

May 29, 2003

COTTON PEST MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER #2

COTTON SITUATION: The Georgia Weekly Weather and Crops Report for the week ending May 25th listed the crop as 75 percent planted. This is only slightly behind the five year average of 79 percent planted. To date, stands appear to be more uniform than in years past. Early planted cotton is actively squaring.

INSECT SITUATION: We have continued to see thrips damage resulting from feeding injury occurring during the past two weeks. It appears thrips numbers are declining somewhat. Cutworms and grasshoppers are still being reported in isolated and sporadic fields. Yellow striped armyworms and a few beet armyworm have also been reported. We have also received reports of tobacco budworm in southernmost Georgia.

Thrips: Monitor for thrips and injury weekly until plants reach the five leaf stage and are growing rapidly. Foliar sprays have been applied in some areas, but not on a widespread basis. If seedlings were severely damaged when the treatment was initiated, we will continue to observe damage on the next few expanding leaves even if all the thrips were controlled. This is due to feeding on small unfurled leaves in the terminal which may not expand or unfurl for several days.

Grasshoppers and Cutworms: Both grasshoppers and cutworms continue to be observed in isolated fields. Not a widespread problem, but scouts should be sure to identify which insect is cutting plants so appropriate treatments can be initiated if the stand is threatened.

Tobacco Budworm: Tobacco budworm (TBW) eggs and small larvae were reported in southernmost Georgia this week. Late May and early June is typically when we observe the first generation of TBW infesting cotton. In most years, the May/June generation of TBW will more commonly infest early planted squaring cotton. Bt cotton will provide excellent control of TBW. On non-Bt cotton, beneficial insects will often suppress populations below economic levels, but treatment may be necessary in some situations. As producers have gained experience, thresholds have been elevated during June. Many producers use 10-15 small larvae as a threshold. Others will use large larvae counts as their primary trigger. For example if 10 small larvae and 0 large larvae were observed on Monday they would not treat and wait for the Thursday scouting report. If beneficials such as big-eyed bugs and fire ants are doing their job, the large worm (>1/4 inch) count will still be low and thus will not treat. However, if large larvae counts are high, treatment should be initiated immediately before larvae become too large to control. There is some inherit risk using elevated thresholds or large larvae counts, but there is opportunity to save some input costs at this time. Additionally, we know that cotton can compensate from some early season square loss. Thresholds will need to be more conservative during July when cotton is setting bolls. If treatment is needed, a non-pyrethroid selective insecticide should be used. At this point in the season we need to conserve beneficial insects.

And secondly, we know we are targeting a near 100% population of TBW. Typically we will not see corn earworms infest cotton until early to mid July.



Tobacco Budworm adult.

Tarnished Plant Bugs: Historically plant bugs have not been a major widespread problem in Georgia. However, each year there are individual fields which require treatment. Thus it is important that scouts be observant for plant bugs and monitor square retention once cotton begins fruiting.



Tarnished Plant Bug adult.

Yellow Striped and Beet Armyworms: Yellow striped armyworms YSAW are observed on seedling cotton during most years. Economic damage rarely occurs as only minor foliage feeding occurs. If high numbers are observed and damage is excessive, treatment would be recommended. Insecticides recommended for beet armyworm should provide control of YSAW. Low numbers of beet armyworms have also been reported but at populations much lower than last year.



Yellow Striped Armyworm larvae.

Scout Schools: The annual cotton scout school will be held in Tifton on June 2, 2003. As in years past pre-registration and a \$7.00 registration fee is required. Additional cotton scout schools are also planned in other areas. The dates, location, and contact for each are listed below:

May 31, 2003	Terrell Co. Ext. Office, Dawson- <i>Will Duffie (229)995-2165</i>
June 2, 2003	RDC, Tifton- <i>Phillip Roberts (229)386-3424</i> (pre-registration required)
June 11, 2003	SE GA Branch Exp. Station, Midville- <i>Richard McDaniel (229)995-2165</i>
June 12, 2003	Evans Co. Ext. Office, Claxton- <i>Mike Dollar (912)739-1292</i>
June 16, 2003	Jeff Davis Co. Ext. Office, Hazelhurst- <i>Tim Varnedore (912)375-6648</i>

INSECT UPDATES: Check the **Cotton Insect Hotline** (1/800-851-2847) for updates on current insect conditions. The Cotton Pest Management Newsletter is also posted on the Internet at:

<http://www.griffin.peachnet.edu/caes/cotton/>

Sincerely,

Phillip Roberts
Extension Entomologist