# Mississippi Crop Situation

| May 9, 2008 | Mississippi State University Extension Service | Number 8 |
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## This Weeks Planting Report

**National Agricultures Statistics Services (Mississippi) Crop Progress for Week Ending 5/04/08**

| Crop | This Week % Planted | Last Week % Planted | Last Year % Planted | 5- Year Average % Planted |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corn Planted | 98 | 96 | 100 | 98 |
| Corn Emerged | 93 | 85 | 98 | 94 |
| Cotton Planted | 14 | 7 | 30 | 54 |
| Cotton Emerged | 5 | 1 | 8 | 28 |
| Peanuts Planted | 12 | 6 | 10 | 6 |
| Rice Planted | 72 | 58 | 80 | 81 |
| Rice Emerged | 54 | 30 | 53 | 58 |
| Sorghum Planted | 43 | 40 | 55 | 76 |
| Sorghum Emerged | 35 | 19 | 30 | 54 |
| Soybeans Planted | 56 | 46 | 66 | 75 |
| Soybeans Emerged | 37 | 22 | 43 | 56 |
| Winter Wheat Heading | 97 | 87 | 98 | 96 |

## MCS Newsletter Email List

We are in the process of changing the email distribution lists over to a list server address. This will make it easier for people to subscribe and unsubscribe to the newsletter. Early this week my distribution list crashed and I lost anyone who subscribed for the email version of the newsletter after 4/4/08. You may receive an email stating that you are on the list.

## Wheat Agronomics

**Dr. Erick Larson**

**Wheat Freeze Injury** – Moderate to severe wheat freeze injury has been documented in central and south Mississippi. As time passes, freeze damage to our wheat crop is becoming more apparent. Severe injury has been documented where temperatures fell to 30 degrees F or less on heading wheat. Although temperatures were just as cold (and more widespread) in north Mississippi, they generally did not fall below 28 degrees F and the low temperature duration was quite short. It appears this slight climatic difference compared to last year's freeze, minimized freeze injury in northern Mississippi, where much of the wheat crop had not yet headed. Heads in the boot stage, just prior to heading, gain some insulation from the leaf sheath to their sensitive floral organs, which produce kernels. Thus, injury to wheat at pre-heading stages may be limited to bent-over heads and/or awns which had difficulty emerging from the "boot," and

swollen or bent nodes. Wheat in the boot stage, where heads were nearly ready to emerge from within the upper leaf sheath, is sensitive to temperatures of 28 degrees F or less.

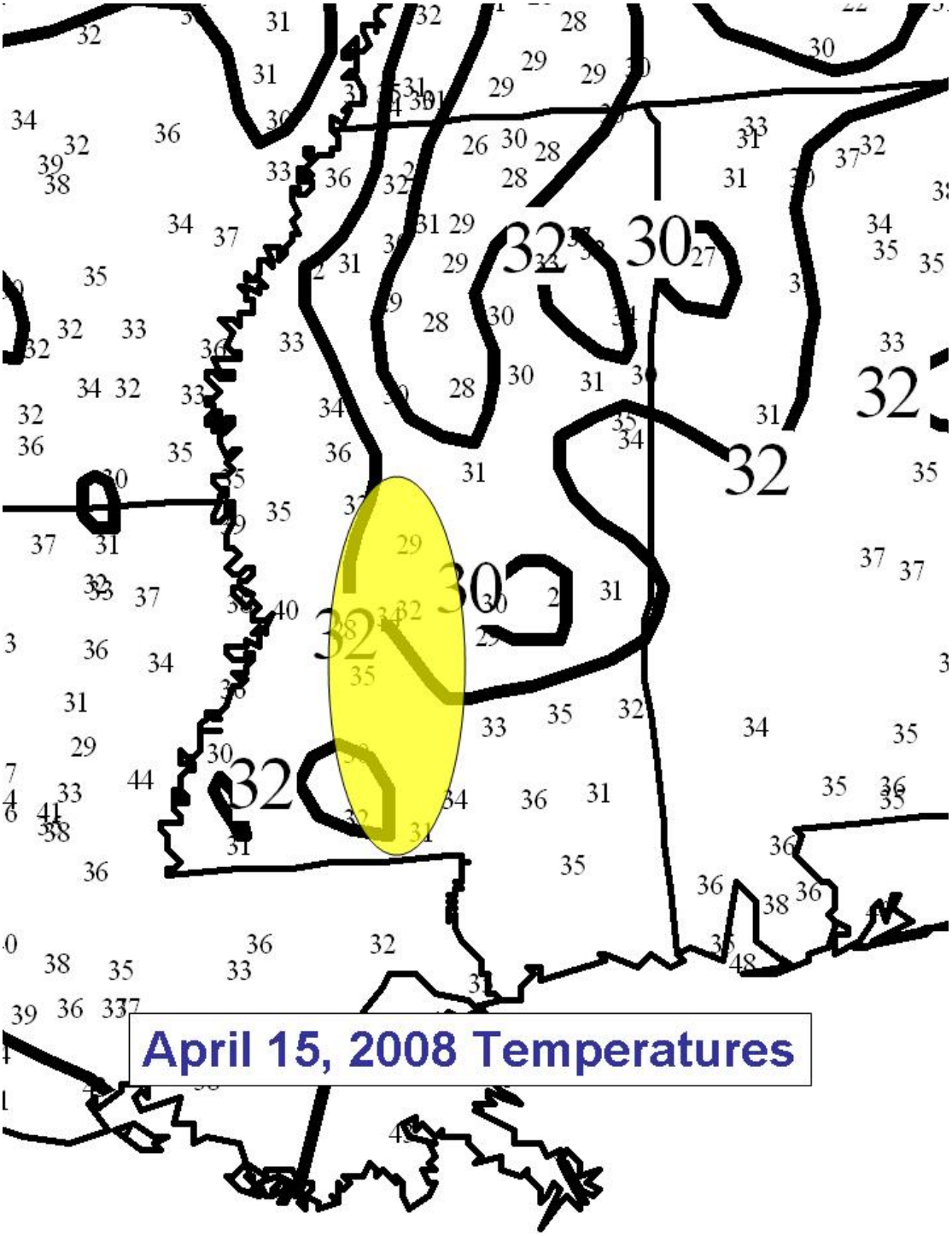
Field evaluation has confirmed wheat freeze damage was closely correlated to crop growth stage and low temperatures. Wheat is most sensitive to freezing temperatures while flowering, a few days after head emergence. Tremendous variation in injury between fields, and between individual heads in a field is likely depending upon wheat maturity at the time of the freeze. The crop growth stage will primarily vary depending upon planting date and variety maturity. The low temperatures during the freeze event were likely influenced by field topography and field borders (especially trees) producing variable damage in areas within a field.

