



Alabama Cotton Picksack Newsletter

July 2009

- ***Cotton Overcoming Early Stresses:** *Dale Monks*
 - ***North Alabama Crop Insect Update:** *Tim Reed and Barry Freeman*
 - ***July Worm Control:** *Ron Smith*
 - ***Scouting For Herbicide-Resistant Weeds:** *Mike Patterson*
 - ***Cotton Economics:** *Bob Goodman and Max Runge*
 - ***2009 Cotton Calendar:** *Dale Monks*
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***Cotton Overcoming Early Stresses:** *D. Monks, Extension Agronomist*

The weather over this growing season has proven to be somewhat of a “Jekyll and Hyde” experience. While the early season brought heavy rains, rainfall suddenly became scarce for many of our producers across the state. Stories of drought conditions for over a month were common many areas and the southern counties were 10 degrees or so warmer than the central areas as recently as last week. Temperatures over 100 were also present across the state. Time will tell if there are any lasting effects on our crops, especially corn.

In visiting cotton fields in some areas of central and southern counties this week, it looks like much of the cotton is growing well and setting squares. Older cotton is blooming and setting bolls in some areas but there are some areas where the crop is yet to start squaring. While cotton-growing conditions are much improved, the crop is still behind what we would have expected if planting had occurred on time. The stand in some fields is also not perfect due to heavy rains and delays. We visited a peanut field earlier this week where half the field was behind the rest because of a 3-wk delay caused by extended rainfall during the planting operation. Most of our row crops were rated in the “fair” or “good” category on July 6, with little in the excellent range. Hopefully that changed with the rainfall we received earlier this week.

***North Alabama Crop Insect Update:** *T. Reed, Extension Specialist and B. Freeman*

Variable rain fall amounts across much of north Alabama July 5 have given renewed hope to many row crop producers. Most of the older cotton (cotton that is blooming) in north Alabama has been sprayed once for tarnished plant bugs and square retention is dropping in the younger cotton that hasn't been sprayed to date. Consultants report that tarnished plant bug numbers in soybeans are down this week compared to last week, indicating an increased movement to cotton. Consultants are concerned that pyrethroid sprays for plant bugs may encourage aphid populations to increase. Aphid numbers have been relatively low to date and few acres have been treated for aphids. Spider mites continue to be spotty and less than 2% of fields have been treated for mites. Bifenthrin was applied to some mite-infested fields to also control plant bugs. Brown stink bug numbers are above normal levels in many corn fields and these pests will be moving to cotton and soybeans soon. The first bollworm/budworm egg was found in the experimental plots at the Tennessee Valley Research and Extension Center July 6. One consultant reports *Heliothine* egg counts as high as 5% in some cotton fields. Conventional cotton should be monitored closely for *Heliothine* eggs and worms.



***July Worm Control:** *R. Smith, Extension Entomologist*

If 2009 goes as the last 30 or so years, we can expect to have some level of both bollworms and tobacco budworms during the month of July. Egg deposition will usually occur during the first 10 days of July, with higher numbers in the southern counties. Historically this flight has been tobacco budworms. About the time this budworm flight subsides, the bollworm flight will begin (about July 12-15 in the south and about July 18-21 in central Alabama). Generally, worm activity occurs about 7-10 days later in northern Alabama. Things could happen a little earlier in 2009 due to the above normal heat units that have accumulated in recent weeks.

Control efforts by growers will depend on what technology they have planted. If they have planted Bollgard™, Bollgard II™, or Wide Strike™ varieties, the tobacco budworm can be ignored. These growers will only need to be concerned about the bollworm flight, which generally produces some escapes in Bollgard cotton. In research plots, Bollgard II reduces the number of escapes by about 90%. Wide Strike varieties could need an overspray for bollworms under heavy pressure. Growers who have planted true conventional or Roundup™ only varieties will have to be much more observant. Hopefully, beneficial insects will contain early July budworms to acceptable levels of damage. Pyrethroids can then be used economically for the mid- to late-July bollworm flight. For the remainder of the season (August/Sept.), we can expect a mixture of both budworms and bollworms. Varieties without the Bt technology will have to be treated with insecticides that will control both bollworms and budworms whenever economic levels of worms appear. This could get expensive in a hurry and is why we don't need to fight the early July budworms. It is more economical to protect August bolls than

early July squares. Non-Bt cotton varieties must be scouted often and very carefully. We now have excellent budworm insecticides (Tracer™, Steward™ and Belt™) but none are clean-up materials on large worms.



