thrips feeding compared with a slow growing plant. We are hopeful that populations will begin to decline on cotton which has recently emerged (plantings after mid-May usually experience lower thrips populations than April and early May plantings). Some early planted fields have received two foliar insecticide applications, and many one. We need to protect young seedlings, especially during early developmental stages (1-2 leaf) but we do not need to apply unneeded applications due to the potential of flaring other pests such as spider mites and aphids. So scout and treat on an as needed basis. The threshold for thrips is when 2-3 thrips per plant are counted and immatures are present. Treatment is rarely necessary after plants have 4 true leaves and are growing vigorously; we want to stress **growing vigorously**. If cotton is not growing vigorously, seedlings with 4 or more leaves may still need to be treated. We recently toured thrips research trials with Dr. Mike Toews, UGA Research Entomologist, and the most striking observation we made was the difference in thrips damage in conventional and strip tillage plots; much less thrips damage in conservation tillage.

False Chinch Bugs: False chinch bugs are a sporadic and uncommon pest of cotton. Historically we have been more likely to observe this pest during dry periods. False chinch bugs also tend to be more common in conservation tillage fields where winter weeds such as primrose and wild radish were not terminated in a timely manner. Immature false chinch bugs may be observed on seedlings but are often found in high numbers under plant residues in reduced tillage fields. A good place to see high numbers of nymphs is under a dead primrose or wild radish plant; it is not uncommon to observe hundreds per square foot in infested fields. False chinch bugs have needle like mouthparts and feed on plant juices. Extremely high populations can weaken and stunt small seedlings and in severe situations kill some plants. Once plants reach the 4-5 leaf stage and are growing rapidly, we would not expect treatment to be necessary; however

infested fields should be monitored closely. False chinch bugs can be difficult to control with insecticides.



Cotton seedling infested with false chinch bugs (top), immature FCBs (left), and adult FCBs (right). Photos by Angus Cachot.

White-Margined Burrower Bug: During the past week we have received several reports of white-margined burrower bugs infesting cotton seedlings. Dr. Jeremy Greene, Clemson, has also been receiving reports of white-margined burrower bugs in South Carolina (see pictures of infested soybeans below). Seedlings can be infested with high numbers of white-margined burrower bugs and in most situations little impact on plant growth is noticed. It appears that seed treatments have activity on white-margined burrower bugs. We observed white-margined burrower bugs during 2006 and the following is an excerpt from the May 23, 2006 Cotton Pest Management Newsletter.

During recent weeks we received a few calls regarding small black and red bugs in strip tillage fields which resemble stink bug nymphs fields (see image below).

*The nymphs were reared to adults and identified as the burrower bug *Sehirus cinctus*. Nymphs of this species are often congregated. Dr. Jay Chapin, Clemson Entomologist who has done much research on burrower bugs, offered the following comments about *Sehirus cinctus*: "I have collected the adults from 13 Feb to 24 June; and the nymphs from 8 April to 24 June in strip-till fields. The more henbit that was in the field during winter, the more *Sehirus*. The first 2 instars require henbit seeds for survival but the adults and nymphs hang around after the henbit is cooked by hot weather or burndown herbicides. It's an unusual burrower bug because adults and late instar nymphs spend most of their time above ground." We do not believe these burrower bugs are an economic pest of cotton, however fields infested with high numbers should be monitored closely for any plant injury. *Sehirus cinctus* is not the burrower bug which is a pest of peanuts.*



White-margined burrower bug adult and nymph (left) and a closeup of an adult (right).



White-margined burrower bugs infesting seedling soybeans. Notice the dead bugs on the

ground, these soybeans were treated with Cruiser (Photos by Jeremy Greene).

Cotton Scout Schools: Cotton insect scouting schools are annually held at various locations in Georgia. These programs offer basic information on cotton insects and scouting procedures and will serve as a review for experienced scouts and producers and as an introduction to cotton insect monitoring for new scouts.

Location	City	Date	Time	Contact for additional information
Tifton Campus Conference Center	Tifton GA	June 13, 2011	9:00 am -12:30pm	Debbie Rutland (229) 386-3424
Southeast Research and Education Center	Midville GA	June 21, 2011	9:00 am -12:30pm	Peyton Sapp (706) 554-2119

INSECT UPDATES: Check the **Cotton Insect Hotline (1-800-851-2847)** for updates on current insect conditions. The Cotton Pest Management Newsletter and additional cotton production information is also posted on the UGA Cotton Homepage at: <http://www.ugacotton.com>

Sincerely,

Phillip Roberts
Extension Entomologist

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