

August 12, 2003

COTTON PEST MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER #10

COTTON SITUATION: The Georgia Weekly Weather and Crops Report for the week ending August 10th listed the crop as 92 percent setting bolls and 2 percent with open bolls. Crop conditions remain mostly unchanged from previous reports. The first USDA cotton production report was released today. Acreage is estimated at 1.29 million and yield at 744 lbs per acre. Some boll rot has been observed in early planted fields. Open weather will be needed soon.

INSECT SITUATION: Corn earworm and tobacco budworm continue to be treated on non-Bt cotton. Producers are having difficulty treating fields in a timely basis due to rainfall. Some corn earworms are being treated on Bt cotton. Soybean loopers have been reported in various parts of the state. Stink bug numbers remain relatively high.

Corn Earworm and Tobacco Budworm: In areas where tobacco budworm (TBW) typically infests cotton (southwest and central Georgia), a mixed population of TBW and corn earworm (CEW) is being observed. However, this ratio or species composition does vary from area to area. Scouts should be observant for moth activity, which suggests species makeup. Mixed populations should be treated as TBW. Will Duffie, CEC in Terrell County, reported an increase in the number of small larvae in blooms in both Bt and non-Bt cotton this week. Historically these larvae are either CEW or fall armyworm (FAW). Fall armyworm numbers have been low to date, but scouts should be observant for feeding on the inner surface of bracts in the lower canopy, which is indicative of an early infestation of FAW.



Small corn earworm larvae feeding in pink bloom (left) and larval feeding damage under a drying bloom tag (right). Photos by Ron Smith, www.IPMimages.org.

Soybean Looper: Light infestations of soybean looper (SBL) have been reported from various parts of the state and a few fields have required treatment. In some fields, SBL infestations may be of benefit. Soybean loopers will initially feed on foliage in the lower part of the canopy and in time will feed in the middle and eventually the upper plant canopy. In fields which are rank, and where lower bolls are mature, foliage feeding in the lower canopy will allow better air movement and potentially reduce the risk of boll rot. Decisions to treat SBL should be based on defoliation. If bolls are immature, foliage which “feeds” these developing bolls must be protected. As SBL larvae size or develop, foliage consumption per day increases dramatically. Nearly 90 percent of total defoliation by larvae occurs during the last two larval instars (large larvae). Scouts should note the presence and size of SBL larvae in fields and monitor defoliation closely. When larvae approach 6 to 8 per row foot, economic damage may occur. Soybean looper eggs are laid individually, typically on the undersides of leaves. Eggs appear similar to tobacco budworm and corn earworm eggs but are “flatter”. Larvae will feed for about two weeks prior to pupating in a silk-like cocoon attached to the underside of a leaf. Soybean looper moths have forewings, which are mottled with a bronze to golden sheen and prominent silver markings near the middle (using your imagination this silver marking looks like a figure eight). Moths will often fly down the row in the canopy of plants.



Soybean looper larvae and pupa. Photo by Ron Smith, www.IPMimages.org.

Boll Feeding Bugs: To date, producers have treated for stink bugs and other boll feeding bugs more than during previous years. Stink bug numbers, especially brown stink bug, have been unusually high. Migration from other crops and host plants continues into cotton. Continue scouting and treating on an as needed basis.

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