

# THE TURN ROW



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JUNE  
18  
2021

## WORKING WITH WHAT MOTHER NATURE DEALS US

By: Jeff Thompson & David Mullins

If the remainder of the growing season is anything like the beginning, we are in for a wild ride this year. All spring we've had to brave the ever-changing vagaries of weather while attempting to get seed in the ground and cotton up to a workable stand. From cold to hot and wet to dry or vice versa, it has been a struggle and continues to be in some locations. Despite what lies ahead, the one common denominator is this year's crop will be later. With that comes a smaller margin for error and a greater need to manage for earliness. Fortunately, today's varieties fruit much faster than their predecessors and we have a host of products at our disposal which can enhance plant maturity. So, it is not the problem it once was but something that must garner our attention, nonetheless.

### SOUTHEAST CONDITIONS

After what has been one of the coolest and windiest Mays on record, the dog days of summer have come early with cotton loving it. The old summertime pattern of random afternoon showers has been widespread enough over the past few weeks to get most cotton to a stand, even that dusted in. Thus, currently with ample moisture and hot humid conditions, young cotton plants are growing rapidly. The earliest planted cotton is just reaching pinhead square with the bulk of the crop two to three weeks behind. Presently, we are in good shape, but more rainfall will be needed soon for we are never more than 10 days or so from a drought. It appears a tropical weather system has developed in the southern Gulf which forecast models have moving north into the Delta and sweeping through the Southeast this weekend delivering significant rainfall. This is good news for the southeast for a wet,



windless tropical disturbance at this time of year is most always welcomed. Worrisome is the fact we are only two weeks into hurricane season so let us hope this is not a sign of things to come.

Most in jeopardy, if weather forecasters are correct, is the midsouth. Portions of this region have been inundated with rain over the past few weeks with many fields now standing in water. The Greenwood, Mississippi, area which accounts for over 50 percent of Mississippi's cotton acreage has received 12 inches of rain in June thus far with some nearby locations getting closer to 20 inches. With crop losses already likely, a tropical system of even this small magnitude could destroy significant acreage in the region.

## SOUTHWEST CONDITIONS

It's a mad dash to the finish line for the remaining acreage in West Texas that has not been planted. With parts of the Rolling Plains receiving over an inch earlier this week, producers will be putting in the hours over the next few days to finish up before the final insurance deadline of June 20. For the most part, we're off to a great start. As usual, crop stages vary from one location to another. Some of the earlier cotton on the High Plains is reaching pinhead square while parts of the Rolling Plains are a good three days out from being planted. The inevitable warm weather finally showed up this week and the cotton seems to be responding to it well. Our focus has now shifted to weed control as the weeds have also responded well to the rains and warmer temperatures.

As is the case in the southeast, most places will need another rain soon to keep this crop going. But, looking back and reflecting on how much conditions have improved in just a few weeks' time is impressive in itself. The overall optimism of a new crop with good potential is exciting.

## IN-SEASON MANAGEMENT EARLINESS

### FERTILITY

Excessive N fertilization can significantly delay maturity causing the plant to focus more energy on vegetative growth rather than setting fruit. In addition, this rank growth could lead to greater boll rot and fiber quality issues later in the season. Those preparing to side dress young cotton should keep this in mind.



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This is where it's good to know the history of a field. In locations known to produce a large stalk, consider reducing the rate of N by 15 to 20 percent from the recommended 90 pounds per acre. A similar reduction is also suggested in cotton following peanuts or other legume crops.

## PLANT GROWTH REGULATORS

Plant Growth Regulators (PGRs) containing mepiquat chloride are most useful in controlling plant growth while subsequently enhancing maturity. Since cotton varieties vary in their response to PGRs the proper use of these materials becomes more of an art than science. A key point to remember is their effectiveness is in direct correlation to the amount within the plant. In other words, when conditions favor excessive growth and the variety is one which responds, do not skimp on rates, especially on the first application. In my experience, like when we fought boll weevils, it is impossible to play catch up once you get behind. During the growing season, monitor the distance between the fourth and fifth nodes below the terminal. A PGR treatment is warranted if this internodal distance exceeds the width of three fingers.





*Pinhead square damage on cotton*

#### INSECT CONTROL

As cotton reaches pinhead square stage, the biggest insect threat will be from tarnished plant bugs. As adult plant bugs begin to leave wild host plants, they will be attracted to the older lush cotton. Under current wet conditions, this migration may extend over a longer period thus requiring more extensive scouting. The pest will feed on pinhead squares causing them to abort while preparing to lay eggs in the stem of the plants. The simplest way to scout for plant bugs is monitor pinhead square retention. If it falls below 80 percent, an insecticide treatment is recommended. Controlling adult TPBs early season will not only prevent yield losses and delays in maturity but will greatly reduce mid-season pressure by limiting egg hatch outs.

Until next time,

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