



## Tailgate Talk

By: Jeff Thompson

**May 29, 2019**

Weather wise, one might think the world has turned upside down. The Southeast is in the throes of a severe drought with extremely oppressive heat; while the Plains of Texas and Oklahoma are receiving record rainfall and mild unseasonable temperatures. In addition, continued flooding in the Midsouth is creating serious hardship. The latest planting progress report has the U.S. on par with its five-year average, but it hasn't been easy. Of course, why should we expect anything different with the unusual becoming the norm in recent years?

### **Southeast Conditions**

To our good fortune, the Southeast experienced favorable weather in April with ample rains and warm temperatures. Being afforded this opportunity most of the crop was planted and excellent stands were obtained. It was not until a few weeks ago as soils dried out did planting problems become an issue. The greatest concern now lies with the twenty to twenty five percent still yet to be planted and the ten to fifteen percent lying in dry ground.

One thing for certain the above conditions are delaying what once was a timely crop. Aware of the importance of earliness, we will have to be ever diligent in our production practices to push this crop along at a good pace. With long-range forecasts offering little in the way of relief, some growers I've spoken with are getting quite anxious to the point of contemplating some rather risky decisions. We'll touch on a few of those in this newsletter. It's times like these, I'm reminded of a saying told to me by a West Texas grower, "No matter how dry it is, today we are one day closer to the next rain."

### **Southwest Conditions**

It's been difficult for most getting seed in the ground and to a stand. As mentioned before, cooler temperatures and abundant rainfall has the Southwest



off to a slow start. As always, conditions and progress vary from one end of the spectrum to the other.

The northern High Plains has struggled with getting cotton in and to a stand due to cool temperatures and heavy rain early on, which is concerning due to their shorter, less forgiving growing season.

A lot of cotton is up around the Lubbock area, much of which looks really good. However, a large area was hit last week with hail storms and, in some cases, over seven inches of rain. Needless to say, there's a lot of replanting going on this week. As for the Rolling Plains, it's as wet as we've seen in quite some time. Very little cotton has been planted so far, which isn't out of the ordinary. June 1 seems to be the time everyone starts in this area. However, fields throughout the Rolling Plains are notorious for having uneven terrain, terraces and low bottoms that can make it difficult to plant quickly, if they can get to them at all this year.

### **Cotton Thrips Alert**

Normally, we associate thrips damage with cool damp conditions though anything hindering seedling development, such as lack of soil moisture, can have the same effect. Couple this with their ever increasing resistance to seed treatments and you have the makings of a major problem. Thus it's no surprise heavy thrips pressure is being reported throughout the Southeast. Delayed maturity is the biggest threat but don't be mistaken under extreme pressure stand loss is very possible. Your best defense, in the absence of rain, is a foliar application of Orthene at four to six ounces per acre. The high rate of this product will provide approximately a week of residual control. Multiple applications may be necessary, as dry conditions persist. If so, Dr. Ron Smith, suggests switching to either Bidrin or dimethoate to lessen the chance of flaring spider mites especially under these hot dry conditions. Don't hesitate to make these foliar applications and pray for rain.

### **Late Planting**

I've had conversations with a few growers lately who are contemplating dusting cotton in. As most of you know, this is planting the seed no more than a half an inch deep so less rainfall will be needed to get it up. Even though this practice may have its place at times, it also carries with it a great deal of risk. For this reason, I'm not a big proponent of dusting in cotton. First, you must be assured no moisture is present which could accidentally swell seed but not be enough to get it up. The same risk is prevalent when only few tenths of an inch of rain is received. An even greater risk is from herbicide damage. A wide range of herbicides are presently used in our battle against pigweed. Each of these vary in their water solubility. Those most soluble such as Reflex and Warrant can cause seed injury under limited soil moisture conditions. Therefore, consider your herbicide options carefully when planting shallow.

## Replanting Cotton

I've always said getting a good cotton stand is half the ball game. Also, there is nothing worse than trying to work a poor or marginal stand. It's rare to get through a planting season without having to make a replant decision on at least a portion of a field if not its entirety. Let's discuss a few factors one must consider when making this decision. First, be conscious of the time of the year. A marginal stand on May 1 may be considered adequate on May 29. The risk of late boll development and an early freeze may outweigh any benefit to replanting. Secondly, it's not so much the plant population or stand count but rather stand uniformity that should most influence your decision. Research has proven one plant per foot of row can produce adequate yields. Also, limited yield increases have been shown to occur when plant populations exceed 20,000 to 30,000 plants per acre. Thus, when making replant decisions look for skips in the row of greater than three feet. If these can be readily found replanting would be advised. Finally, evaluate the existing stand. When seedlings appear unhealthy or have suffered damage to the bud or terminal replanting may be necessary. Finally, my rule of thumb is if you must think hard about replanting then most likely it's not needed.

## Tariff Aid

Much of the talk on the tail gate last week centered around the new round of tariff aid USDA announced would be forth coming to growers. This was especially welcomed since the US and China seem further apart than ever in settling this issue. Specific details of the relief package weren't disclosed as to not unduly influence planting decisions. However, a few items mentioned have me concerned. First, the Market Facilitation payments would be made in three installments. The first in late July, good luck on that one, the second in late fall, followed by the third in early 2020. Also, they would be paid on 2019 planted acres not to exceed that planted in 2018. Therefore, doesn't account for any 2019 acre increases. Finally, and most alarming was the statement whereby incurred damages on which payment calculations will be based would be determined at the county level. This I do not understand at all. Of course, any help will be welcomed, but don't look for this to make you whole. The cotton market has fallen 30 cents since this trade dispute began. The previous payment of six cents was made after most growers had priced cotton in the 80's and 90's. With the market now trading in the 60's it would take a much higher payment to right the ship, which we all know isn't in the cards.

Until next time,