Wheat freeze damage is extremely tedious to assess, because it requires dissection of individual florets on wheat heads. Damage is likely to differ considerably from stem to stem, since wheat maturity naturally ranges by a week or more in most fields. Furthermore, damage may vary depending upon floret location in the head. Overall, there are around 10 million wheat kernels per acre to potentially evaluate.

Freeze damage can sometimes be quickly assessed by the presence of yellow-green, discolored wheat heads, which may turn white or light brown as the tissue dries. Wheat varieties possessing awns or beards often show injury on these organs, since they are very exposed. Varieties possessing awns or beards are not known to be any more or less sensitive to freeze injury than varieties without these organs. Damaged plants in some fields (but not all) are showing symptoms of secondary disease infection promoted by freeze injury. This disease is known as black chaff and is caused by a bacterium. Symptoms may include brown to black streaks or spots on the upper half of glumes. Leaf symptoms appear as irregularly shaped dark brown streaks and in some cases these can extend the entire length of the leaf. Leaf symptoms can give the plant an overall orange-brown hue or cast. Fungicide treatment would not have prevented occurrence of this disease.

**Figure 1.** Although this wheat appears fine to casual observation, close inspection revealed this Mississippi wheat grown south of Tylertown is essentially completely sterile from freeze-damage.

**Figure 2.** Minimal temperatures on April 15, 2008 (NWS Data from NOAA Regional Climate Centers, provided by USDA, Stoneville Field Office). Moderate to severe wheat freeze injury has been documented in many fields in the highlighted area.

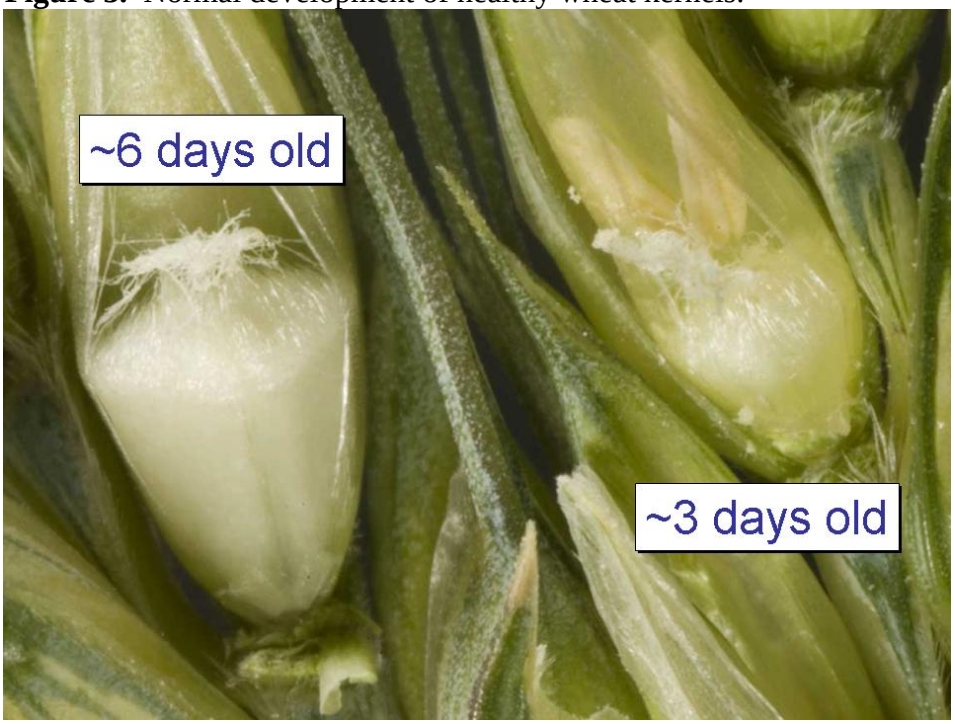



Wheat injury resulting from a freeze near heading will likely reveal complete sterility or arrested kernel fill when you dissect florets.

