

THE TURN ROW



WITH **TIME** QUICKLY
BECOMING OUR **ENEMY**,
ITS CRITICAL TO **REDUCE**
WEED COMPETITION,
PROTECT FRUITING
POSITIONS, AND **MANAGE**
PLANT GROWTH OVER
THE NEXT SIX TO EIGHT
WEEKS TO **OPTIMIZE**
YIELD POTENTIAL.



JULY
21
2021

A STORY OF TIMING AND WEATHER

By: Jeff Thompson & David Mullins

The old adage that no two cotton crops are ever alike has never been truer. In my 45 years of closely monitoring cotton, I have never seen a more difficult start to one. In the past three months across the cotton belt, we have battled one weather extreme after another creating planting and fieldwork delays. As a result, cotton can be found from the cotyledon stage to that in mid-bloom. In short, the operative word this year is 'late.' If you didn't know better, many fields look as if it is mid-June rather than mid-July. Ten days to two weeks of hot, dry, sunny weather is desperately needed to play catch up. With time quickly becoming our enemy, its critical to reduce weed competition, protect fruiting positions, and manage plant growth over the next six to eight weeks to optimize yield potential. Even upon doing this, the crop's fate will ultimately be dependent on a late fall.

SOUTHEAST CONDITIONS

Though there was very little April planted cotton in this region (maybe less than a third), the older cotton is by far our best. It's weed free and blooming having received herbicide and fertilizer applications before the weather turned bad. Presently, it has excellent yield potential; however, there is growing concern if cloudy, rainy conditions continue it may begin naturally shedding fruit. The same cannot be said for cotton planted after May 1. Many locations within the region have received upwards of 20 inches of rain since early May. As a result, especially along the southern tier and coastal areas, saturated soils are depriving plants of oxygen, stunting growth, and fostering weeds. Fortunately, with a host of over-the-top herbicides now available to us, we can turn things around when/if given the slightest break in the



weather.

In our favor, today's cotton varieties are very forgiving, able to produce a crop in a shorter time than those previous. Even so, we must be conscious of the last bloom date from which we can expect a harvestable boll. Historically, this is late August in the northern sections of the region, followed by mid-September in the central areas, and late September along the Gulf Coast. On average, the Southeast crop is three to four weeks behind in maturity as there were very few blooms present on July 4. If the weather cooperates and fruit enhancing production practices are adhered to, we can make up a great deal of this lost ground.

SOUTHWEST CONDITIONS

This crop has the most potential we've seen in several years. Of course, that can't be said for every single acre, but generally speaking, the crop looks good. Widespread rains and milder temperatures have this crop off to an excellent start. With that being said, how it actually turns out will all depend on the type of fall we have. A lot of this crop is late and appears to be taking its time. There are beginning to be serious concerns regarding the lack of blooms we've seen thus far. However, the forecast shows temperatures of above 95 degrees for the next 15 days. We hope this will be enough time to play catch up before the [typical] last effective bloom date.

WEED CONTROL

As you would expect, there is no shortage of weeds with all this rain. Where herbicide applications have and can be made, their effectiveness is excellent as weeds are very receptive under current conditions. The problem lies in fields too wet for spray equipment to stand up. In such instances, the weeds are the same size as the cotton as illustrated in the accompanying picture. Though we cannot control the weather, there are some things to keep in mind to enhance weed control efforts when given the chance. Be aware that most foliar herbicides require three to four hours to become rain fast. Dicamba, and 2,4,D, as well as Staple, are not as effective when applied in cloudy weather. In keeping with the label, Dicamba cannot be applied after July 31. When using Liberty, the degree of control is often predicated on the size of the weeds – the



As you would expect, there is no shortage of weeds with all this rain. In such instances, the weeds are the same size as the cotton.

smaller, the better. In situations where larger weeds are present, add ammonium sulfate to the tank mix to enhance control. In salvage situations, do not overlook hooded sprayers though you may have to search for where you left them last and clean the vines off them.

INSECT CONTROL

There is added difficulty in monitoring for cotton insects when plants vary so much in age. It requires each field be scouted and treatment decisions be made on a field-by-field basis. The stage of your cotton will determine what pest(s) should be your focus.

PLANT BUGS

Normally by mid-July we are outside the plant bug window and moving on to other pests. However, with a high percentage of cotton not yet blooming, we must scout for adult plant bugs as we would in early season. The easiest manner is to check pinhead square retention and apply an insecticide application if it falls below 80 percent. Imidacloprid or Centric are recommended control products. Since neither have residual control on adult plant bugs, monitor fields weekly for additional migrations. When looking for plant bugs in blooming cotton, we shift our focus to immatures. Shaking plants over a drop cloth is the best scouting technique. If three plant bug nymphs per five row feet are found, treat with Diamond at six to nine ounces for it will give you two to three weeks of residual control.

STINK BUGS

July is the time of the year this pest moves into cotton fields. High numbers of stink bugs have been reported in corn and, as stalks dry down, this pest will be migrating to the oldest, most attractive cotton. They are primarily boll feeders, preferring soft, smaller bolls the size of a quarter. Gone unchecked, they can seriously reduce yield and fiber quality. When scouting, pull a sampling of these quarter-sized bolls, crack them open, and look for internal staining or warts. Treatment thresholds vary with the time of the season and percentage of bolls present. Apply a treatment in the first two weeks of bloom when 30 to 50 percent of the bolls sampled show internal signs of feeding. The threshold falls to 10 percent in weeks three through six. Concentrate your efforts on the older cotton and along field borders, initially. We consider stinkbugs the silent killer because the pest itself is hard to detect and signs of their feeding are not very visible, but all the while serious damage could be occurring.



Check bloom tags for bollworm escapes.

COTTON BOLLWORM

With the advent of Bt cotton, the bollworm/budworm complex has posed little threat. That was until bollworm resistance to 2 gene Bt was detected a few years ago. Resistance has been greater in some parts of the country more so than others. Nonetheless, since the July moth flight predominantly consists of bollworms, anyone planting two gene cotton varieties, such as DP 1646, should monitor closely for bollworm

escapes. North Carolina Extension has revised their treatment threshold for bollworms depending on the type of cotton planted. In two gene cotton its 25 eggs per 100 leaves or blooms while in 3 gene cotton it's three live worms per 100 fruiting structures. Bollworm moths will rarely lay eggs in plant terminals but rather on yellow, pink, or dried bloom tags. Let this be your focus when scouting.

PLANT GROWTH REGULATORS

All this rain has allowed cotton with fertilizer underneath it to jump. Hopefully, on older cotton proactive measures have already been taken to apply ample concentrations of PGR into the plant. Battling time, we must keep plants in a fruiting mode from here on out. There is the tendency to be a little shy on the initial application, especially on younger cotton that has struggled. This late in the game and with weather showing no signs of reversing, do not be afraid to give it a good shot. The goal is to maintain the internodal length between the fourth and fifth node from the terminal at no more than three fingers width.

In closing, let me say that I was always taught to never worry about things we have no control over. Instead, be prepared to face any situation as it might come our way. So, do not throw in the towel but instead give this crop all the attention you can muster because, lest we forget, cotton will give you the most when promising you the least. Also, with prices at such lofty levels, we can afford to supply a little TLC. So, stay positive for we are still in the game and the fat lady has not even begun to clear her throat.

Until next time,

Jeff Thompson
David Mullins

CONTACT US

John Mitchell Jeff Thompson
334.365.3369 334.365.3369

TEXAS/OKLAHOMA

David Mullins
806.549.4137

SOUTHEAST

Mark Frasier
334.322.7686