***Scouting For Herbicide-Resistant Weeds:** *M. Patterson, Extension Weed Scientist*

There are several herbicide resistant weeds in Alabama. Common cocklebur resistant to MSMA was found in central Alabama as well as goosegrass resistant to trifluralin and Prowl™ in Cherokee county, horseweed resistant to glyphosate in North Alabama, and now glyphosate-resistant Palmer pigweed in South Alabama (specifically Barbour county documented in 2008). Resistant common cocklebur and goosegrass have not spread since their documentation in the late 1980's. According to farmers and consultants, glyphosate-resistant horseweed is present in many fields in the Tennessee Valley. Controlling the horseweed prior to planting using additional burndown treatments including 2,4-D, dicamba, Ignite™, etc. is imperative, but horseweed is apparently germinating once the summer crop is up also. This means we will have to apply soil-residual herbicides at planting to help provide control as well as killing the horseweed prior to planting.

We will probably see more fields where glyphosate-resistant Palmer pigweed pops up in the future. I heard a report of hard-to-kill pigweed in some south Alabama fields last year and more will be discovered this year.

What should farmers do if they suspect resistance? First, make sure the proper rate of herbicide was applied to the weed at a stage when it should have been controlled. Spraying eight inch pigweed with a half rate of glyphosate will not work. If the proper rate (22 fluid oz Roundup Powermax™ or Weathermax™, or 32 fluid oz of a generic) was sprayed on small (less than three inch tall) pigweed without success, then you may have a problem. Spray again with the 32 ounce rate (on RR Flex™ cotton varieties) as soon as possible and look 7 to 10 days afterward. If this doesn't work, call your regional extension agent and ask if they can visit the site on your farm. Regional agents have small backpack sprayers that they can use to spray small test areas. The agent can spray this pigweed with a three percent solution of Roundup Weathermax or Powermax. If the pigweed is not significantly affected within 10 days, then resistance has probably arrived in your field.



***Cotton Economics and USDA Acreage:** *B. Goodman and
M. Runge, Extension Economists*

The long-awaited USDA June plantings report has arrived. You can access it at:
<http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/current/Acre/Acre-06-30-2009.pdf>.

The “planted acreage” for corn is estimated at 87.0 million acres, up only 1% from last year, but a very large acreage – 2nd largest since 1947. The soybean crop is forecast at 77.5 million acres, up 2% from last year. Harvested bean acreage will be largest on record, if realized. Wheat acreage is forecast to be 59.8 million acres, down 5% from last year. All cotton is forecast at 9.05 million acres, down 4%. Upland is also down 4% at 8.91 million acres. All cotton and upland acres are the lowest since 1983. Mississippi and Louisiana farmers planted the lowest acres for their states on record, at 270,000 and 240,000 acres, respectively.

In summary, US farmers planted 4.6 million acres more than forecast in the March planting intentions report. Corn came in above the highest pre-report guesses by the experts. Soybean acres were up a million from March. The cotton number was right in line with the highest pre-report guesses.

Initial reaction to these numbers, on a day when the DJIA was down over 100 and the dollar was up, was pretty grim. Corn was especially hit hard, of course. September corn was locked down all day. Beans were down pretty good too for a while but came back. December cotton was down around 100 points initially but gained it back within a couple of hours. For cotton, the acreage difference between the low pre-report guess and the high pre-report guess likely amounts to less than 500,000 bales. Given the importance of the economy in the demand side of the price-discovery equation, traders must not be putting a lot of importance or emphasis on the supply side. I mean, we could sell China a half million bales in a single day.

Here are the cotton numbers for the Southeast:

State	08 Planted (000)	09 Planted (000)
Alabama	290	250
Georgia	940	980
Tennessee	285	340
South Carolina	135	140
North Carolina	430	380

Alabama and North Carolina lost cotton acres, Georgia, Tennessee, and South Carolina had an increase. But Texas is where all the cotton is these days, and it’s what goes on in Texas that moves the market, at least in terms of prospective

supply or U.S. production numbers.

Market Response: This spring, it was disappointing that the cotton market was not performing as well as the grains. The grain markets have experienced high prices relative to loan rates, while the cotton market has not. After last week I am no longer envious. September corn lost about a dollar per bushel and beans and wheat were hard hit as well. The DJIA is down big, crude is off over \$5 per barrel, and the dollar is up. It’s kind of like the perfect storm I guess. The dust has not yet settled and nobody (really) knows why cotton is up, but it is. I’m sure our hindsight will again be 20/20. Some experts say this is a good chance to lock in some cotton, and I would never argue against it because the future is highly uncertain.



***2009 Cotton Calendar. D. Monks, Extension Specialist**

Date	Event	Contact Person
Aug 10	Crops Tour, Harpersville and Area	W. Griffith, R. Colquitt
Aug 6-8	ALFA Commodity Tour and Conf., Montgomery	ALFA
Sept 10	Central AL Crops Tour	L. Kuykendall, J. Clary

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

Weekly crop updates:

[www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics by State/Alabama/Publications/Crop Progress & Condition/index.asp](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Alabama/Publications/Crop_Progress_&_Condition/index.asp);

Alabama Crop information: www.alabamacrops.com



*Reference Number: **PSK-7-09**, 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.

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