



Slug Issues and Options in Cotton

—Ralph Bagwell, Ph.D.

There have been several reports of slugs causing significant injury to corn and soybeans. Injury in one case being so severe that replanting corn was considered. Hopefully this is not an indication of a significant future problem in cotton but it is well worth while to understand slugs and their potential for injury.

The most significant injury from slugs occurs during the seedling stage.

Slugs will often feed on the cotyledons as the seed is cracking through the ground. Slug feeding causes injury

ranging from ragging of the cotyledonary leaves to cutting the plant stem similar to cutworms. Plant stand loss during severe slug infestations can be enough to justify whole fields. The images on the following pages are typical of slug damaged cotton seedlings.

"Fields covered with heavy plant residue, such as corn stalks, provide the environment required for slugs to survive"

High risk factors for slug infestations are easily recognized. Slugs are soft bodied organisms that are very susceptible to desiccation. They need regular contact with a high moisture surface. Fields covered with heavy plant residue, such as

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Chilli Thrips—Possible New Invasive Pest of Cotton

At least two entomologists, Gene Burris and Dale Pollet, will be on alert in 2008 for the presence of a new invasive pest on cotton. An early alert has been sounded by Entomologist in Florida that chilli thrips, *Scirtothrips dorsalis* Hood, could be entering the State of Louisiana. Selected monitoring will be conducted in cotton and ornamentals by the LSU AgCenter entomologists.

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Upcoming Dates:

- Northeast Research Station Field Day, St. Joseph—June 24
- Louisiana Wheat and Oat Field Day, Winnsboro—April 17
- Dean Lee Field Day, Alexandria—Aug. 21

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corn stalks, provide the environment required for slugs to survive during the daytime hours. Slugs then feed at night when their potential for desiccation is lowest.



Slug in a cotton field.

There are not a lot of known methods for slug control. The spray type options are products



Slug injury to cotyledon cotton. Note the heavy corn residue.

with the active ingredient metaldehyde. The limitations of this product are application, availability and often cost. Metaldehyde is sold as granular bait with use rates up to 10 lbs product per acre. Application small quantities of granular materials can be very difficult. Corn and legumes (soybeans) are the only crops labeled for metaldehyde application.

Chilli Thrips (cont'd from page 1)

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Dr. Amand Hodges of the University of Florida reports that invasive thrips, chilli thrips, is now a focal point for several university specialists that seek funding to establish monitoring support among extension specialists, regulatory officials, and industry regarding the movement of new, invasive arthropod species through the ornamentals trade. The micro-arthropod pests are problematic invaders that can be accidentally shipped from state to state undetected.

The chilli thrips is of particular concern to the southeastern U.S., as it has established throughout Florida and isolated interceptions have oc-

curred in other states. The chilli thrips has the potential to establish as a problematic pest for numerous crops including the following-ornamentals, cotton, and various vegetables.

A new emerging pest, such as chilli thrips, has the potential to completely disrupt current IPM strategies used for management. Early detection and knowledge of the pest's movement and damage potential is essential to prevention or crop loss, or unnecessary preventative treatments that might occur in relation to concerns of this pest, in the absence of monitoring strategies.

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Seedling damaged by slugs.

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Tillage is the other control option. Tilling fields incorporates much of dead plant residue on the soil surface, exposing more soil surface to sunlight. This reduces locations where slugs can hide during daylight hours, thus increases susceptibility to desiccation.

Fertilizer application has also been suggested as a control method. The idea is that the fertilizer “salts” the slugs. While this method may suppress low population, there are little data to suggest that fertilizer application is a consistent control op-

tion.

Snails have also been implicated as a potential pest of cotton. Snails are easily recognized by the presence of a shell. Although snails can sometimes be found in large number on cotton, rarely do they damage cotton by feeding on it. Most snails are considered as detritivores, which are animals that consume decomposing organic materials as a food source.



Slug feeding on cotyledons.

Dr. Daniel Stephenson, Weed Scientist, Joins AgCenter

Dr. Daniel Stephenson has been appointed assistant professor at the LSU AgCenter's Dean Lee Research and Extension Center, effective May 1. He will be replacing Professor Roy Vidrine who headed up this research and extension program for the past several

years. Vidrine retired after 36 years of service.

Dr. Stephenson will have research as well as extension responsibilities for weed control in cotton, corn, soybeans, and milo.

Dr. Stephenson brings extensive experience

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in weed science and row crop agriculture to this research and extension program. He has worked the past three years as an assistant professor of research/extension for cropping systems agronomy at the University of Arkansas Research and Extension Center in Keiser, Arkansas. He completed his graduate degrees at the University of Arkansas and Auburn University. Dr. Stephenson has conducted or been involved with field research in corn, cotton, grain sorghum, peanuts, rice, soybeans, turfgrass and wheat.

Dr. Stephenson will be responsible for developing a weed control research program in cotton, corn, soybeans and grain sorghum. His research will focus primarily on, but not limited to: evaluation of weed control and crop response of experimental preemergence and postemergence herbicides; weed control programs utilizing newly developed herbicides; developing weed management systems; evaluation of reduced rates, adjuvants and herbicide combinations; and weed management programs utilizing genetically

transformed varieties while monitoring for weed shifts and herbicide resistance. He also will provide assistance for the coordination, development and promotion of statewide extension education programs for row crop weed control using best management practices (BMPs).

Dr. Stephenson stated that he is very excited about this opportunity to work for the LSU AgCenter and to provide leadership for research and extension programs serving row-crop clientele. He is looking forward to working with county agents, research scientists, consultants, agribusiness personnel and producers to carry out the mission of the LSU AgCenter

His domicile will be at the Dean Lee Research and Extension Center at Alexandria. He can be reached in his office at 318-308-6590, or cell phone at 318-308-7225. The email address is DStephenson@agcenter.lsu.edu.

Feel free to contact Dr. Stephenson for any information or assistance you may need.



Cotton planting in full swing in Louisiana this past week.



Clean cotton up to a good stand—the goal over the next few weeks.



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