



Pest Cast

The Row Crops IPM Newsletter for the LRGV, a cooperative project of Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Cotton & Grain Producers of the lower Rio Grande Valley

John W. Norman, Jr.
Editor

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General Situation: Hot, dry and windy weather has been the norm since the rains of mid January. Many dryland and irrigated producers found themselves running out of planting moisture before they could finish planting by the end of March. But, those who had irrigation water and most dryland producers were able to achieve reasonably good to excellent crop stands. Now, we just need some rain to turn the stands into viable yield producers.

Cotton: Cotton acreage is up considerably in the LRGV this season. So far, the Boll Weevil Eradication program has mapped over 176,000 acres. Cotton ranges in age from not yet up to squaring stage. Most fields are to stand and those fields planted in February are squaring.

A scattering of aphids has been observed in fields across the LRGV. No one has reported any need for insecticide for aphids to date.

Thrip moving from matured onion fields to cotton have been the cause for a minor number of fields being treated. There has been a reported increase in onion acres this year and an increase of cotton acres which means the odds of a cotton field being planted next to or nearby an onion field are increased. Thrip moving from onions can be very rapid. So, check nearby cotton often while the onions are still in the field, even while they are being sacked.

No plant bugs have been reported to date. Fleahoppers will likely be observed in some fields very soon. So, we encourage everyone to be alert for changes in fleahopper status.

The Boll Weevil Eradication Program in the LRGV has sent the following tables of information on weevil trapping records as of last week's end reports.

BOLL WEEVIL TRAPPING INFORMATION

YTD	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
	.00323	1.24563	.41343	.16666	.41890	.77436	6.47392

Week Ending	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
4/3/11	0.00476	0.00672	0.19847	0.08503	0.64118	0.88875	6.47392

Traps inspected for current week: 35,962

Grain Sorghum and Corn: Both crops are maturing well. Some flag leaves were observed in sorghum this week. The more mature fields likely will be in boot stage shortly. Dryland fields were showing some signs of moisture stress this week. The very hot day on Monday, April 4th was especially revealing about sorghum moisture conditions as sorghum showed twisting leaves all across the LRGV. The next day as temperature dropped to the upper 70's to low 80's, all crops looked much less in stress.

The following information was sent to us by Dr. Scott Armstrong, Research Entomologist from the USDA-ARS lab in Weslaco. Dr. Armstrong and others have been working the biology of the green plant bug for several years.

Green Plant bug from South Texas gets a common name - the “verde plant bug”

Some cotton producers from south Texas and the Gulf Coast regions have been unfortunate over the last few years because they have had to deal with a green plant bug, *Creontiades signatus* that will feed on cotton fruit. The insect was initially, and erroneously, thought to be *Creontiades dilutus*, an almost identical looking bug with the common name “green mirid” which turns out to be the number one pest of cotton in Australia. After some molecular and taxonomic work of comparing the two cousins, it has been determined that the Australian green mirid, and the one infesting South Texas are cousins, and not the same species. Therefore, our native plant bug has been given a common name, sanction by the Entomological Society of America, as the “**verde plant bug**”. Verde meaning green in Spanish (see image below).



Verde plant bug egg laid flush with the surface of a cotton petiole, nymph, and adult (adults are about 0.5 inches in length). Small nymphs look much like a cotton fleahopper.

The historical development pattern for the “verde plant bug” to infest cotton has been that it really likes certain Gulf Coast plants from the salty or saline soils of the Gulf Coast, and does well on these in the winter, if it does not get too cold. But as it warms up, and crops progress, including grain sorghum heads, it will migrate and reproduce on any number of crop and weed species. It appears to be somewhat like a “snowball” effect where as the temperature warms, and more succulent host plants are available, it starts to roll. Verde plant bugs usually doesn't move in to cotton until bolls are formed, But they should be scouted for any time cotton is squaring to be on the safe side.

For more information on the biology of this insect, or the potential damage it causes to cotton contact:

Scott Armstrong Ph.D.
Research Entomologist
USDA ARS Beneficial Insect Research Unit
2413 E. Highway 83
Weslaco, TX 78596
phone (956) - 969 - 4807
lab (956) - 969 - 4811

IPM and Water Quality

There are not too many things that everyone agrees about. But nearly everybody puts high value on having clean, pure water. Research-based, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) systems help support this goal. Multi-tactic, IPM systems rely on a whole array of practices – some of which are resistant and quickly maturing varieties, crop rotation, use of appropriate planting and stalk destruction dates, field scouting to determine pest and beneficial insect populations and conservation of natural enemies. IPM systems rely on pesticides only as a last resort if pests are present in damaging numbers after all other appropriate management strategies have been used. When pesticides are used; products, rates and methods of application are chosen that pose the least possible threat to water and the environment. The common sense, IPM approach to pest management is effective, economical and environmentally friendly.

We thank the following sponsors of the Pest Cast newsletter for their very generous contributions toward this effort.

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Contact Info

Pest Cast Newsletter
Texas AgriLife Extension Service
South District 12
2401 East Highway 83
Weslaco, TX 78596
(956) 968-5581
E-mail: d12south@ag.tamu.edu