

Extension Cotton Newsletter 8-19-10



Hot, hot and more hot.

If July's rain was equivalent to a feast, then the August heat and humidity would be the famine. Since mid July temperatures quickly reached, and have basically stayed, between 95 and 102 degrees. Let's be honest, we kind of expect that...but what about the humidity? The average daily humidity for July never dropped below 52% and for two thirds of the month was above 70%. That is definitely above average for this part of the world. In typical August fashion temperatures have stuck around the century mark most of the month. Any cotton that has had adequate moisture over this period seems to have set a large amount of fruit in a short period of time. Even though our dryland acres have not flourished in August as compared to July, most of those acres still have a good fruit set with above average yield potential. The fields where cotton was planted behind a harvested wheat crop have taken the hardest hit from the recent hot, dry weather. Those acres will require significant rainfall in August in order to maintain decent yield potential. Typically the end of August (Aug. 20th- Sept. 1st) is when we reach our "physiological cutout" in Oklahoma. This "cutout" term refers to the physical condition when the plant reaches the stage when it only has four nodes of growth (branches) above its highest first position white flower. At this time, a well loaded plant will cease production of additional fruiting branches and focus on supplying the physiological needs of the bolls already on the plant. This time of year is also referred to as our last "effective bloom date". Basically this means that any blooms produced after this time will typically not have enough growing season to mature into an open boll. It takes approximately 50-60 days for a flower to mature into an open boll. Therefore blooms on the 25th of August should be mature, open bolls by the 15th-25th of October. This is also the time when irrigated producers should be considering their last irrigation date. Traditionally on furrow irrigated fields we want to have good moisture in our profile on the 1st of September, if this exists no additional irrigation is necessary. However, under sprinkler or drip irrigation we may want to consider extending irrigation into the first seven to ten days of September. Typically, with furrow irrigation we tend to irrigate less frequently but with higher volumes, whereas with sprinkler or drip irrigation we irrigate more frequently with less volume. Often times the lower volumes of water applied through these systems (sprinkler or drip) require us to extend our irrigation run compared to furrow irrigation. Physiologically speaking, typically furrow irrigation should stop at the first naturally opened boll (not burned open from stress) whereas sprinkler or drip irrigation may need to continue an additional 7 to 10 days after first open boll.

With the prospects of terminating irrigation on the horizon, another crop comes to mind...wheat. Typically you won't hear me talking about wheat (I'm strictly a cotton guy), however with the substantial number of cotton acres planted this year behind harvested wheat and the potential for more next year (due to the positive market outlook for cotton), I thought it would be good to mention a few things with regard to the prospective acres in 2011. Growers interested in the possibility of planting cotton behind their harvested wheat next year (2011) have some important considerations this year when their wheat crop is being established. The primary concern is with the grower's choice of herbicide. Many of the popular wheat herbicides may potentially be a problem for next year's cotton crop. For example,

sulfonylurea herbicides (often referred to as SU herbicides) which include Ally, Finesse or Glean (or some combination of these products) definitely have the potential for carryover when considering cotton next summer. In addition to normal or expected carryover problems, sometimes these problems can be intensified in certain situations. This specific class of herbicide (SU) is known to remain in the soil for longer periods of time as the pH of your soil increases. Unfortunately these are not the only wheat herbicides with carryover concerns when considering a cotton crop down the road. Sounds like a lot to keep up with right? Not really. Just remember the three most important things when it comes to herbicide choice...READ THE LABEL, READ THE LABEL, READ THE LABEL (kind of like location and the real estate business). All of this important information can be found on any herbicide label. Usually carryover concerns are addressed in the "Crop Rotation" section or it may sometimes be referred to as a "Plant back interval." Either way it is usually easy to find when reading. In addition to reading the label another consideration may be alternate chemistry. Often times there are alternative herbicides that provide adequate weed control which may still allow you the flexibility of following your wheat crop with cotton. If you want to keep your options open and remain flexible, do your homework...or better yet, get someone else to do it for you. In many instances your local county educator may be aware of these considerations. If you need help with your wheat herbicide options and how they may affect cotton, or want to discuss anything else I have mentioned, call me and I would be glad to help.

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