



Alabama Cotton Picksack Newsletter

June 2008



- * **Precision Ag and Field Crops Day, July 10:** *Shannon Huber Norwood & Amy Winstead*
- * **Launching the Alabama Crops Web Site.** *Dale Monks*
- * **Insect Outlook- Late June.** *Ron Smith*
- * **Early Postemergence Treatments in Cotton.** *Mike Patterson*
- * **Commodity Market Update – Is \$10 Corn Possible?** *Bob Goodman*
- * **2008 Cotton Calendar.** *Dale Monks*



- * **Precision Ag and Field Crops Day, July 10**
S. Norwood and A. Winstead, North Alabama Regional Agents

The 2008 Precision Ag and Field Crops Day will be July 10 at Isbell Farms in Cherokee, Alabama. The ACES Precision Ag Team has partnered with the University of Georgia Precision Ag Team, Alabama Farmers Federation, Auburn University, and the USDA National Soil Dynamics Laboratory for this event. Topics to be addressed include: grain bin storage, irrigation, variable rate seeding, Continuously Operating Reference Stations (CORS), bioenergy gasifier, and weed and nitrogen management in conservation tillage systems.

Isbell Farms is a five generation family farm, currently operated by Neal Isbell and his two sons, Todd and Shane. They grow cotton and corn, and utilize precision ag technologies as a part of their operation. In addition to zone soil sampling, the farm uses guidance, yield monitoring and variable rate application of plant growth regulators and defoliant. An irrigation pivot was configured to allow for variable rate irrigation through a cost-share project with the University of Georgia Precision Ag Team. They have been a cooperator with the ACES Precision Ag Team for variable rate seeding projects and a study evaluating the spatial variability of nematodes. The Isbells are also partners in a cooperative gin and involved in numerous industry groups.

For a flyer with directions to the Isbell Farm go to:
http://www.aces.edu/counties/Limestone/files/Field_Day_Info_for_web.pdf



***Launching the Alabama Crops Web Site**

Dale Monks, Extension Agronomist

For the past several years, our crops team has developed and maintained various web sites that are pertinent to cotton as well as other row crops grown in the state. While these have been helpful in a lot of ways, we also understand the need for consolidating information to save time when searching for information on the web. After encouragement from producer groups and internally, we are launching a new web site called "www.alabamacrops.com". This new web site will serve as a hub to provide information links to a majority of the row crop information available from ACES, the Alabama Experiment Station, and other sources at Auburn University. It is not intended to replace all the other sites, but is our attempt to simplify your quest for row crop information in Alabama. It will, however, take the place of the ACES cotton and soybean websites. We have consolidated the information from those sites into the new crops hub.

If you have any suggestions for content or comments concerning our new web site, please direct them to our webmaster, Jon Brasher, at brashjh@auburn.edu. We hope that this will allow us to better serve you in the upcoming seasons.

Update: As for the cotton crop in central and southern Alabama counties, we have been under the influence of dry weather over the past several weeks. Many of the fields I have seen are still growing slowly but should respond to the showers that some areas have gotten this week. We have irrigated cotton at the E.V. Smith Research Center near Montgomery that is growing well and is squaring heavily. The primary problem we have seen on this cotton has been the presence of plant bugs over the past week or so but you need to look closely at Ron Smith's discussion below. With all the grain harvest that is taking place on and near the station, we expect this to be an ongoing problem over the next few weeks. We desperately need rain in the Wiregrass to help peanuts and cotton along, but it is too late for some of the corn I have seen. Cotton further north around Shelby County has received more rainfall this spring and looks very good at this point in the season.



*** Insect Outlook- Late June**

R. Smith, Extension Entomologist

The rainfall and drought situation in early June could not be more varied than that found between Northern Alabama and the Southeastern part of our state. Some areas had as much as 10 inches of rain in one week while others have not had a cumulative total of one inch since April. The rainfall pattern has greatly impacted our crops and will likely impact insect populations. During the first week of June reports were received that

“worms,” eggs and damage was observed in early square conventional cotton in Central Alabama. Others had previously noted an above average level of “worm” activity, of several species, in other crops such as wheat and corn. It is too early to predict what kind of caterpillar year we will have. However, we must continue to monitor all our crops for insect presence and damage. Based on our experiences more than a decade ago, prior to the introduction of Bollgard Cotton, I would advise that we cannot win if we get into the battle with worms on pre-bloom, conventional cotton. Even if we win the battle, we lose the war due to the expense of control. Hopefully we can utilize beneficial insects, including fire ants, for our worm control until mid-to-late July. On another insect, reports of high numbers of stink bugs are being reported in wheat, corn and soybeans from all across the southern U.S. We must keep a sharp eye on stink bug populations since they can cause heavy damage in most all of our various crops.



