



## *Cotton/Soybean Insect Newsletter*

Volume 4, Issue #6

Edisto Research & Education Center in Blackville, SC

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### *Newsletter Update*

I will be out of town all of next week, so there will not be a newsletter next week (18 June). The newsletter will resume the following week with an issue on 25 June.

### *Pest Patrol Hotline*

A summary of current problems with insects is available this season via a toll-free hotline. Simply call the free number (877) 285-8525 and select the messages you would like to hear. I will update the short message weekly for at least as long as the newsletter runs. The hotline is sponsored by Syngenta.

### *Cotton Situation*

As of 8 June 2009, the USDA NASS South Carolina Statistical Office had our progress at 95% of the crop being planted, just behind where we were last year and the 5-yr average of 97%. Conditions were described as 4% excellent, 56% good, 36% fair, 3% poor, and 1% very poor for the crop. These are observed/perceived state-wide averages.

### *Soybean Situation*

As of 8 June 2009, the USDA NASS South Carolina Statistical Office had our progress at 55% of the crop being planted, behind where we were at 68% in 2008 and the 5-yr average of 65%. About 44% of soybeans have emerged, slightly behind where the crop was this time last year at 48% and the 5-yr average emergence of 47%. Conditions were described as 5% excellent, 77% good, and 18% fair. These are observed/perceived state-wide averages.

### *News from Above the Lakes*

Randy Cabbage, county agent in Lee County, reported that he identified some bean leaf beetles this week from samples brought to him from one soybean field but did not know if the levels were high enough to justify a treatment. I am sure he is following up on any damage reports. Randy also reported that cotton looked normal to him. He is seeing some 5- to 6-leaf cotton that might be their most advanced.

### *News from Below the Lakes*

One local consultant reported that issues with thrips were not bad and that cotton was growing very quickly. Jonathan Croft, county agent in Dorchester County, reported that "in the upper end of Dorchester County, most of the cotton is looking better and has finally starting growing like you would expect. There has been some thrips injury, especially in fields that were slowed down by the cool weather a few weeks ago. Soybeans range

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in size from just emerging to about a foot tall and all that I have looked at this week in my travels around look good. I have not seen or heard of anybody having insect problems in their beans yet.” Charles Davis, county agent in Calhoun County, reported that there are “a number of producers near Cameron who will not get their cotton and peanut acreage in this year because of heavy rainfall. Some areas got over 7 inches in one afternoon and have since gotten over 4 additional inches. This has been going on for the past three weeks. Some had planned to take the reduced insurance payments and try to plant soybeans, but have given up on that idea after the additional 4 inches. Cotton in the Calhoun County area is looking fair. A lot of up and down cotton, leggy cotton, and some is just under water. Weed control is becoming a big concern. Resistant pigweed doesn’t seem to mind the rain.”

**Tobacco Budworm & Bollworm**

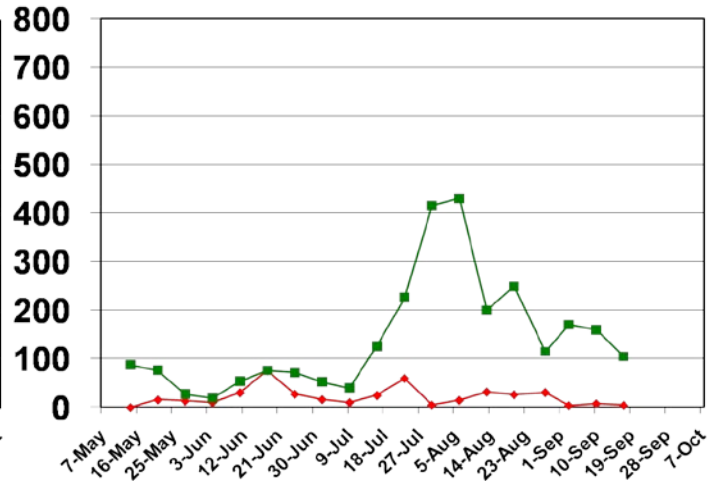
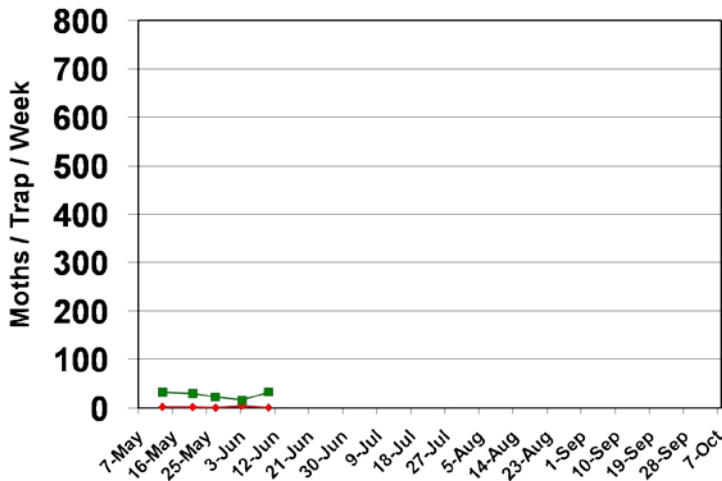