Wheat-freeze damage may be assessed by observing grain development of successfully pollinated kernels. Pollination normally occurs within 3-5 days of head emergence. After

pollination occurs, plump wheat kernels rapidly develop and attain their full length within about 12 days after pollination.

**Figure 3.** Normal development of healthy wheat kernels.




Freeze-damaged kernels may be shriveled and/or halt development altogether. These kernels will not likely develop appreciable seed weight. Close monitoring of freeze-damaged fields should reveal kernel development problems within a few days, since kernel development proceeds rather quickly following pollination.

**Figure 4.** Kernels severely damaged by a freeze shortly after pollination.

**Figure 5.** The two kernels on the left are plump and developing normally. The development of the kernels on the right is arrested by freeze damage during early grain fill. They have not attained their full length and are considerably shriveled and may appear rough or dimpled, despite being the same age as the other kernels. These moderately-damaged kernels will be very light and shriveled at maturity, if they continue to develop.


## Soybean Agronomics

**Dr. Trey Koger**

The last six weeks have definitely been challenging for everyone trying to get a crop in the ground and up to a stand. The past few springs have been fairly dry and helped us to forget what it is like trying to get a crop in the ground and up in an extremely wet spring. This is not to say we cannot make a good crop in years with wet springs because we have in the past, it is just something we haven't dealt with in a few years. About the time you get frustrated with drowned out low lying spots in fields or bottom ends of fields where we have lost some crop, think about those dealing with flood waters that have killed entire wheat, corn, and/or soybean crops and that still have floodwaters covering a tremendous amount of their acreage. Unfortunately, it does help to put things in perspective for those not dealing with extreme floodwaters.

With respect to soybean plant populations and how low can we go and still make good yields, it is important to note that there are a lot of fields across the state that have good to excellent soybean stands. This is a blessing considering the weather they have been through the past six weeks. However, there are fields that have extremely low populations and will be replanted, fields with skippy stands that will be patch planted, and fields we are going to keep using the existing populations. In years past, we likely would have replanted some of these fields, but because of several key issues discussed below, we are going to go with the existing stands. There are several key issues regarding replanting options that can be discussed at great lengths. I will keep the discussion on these key issues brief.

First, even though we are planting a later crop than what we have planted in several years, we can still make a good crop planted in the month of May. This is especially true for irrigated acres. We moved to the early planting system to avoid late summer drought as well as late-season insect and disease pressure. Making an excellent crop that is planted late is possible, we just have to intensively manage pests that we have the tools to manage, do a good job of managing water on irrigated acres, and hope for late-season rains on our dryland acres.

Second and most importantly, seed availability is extremely tight and driving a lot of potential replant decisions. There may not be seed available for replanting in a lot of cases.

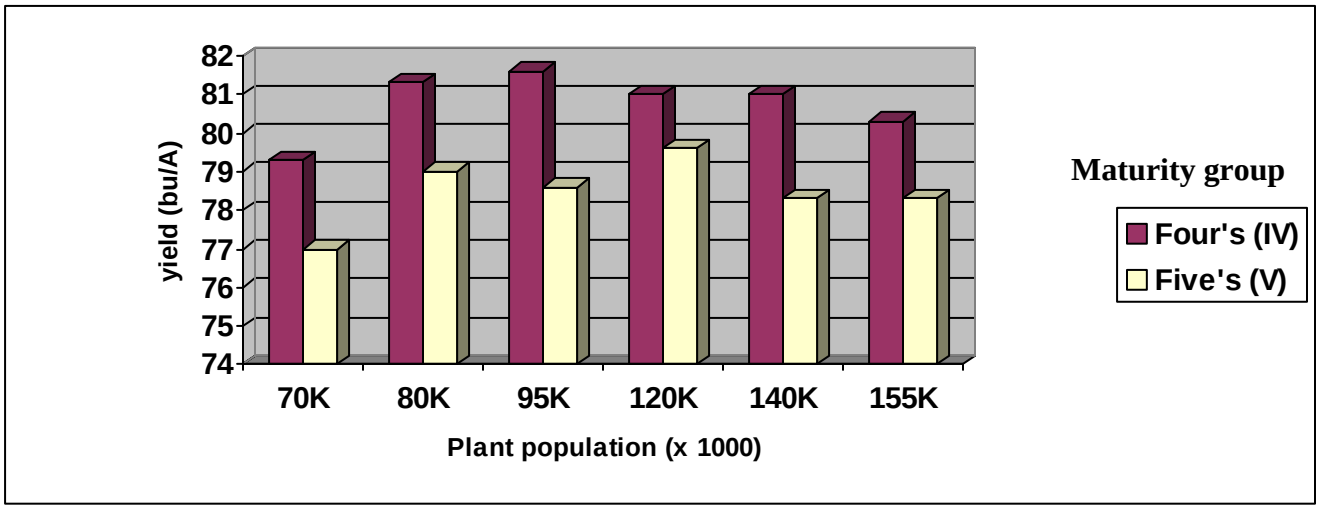
Third, the calendar date is affecting our replant decisions. Soybean planted in mid-may often will not yield as well as that planted in mid-April, especially dryland acres. Additional cost for watering replanted soybean as well as the potential losses and cost of managing late-season diseases and insects must be taken into consideration.

