

Tips – May 2001

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Late planted cotton looks to be the order of the season. Couple this late start and its potential impacts on yield with low commodity prices, higher energy costs and reduced water availability, making cotton profitable will be a challenge. In spite of these factors that are beyond the grower's control, insect management decisions do remain under grower's control.

Thoughtful decisions must be exercised when determining if a field needs treatment. Treatment decisions depend on solid information, not guesswork or panic. Make use of your PCA's or consultant's field data and be sure they are checking the field carefully, thoroughly, and frequently. Weigh the potential cost of any treatment with the real threat to yield. Discuss at length the upside and downsides of a treatment decision. Here is a suggested list of questions:

What stage of development is being threatened?

How severe is the threat, can we wait to see if the problem persists or is the threat so great, immediate action is need?

What part of the plant is being damaged: root, shoot, leaf, square or fruit?

How much time remains in the season? Can the plant compensate for the damage?

If I treat, what are the possible side effects?

What should I use and why? Cost? Efficacy? Residual control? Selectivity? Reduced risk? Resistance management?

I predict that there will be great tendencies to want to protect the crop early this year. A late-planted or delayed crop stirs action in people. We want to help the crop, to minimize any threat seen as a delay to maturity. But next to cash, patience may be the most important resource a grower will need.

Make your insect control decisions with care, deliberation and the best information possible. Having trusted PCAs and consultants may be one of your best investments in a year as challenging as this one promises to be.

Lygus tips:

Planting is delayed so squaring will be delayed (according to the calendar). This might help us or hurt us depending what factors cause lygus to move around your fields.

The lygus potential for 2001 is still being assessed. It is a confusing and unique year relative to lygus development and their hosts. As soon as we feel comfortable that we can predict host suitability through May and we have more sampling data, we will announce the lygus projections. I will try and post concise information on the Insect Hotline (800/880-0981).

For those that have almonds or other tree crops with vegetation in the centers, mow these orchards frequently. One approach is to mow every other center over a period of time. This will help keep lygus in the orchard while depriving the next generation of useful habitat.

Give serious consideration to alfalfa management if you have in your neighborhood.

Work with neighbors to stagger the cutting of fields so alfalfa habitat is closely available for lygus

Start learning about the crops and other vegetation that surround you. You should have a good idea of when these host plants will become unsuitable for lygus and therefore when the bugs should move.

In general, the earlier the movement the better. Why? Lygus population must develop like investments beginning with low principle but getting larger through time. A smaller population spreads out and causes less immediate damage. Earlier movement usually precedes squaring; later large-scale movement can overwhelm a fruiting cotton field. Stay informed! Talk with your PCAs, neighbors and anyone else that has information. Begin to develop a strategy that is based on the reality of the crop's potential and the actual threat to profit.