

# WEST PLAINS IPM UPDATE

News about  
Integrated Pest  
Management in  
Hockley,  
Cochran, and  
Lamb Counties  
from  
Kerry Siders

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## CROP AND PEST SITUATION

**Cotton** ranges from 5 leaf stage to 13 true leaves with square set good at +90%. As of today, no blooms have been seen by myself or my scout. I do anticipate seeing blooming fields by July 20th. I am basing this on the fact that our most mature field in the scouting program has 5 first position squares. We typically go into bloom with 8 nodes above white flower. To do this, we need to form 4 additional squares. It will take 3 days per square to form, this equates to 11-12 days. This places first bloom on July 20<sup>th</sup> on this more progressed field. Majority of fields then will be after this date.

Cotton insect pests remain very quiet. In the IPM Scouting Program we have noted only an occasional fleahopper, and no Lygus or stink bugs. We can find grasshoppers on field margins near rangeland. Beneficial insect and arachnid numbers are surprisingly good in some fields, though limited food source is available. I suspect these are residual populations from wheat.

Weeds continue to be the most dominant pest. A long varied list of weed species noted throughout all three counties. If you need help identifying a weed and coming up with a control plan give me a call. Remember, these weeds serve as host to many of our cotton pests.

Most cotton has begun to make good progress over the last few days since we have had some open warm sunny weather. Obviously there have been major hurdles to get to this point and most likely some of those will continue. I am optimistic for most of our area dryland and irrigated cotton. If we continue to receive measurable precipitation in July, which is in the forecast I will remain optimistic. In fact, you may need to add to your “to do” list an application of PGR if you have not already done so. Between many now considering upping their fertilizer game, and mostly a full soil moisture profile going into July, cotton plants are making good progress in growth. I would like to see having 16-24 oz of a plant growth regulator accumulated in the plant going into bloom in a few weeks.

**Peanuts** continue to bloom with pegging and pod set going strong. We are about 10 days ahead of where we were at last year at this same time. We can attribute this to the environment which is created in canopy with rain. If soil surface is too hot and dry pegs will not develop properly, and hence no pod. I have not found or seen damage from foliage feeding larvae. I have not seen much in the way of pathogens either.

## Cotton Fleahopper

The cotton fleahopper is the insect of concern right now in cotton. Though I do not anticipate wholesale problems with this pest I think it is important that we cover some of the biology and management here. Adult fleahoppers are about 1/8 inch long and pale green. Nymphs resemble adults but lack wings and are light green. They move very rapidly when disturbed. Adults move into cotton from weed hosts when cotton begins to square. Both adults and nymphs suck sap from the tender portion of the plant, including small squares. Pinhead size and smaller squares are most susceptible to damage.

**Management and decision making.** The decision to apply insecticide should be based on the number of fleahoppers present, the squaring rate and the percent square set. If conditions are conducive to the rapid buildup of cotton fleahoppers in alternate hosts, scouting intervals should be shortened (i.e., monitor fields every 3 to 4 days).



**During the first week of squaring, the economic threshold is 25 to 30 cotton fleahoppers per 100 terminals combined with less than 90 percent square set. In the second week of squaring, the economic threshold is 25 to 30 cotton fleahoppers per 100 terminals combined with less than 85 percent square set. Starting with the third week of squaring up to first bloom, the economic threshold is 25 to 30 cotton fleahoppers per 100 terminals combined with less than 75 percent square set.**

As plants increase in size and fruit load, larger fleahopper populations can be tolerated without yield reduction. In most years treatment is rarely justified after first bloom. However, occasionally, when cotton plants do not set an adequate square load during the first 3 weeks of squaring, fleahoppers can prevent the square set that is needed for an adequate crop.

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### Priorities for the next several days:

1. Continue chipping away at weed control.
  2. Get fertility program going and match it up to potential, including dryland. Have a goal to wrap up fertilizing by end of this month!
  3. Scout for square robbing insects in cotton.
  4. Scout for Sugarcane aphid in milo.
  5. Protect developing peanut pods from disease 60 days from planting.
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**West Plains IPM Update** is a publication of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service IPM Program in Hockley, Cochran, and Lamb Counties.

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