Fourth, the cost of seed for replanting and to kill the existing plants must be considered. Cost of seed, seed treatment, tillage or chemical used to kill existing crop, and labor should be considered and these costs can exceed $50/acre. Replanting soybean into a field and not killing what is already up either with tillage or chemicals often leads to essentially two crops that do not uniformly dry down and are difficult to manage come harvest time, and in a lot of cases the older crop actually acts like weeds that can compete with the second planted crop.

Several other issues that come into the picture and must be factored into the replanting equation are dryland vs. irrigated, row spacing, planted vs. drilled, and uniformity of existing stand, and planter capacity. Many of us are either still planting our first crop or haven't even started planting due to wet weather and/or corn replanting. In these situations planter capacity is such that we should concentrate on planting what we have left to plant and then concentrate on replanting. This will only put us later into the season when we make the replanting decisions, but getting our first planting is top priority.

I mention all of these issues not trying to discourage replanting. I know there are times when we do not have a choice and must replant a crop. These are just issues that must be considered and weighed into the decision whether to replant or not.

**What population is too low?** Keep in mind that a soybean plant has an excellent capability to compensate for a thin stand. A stand consisting of evenly spaced, healthy plants that came up about the same time and that does not have huge skips, often will produce adequate to good yields. It is often difficult to come up with a single plant population that will work for every field. Adequate populations that will produce adequate yields must be determined on a field by field basis. Below is a summary of a multi-year, multi-variety data set on seeding rates for group four and group five soybean varieties planted in late-April to early-May. This research was conducted at the Delta Branch Experiment Station, Stoneville in 2005 and 2006 on heavy clay soil. The trials were irrigated and planted in 18" rows.



Based on this research, yields for maturity group four and five varieties were essentially the same at plant populations of 80,000 plants or higher. A slight yield reduction was observed at populations of 70,000 plants/acre.

In situations where seed is available and when taking into consideration:

- the calendar date
- cost to replant
- time period lost to replanting and potential yield reduction associated with mid-May planted soybean vs mid-April planted soybean
- additional costs associated with producing a later crop

replanting soybean this year should be **considered** only when plant populations are below 75,000 plants/acre. Again, keep in mind it is difficult to come up with a definitive number with so many factors involved and so many different scenarios. If you have a uniform stand consisting of healthy plants that came up at the same time, that does not have huge skips, and are at a population of at least 75,000 plants/acre it would be more advantageous to keep what you have rather than replanting. One thing to keep in mind, the minimal plant population for drilled beans in row spacings of less than 15" should be closer to 85,000 plants/acre before replanting is considered.

These recommended minimal plant populations are lower than what we would recommend in a year in which more seed for replanting is available and considering where we are on the calendar. We should never plant seeding rates to reach these low populations in hopes that they will produce optimal yields year in and year out.

**In a year like this in which seed availability is so tight, we are going to keep fields with populations below this minimal recommendation of 75,000 to 85,000 plants/acre. We can still make adequate yields with populations below this, but yields are likely to be lower to a degree that is difficult to estimate but may very well be minimal. Including residual herbicides such as Sequence (glyphosate + Dual or a metolachlor product) or Prefix (Reflex + Dual) + glyphosate over the top of small soybean early in the season should be considered to combat increased weed pressure in thin soybean stands.**

The table below provides the number of plants per linear row foot for various row spacings at plant populations ranging from 65,000 to 95,000 plants/acre. This information can be used to determine plant populations by counting the number of plants in a given length of planted row. If you count the number of plants in a 10-foot length of row, then divide that number by 10 the resulting number will be the number of plants per linear row foot. If you count plants from more than one 10-foot length, then divide the number of plants you counted from each 10-foot length by ten and average these numbers according to the number of 10-foot lengths counted. For example: assume you counted the number of plants from five 10-foot row lengths. The numbers you counted were 98, 102, 120, 100, and 99. Divide 98/10, 102/10, 120/10, 100/10, and 99/10. This results in 9.8, 10.2, 12, 10, and 9.9. Average these five numbers: (9.8+10.2+12+10+9.9)/5= 10.38. There are 10.38 plants per foot of row in this given field.