Captures of bollworm (BW) and tobacco budworm (TBW) moths in pheromone traps at EREC this season and last season are presented. The scales on the charts are the same to illustrate where we are compared with last year. We trapped about 33 BW and 1.5 TBW moths per trap this past week. That is about twice the number of BW moths from last week and down for TBW. So far, the numbers look much like they did last year.



**Pheromone Trap Capture SC - 2009**

**Pheromone Trap Capture SC - 2008**



**Most Important Thing to Apply to Your Fields**

It cannot be stressed enough that the most important thing that you can put on your fields this season is your shadow, the shadow of your local county agent, and a consultant’s shadow. I borrowed this piece of advice from a former colleague in Arkansas (thanks, Robertson), and I think that it is a good one. How else are you going to know what is happening in the field and what might need attention? I have said it before, but it is worth mentioning again. Spraying for insects based on a schedule is very risky business. It might work with some situations, some of the time, but it will not pay off in the long run. An average application of insecticide

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plus the application costs will run no cheaper than \$5/acre for any generic insecticide and a “barebones” application estimate. Often it is more than that and can be many times that amount, depending on what chemical is used. For most applications, total costs are somewhere closer to \$8-10/acre. For that same amount of money, you can have the shadow of a consultant on every field at least once per week for the entire insect season. Some consultants check for insects only, but some do much more (soil sampling, etc.). My point is that you can have someone checking for dynamic problems on most of your acreage for about the price of one insecticide application. Anyone arguing that they would rather spend the money on the one insecticide application than on the consultant for the season is faced with the reality that calendar spraying might work and might fail miserably. Consider this example in cotton. Suppose that you sprayed your cotton (let’s use DP555 in this example) crop 3 times on a schedule for bollworm and stink bugs. You think you did a pretty good job but find out at the end of the season that your yields were off. Maybe the following happened. Your first scheduled spray was when you thought it should be, but, in fact, it missed the heaviest pressure from bollworm “escaping” control from the Bt protein, so you lost some there. Because your first application was a little late, your second application was basically a weak rescue spray. Your third application was totally unnecessary because the worms and bugs were not there then. But the 3<sup>rd</sup> application did flare spider mites, resulting in early defoliation in many parts of the fields that negatively impacted yield. This scenario might seem farfetched, but it is closer to reality than you think with automatic applications. If you had a consultant on the job, he would have made sure the 1<sup>st</sup> application was on time. That might have prevented the second application altogether, or at least delayed it until it was necessary. Your consultant would have seen the building threat from spider mites early and been able to recommend a course of action, if it was even needed at all. Remember, he has only recommended 1 or 2 applications up till this point. So, with just a simple scenario like this, you could have saved/made more money by hiring the consultant. It is of my opinion that you need help from consultants and county agents now more than ever, especially with bugs much more important in second-generation Bt cotton. It might be possible to time some applications in cotton around peak bloom and typical bollworm flights out of corn, but applying insecticides for bugs on a schedule is really shooting in the dark. Also, because soybeans are worth more these days, those acres need a watchful eye as well. How many foliar insecticide applications are you going to apply this season? If you know the answer already, you could be wasting big money.

### **2009 SC Cotton Growers’ Guide, Pest Management Handbook, and Insect Control Guides**

The 2009 South Carolina Cotton Growers’ Guide is available from your local county office in paper copy or online at: <http://www.clemson.edu/psapublishing/pages/AGRO/EC589.PDF>.

The 2009 Pest Management Handbook is available in limited quantities. Contact your local county office for availability. A \$10 fee might be charged for the handbook. You can also download the handbook from: <http://www.clemson.edu/extension/rowcrops/index.html>

Clemson University Publications IC97 (Cotton Insect Management) and SL1 (Soybean Insect Management) are available free from your local county office in paper copy or online at: <http://www.clemson.edu/psapublishing/pages/ENTOM/IC97.PDF> and <http://www.clemson.edu/psapublishing/pages/AGRO/SL1.PDF>

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**Need More Information?**

Log on to the following webpage to view important recommendations for cotton and soybean insect management, data, and historical cotton insect newsletters:

<http://www.clemson.edu/edisto/cotton/cotton.htm>

Sincerely,

Jeremy K. Greene, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor – Entomologist



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