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Agronomy Notes

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Features:

Crops:

Forage:

Weeds and Pesticides:

Miscellaneous:

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Drought and Planting Dates for Cotton and Peanut

Spring of 2011 has been extremely dry with many areas receiving 10 inches or less than normal rainfall. Many growers have not planted cotton and peanut in early June and are concerned that yields will be dramatically lower with June planting. The forecast is not calling for rain until the middle of June. Cotton can still make high yields planted into the 3rd week of June. In most years early July planted cotton will fruit well but is often damaged by an early freeze and does not produce profitable yields.

Peanuts should be planted by the middle of June to keep from getting potential freeze damage at harvest. However, peanuts often do well if planted by the third week of June in years with late freezes. Cotton and peanut both require from 135-150 days from planting until harvest and grow quickly planted in June due to high temperatures but growth slows as temperatures cool in the fall and maturity is often delayed.

Adequate Cotton Stand

Many cotton fields have stands that are spotty with half the stands planted. High technology fees have pushed growers to minimize seeding rates for cotton. In a dry year as this year, minimal seeding rates may result in poor stands. However, cotton can compensate for low stands by making larger plants. This may delay maturity by a week or more and weeds may be more competitive. Even though we recommend 3 plants per foot of row, an average of one plant per foot of row is adequate for good yields with plants being bushy and having more bolls on each plant. Cotton has been planted in 2:1 skip row patterns for many years with yields being about 95% of solid planting even in good years. It is better to go with a marginal stand in many years than to plant or replant in July.

Skips in cotton stands that has little impact on final yield.

Photo: David Wright

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Areas of Control in Grazing Management

Grazing management can be used more or less intensively, or more or less extensively. Intensive grazing management usually brings more inputs such as labor, livestock, plant nutrients, etc to improve forage production and utilization. Extensive grazing management uses lower optimum inputs of labor, and resources toward the same goal of animal production. Which ever the case, there areas of control in grazing management include:

a) grazing intensity (or residual stubble height in the pasture)
b) grazing method (or the manner in which animals are stocked), and
c) timing of grazing.

Grazing intensity or stubble height is the most important factor in grazing management decisions."How short is too short?" should be a recurring question to avoid overgrazing pastures. A two inch stubble height recommendation for bahiagrass may not be adequate for other plants with accumulation of reserves in the lower section of the canopy as is the case with limpograss (Hemarthria spp), stargrass, Tifton 85 bermudagrass, or some of the summer or winter legumes. Under drought conditions, try to protect the stand by taking the cattle off before you graze the pastures too low.

Grazing method refers to the manner in which animals are stocked or have access to the different pastures and paddocks. Choosing a grazing method is a separate decision from that of grazing intensity. Pastures can be stocked continuously, or they can be grazed rotationally.— Is one method better than the other? Not necessarily. However, pastures that are rotationally stocked may be more productive because there is a better spread of the animals and recycled nutrients from manure and urine, and the forage is more uniformly grazed. Spot grazing observed in continuously grazed pastures is reduced when rotationally stocking.

Timing of grazing is also critical, depending on specific grass type and situations. For example, removal of shade conditions by grazing winter annuals is critical for the emerging dormant warm-season grass in the spring.

Out of the three areas under your control, grazing intensity or stubble height is the most important.

Stubble height (or grazing intensity) is more important than any other grazing management decision.

Photo: Yoana Newman

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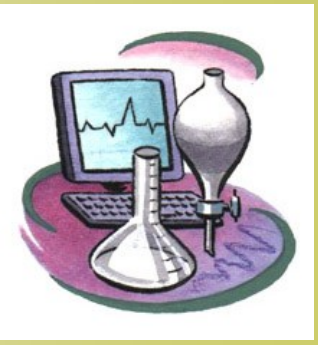
2009 Pesticide Data Program's Summary Released



The most recent Pesticide Data Program's (PDP) annual summary was published for data collected during 2009. These data continue to demonstrate that the food supply in the U.S. is among the safest in the world.

Before allowing a pesticide to be used on a food commodity, EPA sets limits on how much of a pesticide may be used on food during growing and processing, and how much can remain on the food you buy. Government inspectors monitor food in interstate commerce to ensure that these limits are not exceeded. EPA also sets standards to protect workers from exposure to pesticides on the job.