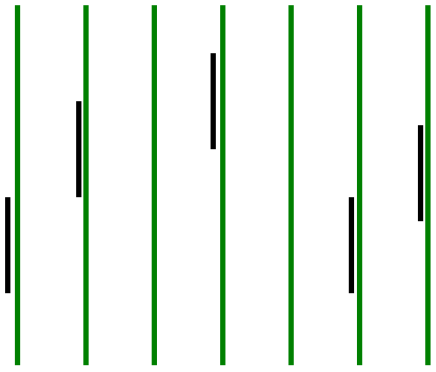
| Plant population | Soybean row spacing (inches) | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 7 | 7.5 | 8 | 10 | 15 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 38 | 40 |
| plants/acre | number of plants per linear row foot | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 65,000 | 0.8 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.9 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 2.5 | 3.1 | 3.7 | 4.7 | 4.9 |
| 70,000 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.3 | 2.0 | 2.4 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 3.3 | 4.0 | 5.1 | 5.3 |
| 75,000 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.14 | 1.4 | 2.2 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.8 | 3.6 | 4.3 | 5.4 | 5.7 |
| 80,000 | 1.1 | 1.14 | 1.2 | 1.5 | 2.3 | 2.7 | 2.9 | 3.0 | 3.8 | 4.6 | 5.8 | 6.1 |
| 85,000 | 1.13 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 1.6 | 2.4 | 2.9 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 4.1 | 4.9 | 6.2 | 6.5 |
| 90,000 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.7 | 2.6 | 3.1 | 3.3 | 3.4 | 4.3 | 5.2 | 6.5 | 6.8 |
| 95,000 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.8 | 2.7 | 3.3 | 3.4 | 3.6 | 4.5 | 5.4 | 6.9 | 7.3 |

**How to calculate plant populations:** There are several ways to calculate plant populations and there is no one best method. The most important objective behind estimating plant populations is that the estimate is a good representation of the entire field. Plant populations can vary tremendously across a field due to soil type, soil roughness, and drainage aspects of the field. Populations in fields with shallow slopes are likely to be higher in the upper portion of the field and lower towards the bottom of the field due to the substantial and numerous rainfall events received this spring. Whole field populations should be estimated by taking into account areas of the field having good populations as well as drowned out depressions or skippy stand areas of the field. If a lot of thin spots exist in the field, patch planting these low population areas should be considered.

**Steps to calculating the plant population in a soybean field.**

1) Determine the row spacing.
2) Count number of plants from a 10 foot length of row either in 5 or 10 places throughout the field. See recommendations below.
    a. For uniform stands, counting the number of soybean plants from five 10-foot lengths is sufficient (see diagram below)
    b. For skippy stands, counting the number of soybean plants from ten 10-foot lengths is sufficient. (see diagram below)
    c. Take counts from field areas that represent the entire field.
    d. If the stand is thin in some areas and adequate in others, take half of the counts from the thin areas and half from adequate areas.

For uniform stands: = soybean row



Add the total number of plants counted across all five 10-foot lengths. Then divide that number by 5.

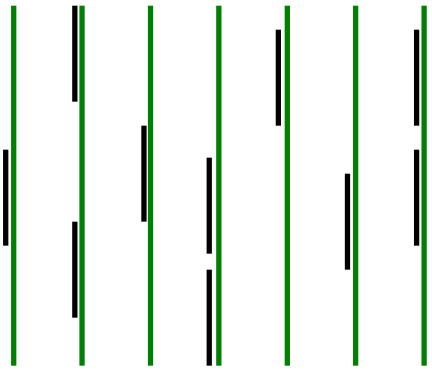
For ex.: Assume 10, 9, 8, 9, and 10 plants were counted from the five 10-foot lengths.

10+9+8+9+10 = 46

46/5= 9.2.

There are 9.2 plants per foot of row in this field.

For skippy stands



Add the total number of plants counted across all ten 10-foot lengths. Then divide than number by 10.

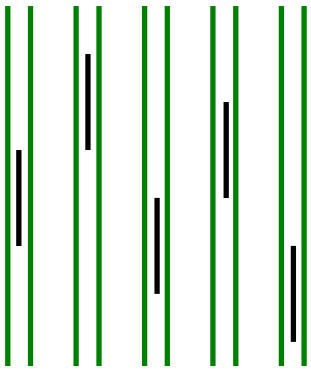
For ex.: Assume 7, 10, 7, 5, 8, 10, 7, 9, 9, and 6 plants were counted from the ten 10-foot lengths.

7+10+7+5+8+10+7+9+9+ and 6 = 72

72/10= 7.2.

There are 7.2 plants per foot of row in this field.

For uniform twin-row patterns:



Add the numbers from the two rows of each twin-row set.

For ex.:
4+5 = 9
5+5 = 10
6+ 4 = 10
4+4 = 8
5+4 = 9

9+10+10+8+9 = 46

46/5 = 9.2 plants per foot of row.