*** Early Postemergence Treatments in Cotton**

M. Patterson, Extension Weed Scientist

Most cotton in the state is up to a stand and may need some postemergence applications for weed control. Since over 90 percent of our cotton is Roundup Ready, the logical choice for early post treatment is glyphosate (Roundup, etc.). Glyphosate may be and probably should be mixed with metolachlor (Dual Magnum, etc.) if pigweed and annual grasses (crabgrass, goosegrass, etc.) are emerged. This will hopefully provide foliar control of emerged weeds from the glyphosate and residual control from the metolachlor if rainfall or sprinkler irrigation is received within a week or so following application. If morningglory or glyphosate-resistant pigweed is a problem, then adding Staple to the glyphosate will increase control of these weeds. Make sure the application is made prior to the fifth leaf stage with RR varieties (i.e. DPL 555, etc.). It is critical to obtain weed control in the drill at this stage so the crop can obtain a height advantage over the weeds. We will be coming back later with post-directed, hooded, or layby applications of hotter mixtures like diuron (Karmex, etc.), prometryn (Caparol, etc.), diuron + linuron (Layby Pro), or Valor. When mixed with glyphosate or MSMA these products will kill most emerged weeds and have some residual activity if activated by rainfall or sprinkler irrigation following application. They are also very injurious to cotton if applied to the leaves and green stems.

There are some growers who have planted traditional non-transgenic cotton in Alabama. Hopefully this was planted with herbicides like Treflan or Prowl and/or fluometuron (Cotoran, etc.), prometryn, or diuron soil-applied to slow the weeds down while the crop emerged and became established. Moisture to activate preemergence herbicides has been limited in many fields. If weeds are present in this cotton and the crop has five leaves or less, then options are limited for broadleaf weed control. But there are a couple of products you can use without significant crop injury. Fluometuron or Staple can be sprayed either over-the-top of small cotton or post-directed in a sloppy application. MSMA at one pint per acre can be added to increase the foliar activity of the mix, but more injury will need to be tolerated. You can rough up the young cotton,

but this is the trade-off to obtain some weed control. These mixtures should be applied well before cotton begins to square.



*** Commodity Market Update – Is \$10 Corn Possible?**

B. Goodman, Extension Economist

This past week has been active in futures markets. December Corn is over \$7 per bushel, up 55 cents since last Thursday. November Soybeans are \$14.42, having touched \$14.60 several times since starting last Wednesday at \$13.60. July Wheat is back over \$8, up about 40 cents. Even December cotton is up, but only a couple of points, trading between 74 and 75 cents.

In these times of perilously volatile markets and exorbitant input prices, every farmer must be prepared to move on any opportunity to increase profit. While the consensus is that even higher prices for grains and oilseeds are on the way, some protection against catastrophic declines may be in order, however options prices are extremely high right now. For example, even a \$5 December Corn Put is 7 cents, which seems like a lot to pay for a contract that is \$2 out of the money. I guess my problem is I just can't get my pocketbook calibrated to the new price realities. What I need to do is forget about what things like gasoline, diesel fuel, and corn "used to cost" and concentrate on what they might cost in the future. While 7 cents might be considered expensive for a put option so far out of the money that the chance of a corn price anywhere in the vicinity is small, and while the time value lost on this contract will not only make it expensive to buy, but also expensive to keep, if you decide you wanted hedge a little bit, you should just suck it up and pay it. But, at these prices you need to watch and be ready to sell that option when you are done with it and before it loses all its value.

The point is that the marketing stakes have been ratcheted up a couple of notches. You can't expect to make a move and forget about it. You have to watch it every day, take positions, lift positions. Act just like a New York Stock Trader. Maybe even buy a green eye shade. It's too volatile to risk turning your back on it.

Like I said, I just can't get used to these new numbers. My market advice on corn wheat and soybeans is to sell it all and sell it now. But that has been my advice all spring. If you followed it, you probably did ok on beans and wheat, but you would have left \$1 on the table with corn.

With cotton, the picture is murky. Fundamentals are not good. About all you can say is that we hope the marketing coops do a good job for us. We cannot seem to break out of the "no-win zone" where we get above the target price enough so price increases actually benefit the farmer. Remember, with the new higher basis on cotton contracts we are still well below target price to the farmers.



***2008 Cotton Calendar.** *D. Monks, Extension Specialist*

Date	Event	Contact Person
June 18	Cotton Scout School Tenn. Valley Res. & Ext. Center, Belle Mina	Tim Reed, E. Schavey
July 10	Precision Agric. Field Day Isbell Farms, Colbert Co.	S. Norwood, A. Winstead
Aug 9-11	ALFA Commodity Tour and Conf., Mobile	ALFA

There are two websites that you may be interested in visiting:

Weekly crop updates: www.nass.usda.gov/weather/cpcurr/al-crop-weather

Alabama cotton information: www.alabamacrops.com



*Reference Number: **PSK-6-08**, D. Monks, C. Burmester, and B. Goodman, editors



Use pesticides **only** according to the directions on the label. Follow all directions, precautions, and restrictions that are listed. Do not use pesticides on plants that are not listed on the label.

The pesticide rates in this publication are recommended **only** if they are registered with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries. If a registration is changed or cancelled, the rate listed here is no longer recommended. Before you apply any pesticide, fungicide or herbicide, check with your county Extension agent for the latest information.

Trade names are used **only** to give specific information. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System does not endorse or guarantee any product and does not recommend one product instead of another that might be similar.

For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and other related acts, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability.

© 2004 by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. All rights reserved.