



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

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COTTON PEST MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER #5

COTTON SITUATION: The Georgia Weekly Crop Progress and Condition Report for the week ending July 12th listed the crop as 70 percent squaring and 20 percent setting bolls which are behind the 5 year averages of 81 percent squaring and 37 percent setting bolls. Cotton continues to grow and develop nicely where adequate moisture is available.

INSECT SITUATION: Corn earworm egg lay and small larvae counts have increased in several areas, especially southwest Georgia. There are also some fall armyworms which have sized enough to correctly identify. Beet armyworms have been reported from scattered areas on multiple crops (cotton, soybeans, and peanuts). Stink bug treatments are being made in fields which have been blooming a couple of weeks. The aphid fungus has been reported in several counties, but aphids continue to linger in some fields.

Bt Cottons (Bollgard, WideStrike, and Bollgard II): Most growers planted a portion of their acres in two-gene Bt cottons this year. Both WideStrike and Bollgard II offer improved control of caterpillar pests compared with the single gene Bollgard trait. **However, the two-gene Bt cottons are not immune from caterpillar damage and should be scouted for caterpillar pests on a regular basis and treated if threshold values are exceeded.** The threshold for corn earworm on Bt cotton is 8 larvae (1/4 inch or greater in length) per 100 plants.

Corn Earworm: CEW egg counts and small larvae counts have increased in several areas during the past week; moth activity is high as well. Escaped CEW larvae (1/4 inch or greater in length) are generally found near the uppermost bloom; either in blooms, under stuck bloom tags, or small bolls. Scouts should sample at least one bloom, one boll with a stuck bloom tag, and a small boll per plant in addition to searching the terminal of the plant. Do not ignore the terminal of the plant as some square damage may be observed in Bt cottons when heavy pressure is observed.

Aphids: This has been a strange year for aphids. Populations have been slow to build in some, but not all, fields. Differences in populations can vary from field to field when in close proximity. We see this commonly with other insect pests, but less so with aphids. That is why all fields should be scouted.

Pest movement from Weeds to Cotton - Could it Happen? Palmer pigweed has proven to be a serious pest of row crop production in Georgia. Years ago when beet armyworms (BAW) were more prevalent, we often observed BAW feeding on pigweed. In recent years BAW populations have generally been low and we have not routinely observed BAW infesting pigweeds. However, BAW appear to be more common this season and we should be aware of potential

insect pests such as beet armyworm infesting weed hosts in fields. Potentially insect pests could move from in-field weed hosts to cotton; especially when the weed host is killed with herbicide or begins to dry down.

Fall Armyworm: FAW is a difficult insect pest to scout due largely to their tendency to infest fruiting forms in the mid and lower canopy. Newly hatched larvae appear identical to CEW larvae. However as they develop identifying characteristics become apparent. When infesting bolls, small FAW will often feed or etch the inner surface of boll bracts. When bolls with etched bracts are observed (see picture below), be sure to carefully examine that boll for the presence of a FAW.



FAW etching on inner surface of boll bract.



Large FAW feeding on boll.

Stink Bugs: Both brown and southern green stink bugs are being observed in blooming cotton. As corn dries down, stink bugs infesting those acres will be in search of a more suitable host plant. Will it be your cotton?

Plant Bugs: Scouts should monitor square retention and be observant for adult and immature tarnished plant bugs. Although not widespread, we have received more reports on plant bugs than usual. In addition to monitoring retention of small squares, it is a good habit to periodically pull plants when walking fields and monitor whole plant retention. Our goal should be to retain 80+ percent of first positions at first bloom.

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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