3) Find your given row spacing in the table below and see the square foot area per foot of linear row for that given row pattern.

| Row spacing (inches) | Sq. foot area per linear foot of row |
|---|---|
| 7 | 0.583 |
| 7.5 | 0.625 |
| 8 | 0.666 |
| 9 | 0.75 |
| 10 | 0.833 |
| 15 | 1.25 |
| 18 | 1.5 |
| 19 | 1.583 |
| 20 | 1.667 |
| 25 | 2.083 |
| 30 | 2.5 |
| 38 | 3.167 |
| 40 | 3.333 |
| 38 (twin)* | 3.167 |
| 40 (twin)* | 3.333 |

*regardless of distance between rows in twin-row sets.

4) Calculate the plant population using steps below:

a. Divide the number of total plants you counted by the number of 10-foot lengths you counted from.

   For ex.: assume you counted a total of 92 plants from ten 10-foot lengths. Therefore you divide 92/10, which results in 9.2 plants per foot of row.

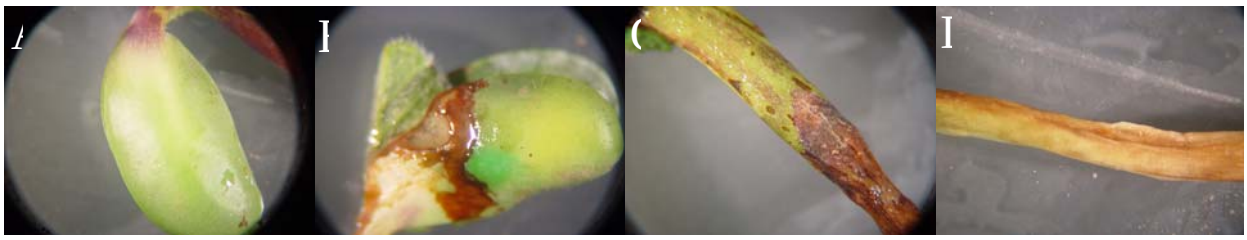
b. Divide the number of plants per foot of row you calculated (see step a. just above) by the square foot estimate provided in above table for your given row spacing.

   For ex.: assume you estimated 9.2 plants per foot of row and the row spacing is 38 inches.
   Step 1. Divide 9.2/3.167,which equals 2.904.
   Step 2. Multiply 2.904 by 43,560*. This equals 126,539 plants/acre.

   *There is 43,560 sq. feet in an acre.

## Soybeans: Seedling Disease Versus Valor Injury

**Dr. Tom Allen, Dr. Dan Poston, Dr. Trey Koger, and Dr. Billy Moore**



Several calls have been received in the last week concerning poor soybean stands. In some situations seedling disease has been the root cause and in a few other situations Valor has been to blame. Valor (flumioxazin) is labeled for over the top application in soybeans that have not yet emerged. For the most effective herbicide performance, Valor should be applied from 14 days before planting right up to seedling emergence.

While the two disorders can appear to have similar symptoms, there are a few signs used to differentiate between the two. Symptoms of Valor damage will appear as purple or brown lesions on the bottom of the cotyledons as compared to a healthy cotyledon (Compare Figure A (healthy) to Figure B (Valor damaged)). The bottom of the cotyledon is the first part of the plant that emerges and in situations where Valor was applied late the cotyledons come into contact with the herbicide. Additionally, splash from rainfall can also lead to lesions on the bottom of the cotyledons. Purple colored sores or lesions can also occur on the main hypocotyl or stem (Figure C). In most cases the injury can be more severe on soybeans planted in coarse, sandy soils. In general the injury we see on soybeans is not indicative of a late season yield loss. Most plants will rebound from Valor injury as long as the growing point is not killed. Soybean injury from Valor typically occurs following heavy rainfall at the time of seedling emergence when the emerging cotyledons come into contact with the herbicide.

Seedling diseases can also be prevalent with the environmental conditions we have experienced over the past few weeks. Calls related to seedling disease incidence have generally come from those growers that have planted soybeans on heavy clay soil. Seedling diseases, including pre- and post-emergence damping off, and seedling root rots can be caused by *Pythium*,

*Phytophthora*, and *Rhizoctonia*. While *Phytophthora* can cause seedling diseases we more often see this organism causing late season damage to soybean plants. At present time we are encountering a lot of post-emergence damping off and believe it has been caused by *Pythium*. However, direct evidence in the form of cultural evidence will not be available until next week. Post-emergence damping off occurs when the seedling emerges from the soil, and either becomes infected at this time, or infected due to the environment most notably from rainfall splashing fungal propagules onto the plant. Seedlings infected with *Pythium* will have normal cotyledons, look vigorous and then brown to tan lesions will appear on the main stem. The stem will appear collapsed and after a period of time, rotted (Figure D). The species of *Pythium* that cause seedling diseases can be most destructive during periods of cool, wet weather. In addition, two different kinds of *Pythium* seedling disease can occur. Non-lethal *Pythium* will lead to seedlings having a less vigorous appearance. Seedlings infected with non-lethal *Pythium* will generally recover but this can depend on the environment. However, lethal *Pythium* infection will ultimately lead to the death of soybean seedlings, either shortly after cotyledon emergence or while the seedling is still below the soil surface. Post-emergence damping off infections will most often occur on seedlings that require more time to emerge from the soil. This is one reason that choosing the correct seed treatment is so important. A seed treatment that offers good *Pythium* control for the longest period of time is essential in protecting seedlings and allowing them adequate time to emerge from the soil. We are currently in the process of determining which seed treatment products have been applied to seed from those fields with the most observed problems. At present time we do not think that there is a varietal/chemical interaction but will be collecting information in the coming days and weeks.

## Corn Insects

**Dr. Chris Daves**

**Sugarcane Beetles:** In the last 7-10 days there have been reports of sugarcane beetle infestations in several counties on the east side of the state (Madison, Rankin, Scott, Attala, and Monroe counties). In fields I have visited, infestations were causing some stand loss. In some cases, only a plant here and there had been damaged and in other fields 4-5 plants in a row across the field. Beetles could be found feeding under every wilted plant in most of these fields. Extensive feeding by these beetles on seedling corn plants can result in death of the plant. Feeding injury on older plants will cause stunting and tillering. There are no rescue treatments available.

**Stink Bugs:** There have been numerous calls this week regarding stink bugs in the delta. Stink bugs are being found in the field borders as well as in the middle of the field. The majority are brown stink bugs with a few greens being picked up in some fields. Theses stink bugs are moving around on the plant so be sure to examine the entire plant, especially the base of the plant. Many of the consultants are finding their counts are increasing when taking a closer look at the base of the plant. Brown stink bugs are easy to miss because they blend in with the soil. Also, keep in mind that corn fields next to wheat need to be monitored closely for stink bugs.

## Northeast MS Insect Update

**Dr. Don Cook**

Several corn fields in Monroe and Clay counties have sugarcane beetle infestations. So far stand loss has not been severe enough to warrant replanting. In many of these fields, the entrance holes in the soil have filled in and above ground injury symptoms are similar to that for rootworms/wireworms. Below ground injury is different from rootworms/wireworms with large portions of the stalk damaged.



Some corn field had volunteer soybean plants in them. The soybean plants had moderate to severe injury from bean leaf beetles with beetles present.

Volunteer soybeans with bean leaf beetle injury

## Corn Agronomics

**Dr. Erick Larson**

**Wet Weather Plagues Corn Crop -** Weather conditions this spring have been virtually opposite of last year. Frequent rainfall has delayed planting, anaerobic soils have caused substantial stand loss in poorly drained areas, and floodwater and seep-water from the Mississippi and other rivers, has overrun many crop fields. I expect many problems related to poor corn root development to become apparent during the near future as well. These problems include rootless corn syndrome and phosphorus and other nutrient deficiencies. Further rainfall and wet soils could also make nitrogen fertilizer and herbicide application difficult. Considering the very wet conditions this spring, coupled with high fertilizer prices, applying nitrogen fertilizer using sound split application strategies, rather than ease of application (large amount of nitrogen applied early), will likely produce considerable economic returns this harvest.

**Figure 6.** Rootless corn syndrome is often caused by rainfall eroding soil from the top of beds, shallow seeding depth, and/or compaction from planting wet soil. There is no immediate remedy to this problem. If the soil surface is crusted or very dry, irrigation may help promote root growth, but this likely is not a problem currently. After plants become strongly erect, you may be able to refresh the beds, replacing the eroded soil with cultivation, which might enhance root growth in the long run.

**Corn N / herbicide application difficulty -** Considering widespread rains have fallen on a frequent schedule, seep-water is restricting ground access near the Mississippi river, and growers are now scrambling to plant other crops, I suspect some corn fields may not be fertilized and receive herbicide applications in a timely fashion. Although corn uses less than 10 percent of its nitrogen before rapid vegetative growth begins, some nitrogen is needed during early growth stages to support vegetative development. Foregoing nitrogen application indefinitely after corn emerges is going to reduce yield potential. If ground application is restricted by wet soils, aerially apply some granular nitrogen to support the crop until side-dressing can provide the balance of nitrogen, hopefully before plant height restricts ground application altogether. Ammonium nitrate, ammonium sulfate or urea treated with a urease inhibitor can be applied to

supply nitrogen. Urease inhibitors, such as Agrotain temporarily slow the activity of the urease enzyme, but still need timely rainfall or overhead irrigation to incorporate the urea-based N into the soil. After the first application, there is normally a substantial window to apply the second application, before the corn grows tall enough to restrict tractor/applicator passage. However, difficulty with the second application may be compounded tremendously by further rains, because corn normally grows from 12-inches to exceeding 30-inches tall in about 10 to 14 days in Mississippi. Therefore, completing the second nitrogen application as well as postemergence herbicide applications should be a high priority for corn well over 12-inches tall as soon as soil moisture is dry enough to permit application and avoid considerable compaction.

**Extra late planting suggestions –** Little research is available documenting corn yield expectations from plantings in late May and thereafter. However, grain yield potential can be expected to drop significantly and there is considerably more risk associated with corn production resulting from extreme drought, especially in dryland fields, and pest problems. Since late-May planted corn will be maturing in late June through August, **I strongly recommend selecting well- adapted, heat tolerant hybrids for late plantings. These hybrids tend to be mid to late maturity hybrids, rather than early maturity hybrids.** Early-maturity hybrids normally perform poorly when planted late, compared to late-maturity hybrids, because they are generally bred for areas well into the northern corn belt. Bt corn borer protection is highly recommended for late-planting dates (please uphold the Bt refuge requirement). Seeding rates can also be reduced considerably for very late planting dates, since warm temperatures enhance seedling establishment and produce taller, leafier plants, but are more likely to expose the crop to late-season drought stress, decreasing grain yield potential. Thus, I would seed about 22,000 - 24,000 seeds/a for dryland fields and no more than 28,000 seeds/a in irrigated fields. Nitrogen rates should also be reduced, according to lower yield expectations.

## Market Briefs

**Dr. Steve Martin and Dr. John Anderson**

**Cotton:** Cotton futures prices weakened through the second half of April, but have shown a few signs of life in the month of May. The Dec 2008 contract has risen $0.02-$0.03 per pound and is currently trading around $0.79. The speculator/fund money that sent cotton prices through the roof has receded to a large degree and supply and demand fundamentals now mean at least a little more to the market. Cotton market fundamentals alone do not support $0.80 cotton. There is an acreage premium built into the market from the realization that supply should be reduced in the 2008/09 marketing year. USDA's first estimate for the 2008/09 marketing year suggests carryover will be 5.6 million bales down from 9.9 million in the 2007/08 marketing year. Weather in west Texas will dictate to what degree supply is reduced within the next cropping year. Already there are daily reports of rain and weather conditions in Texas and the crop is yet to be planted. Those growing cotton this year should be not be in any hurry to price it, as weather scares throughout the growing season will likely result in price spikes. Down-side risk is probably now less than up-side potential.

**Corn:** The corn market is very much focused on Midwest planting progress right now. Corn planting as of last weekend was well behind schedule. The *Crop Progress* report released on Monday put corn planting at just 27% complete nationally. This compares with a 5-year average of 59% planted by this date. Planting delays have been even more dramatic in key states. For Iowa, Monday's report showed planting just 18% complete versus a 5-year average of 64%. For Illinois, this year's crop was reported to be 28% complete versus a 5-year average of 76%.

Continued uncertainty over the weather in the Midwest this week has provided support for prices; however, that support has been tempered to some degree by other information. Some strengthening of the dollar this week along with expectations that Friday's *World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates* (*WASDE*) report will show a modest increase in expected corn carryover compared to last month's estimate have been generally negative factors for corn. Still, corn futures have maintained a fairly narrow trading range near contract highs.

**Rice:** Rice futures have fallen roughly $3.00 per cwt from their contract highs. The realization that the U.S. was not in a rice shortage as well as efforts around the world to curb rice hoarding have taken some of the panic out of the rice market. Rice prices still remain quiet strong and should remain there for the next several months. The recent cyclone in Burma may add fuel to the market again. USDA's first estimate for the 2008/09 marketing year (2008 crop) showed carryover stocks at 17.5 million cwt down 45% from this year. Additional rice acres will be planted this year, but under the current supply and demand situation, prices are well supported at and above current levels.

**Soybeans:** Soybean planting is just getting underway in earnest at the national level, but *Crop Progress* figures indicate that it, too, is off to something of a slow start. Through last weekend, soybean planting was 5% complete nationally – off from the 5-year average of 14%. In Mississippi, planting was estimated to be 56% complete versus of 5-year average of 75%. New crop beans have edged a little higher this week. Acreage uncertainty remains a drag on the market, but talk of a renewed farmer's strike in Argentina has raised prospects for further improvement in demand. Already, analysts are expecting a decline in ending stocks projections in tomorrow's *WASDE* numbers.

**Wheat:** Wheat futures have quietly traded in a mostly sideways fashion this week. There has not been a whole lot of new fundamental news in the market. This week's crop condition ratings showed a slight increase in the percent of the crop rated Good-to-Excellent, but nothing seems to be falling outside of the market's expectations this week. Analysts are divided as to whether tomorrow's *WASDE* report will adjust ending stocks projections up a little or down a little. The average estimate is for basically no change from last month's ending stocks estimate of 242 million bushels.

## 2008 Scout Schools

| Location | City | Date | Time | Crops Covered | Contact |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NE MS Research and Experiment Station | Verona, MS | Tuesday May 27 | 9:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m. | Cotton, Corn, Soybean, Wheat | Don Cook Angus Catchot |
| Delta Research and Extension Center | Stoneville, MS | Wednesday May 28 | 9:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m. | Cotton, Corn, Soybean, Wheat | Gordon Andrews Angus Catchot |
| Central MS Research and Extension Center | Raymond, MS | Thursday May 29 | 9:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m. | Cotton, Corn, Soybean, Wheat | Chris Daves Angus Catchot |
| Clay Lyle Entomology Building | Starkville, MS | Friday May 30 | 9:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m. | Cotton, Corn, Soybean, Wheat | Angus Catchot |

******Each Scout School is free of charge and will qualify to renew Entomology Consultant Licenses ******

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