AMS, through its Monitoring Programs Office (MPO), is responsible for the administration, planning and coordination of day-to-day PDP operations. MPO meets regularly with EPA and other government agencies to establish program priorities and direction. Sampling and/or testing program operations are carried out with the support of 12 States: California, Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New York, Ohio, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. These States have a prominent role in program planning and policy setting, particularly policies relating to quality assurance.

In 2009, program support for sampling of beef also was provided by USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service. Sampling and testing of drinking water was conducted with personnel from various public utilities. State health technicians and homeowners provided sampling for groundwater. Testing also was conducted by USDA's AMS National Science Laboratory, USDA's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration Laboratory, and EPA's Analytical Chemistry Laboratory.

PDP commodity sampling is based on a rigorous statistical design that ensures the data are reliable for use in exposure assessments and can be used to draw various conclusions about the Nation's food supply. The pesticides and commodities to be included each year in the sampling are selected based on EPA data needs and take into account the types and amounts of food consumed by infants and children. The number of samples collected by the States is apportioned according to that State's population. Samples are randomly chosen close to the time and point of consumption (i.e., distribution centers rather than at farm gate) and reflect what is typically available to the consumer throughout the year. Samples are selected without regard to country of origin, variety, or organic labeling. The monthly sampling rate is 62 samples per commodity, except for highly seasonal commodities. For seasonal commodities, sampling rates are adjusted to reflect market availability. Sampling rates for beef are based on production.

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(Continued from page 2...

2009 Pesticide Data Program's Summary Released)

Fresh and processed fruit and vegetables accounted for 81.5 percent of the total samples collected in 2009. Other samples collected included water samples, 6.7 percent; beef, 4.4 percent; catfish, 4.1 percent; and rice, 3.3 percent; fresh and processed fruit and vegetables tested include: apples, asparagus, canned beans, cilantro, cucumbers, grapes, green onions, lettuce (organic), oranges, pears, potatoes, spinach, strawberries, sweet corn (fresh on-the-cob/frozen), sweet potatoes and tomato paste. Approximately 79 percent of samples were from U.S. sources, 20 percent were imports and 1 percent was of mixed or of unknown origin.

Because PDP data are mainly used for risk assessments, PDP laboratory methods are geared to detect the smallest possible levels of pesticide residues, even when those levels are well below the safety margins (tolerances) established by EPA. Prior to testing, PDP analysts washed samples for 10 seconds with gently running cold water as a consumer would do; no chemicals, soap or any special wash was used. Results for more than 1.8 million analyses were reported by the laboratories in 2009, too numerous to be included in their entirety in this summary.
PDP is a voluntary program and is not designed for enforcement of tolerances. However, PDP informs the U.S. Food and Drug Administration if residues detected exceed the EPA tolerance or have no EPA tolerance established. In 2009, residues exceeding the established tolerance were detected in 0.3 percent of the samples tested, and residues with no established tolerance were found in 2.7 percent of the samples.
PDP laboratories also test foods for low levels of environmental contaminants that are no longer used in the U.S., but due to their persistence in the environment, particularly in soil, can be taken up by plants. PDP tracks these contaminants and provides the data to the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

In 2009, 612 (treated and untreated) drinking water samples were collected at water treatment facilities in 11 States and 278 groundwater samples were collected at farm wells, school/daycare facilities and private residence wells located in 16 States. Low levels of detectable residues, measured in parts per trillion, were detected in both drinking water and groundwater. The majority of pesticides, metabolites, and isomers included in the PDP testing profiles were not detected. None of the detections in the finished water samples exceeded established EPA Maximum Contaminant Levels, Health Advisory levels, or established Freshwater Aquatic Organism criteria.
PDP continually strives to improve methods for collection, testing, and reporting data. These data are freely available to EPA and other Federal and State agencies charged with regulating and setting policies on the use of pesticides and to all stakeholders by hard copy, Internet, or custom reports generated by MPO.

PDP data are essential for the implementation of the 1996 Food Quality Protection Act that directs the Secretary of Agriculture to collect pesticide residue data on foods that are highly consumed by infants and children. EPA uses PDP data as a critical component for dietary assessments of pesticide exposure. Results provide realistic exposure information to the EPA assessment process.

More information about PDP and the full report may be reviewed at

http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5091055.

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Timing of Fall Panicum Control in Sugarcane

Timing of post emergence herbicide application is very important for fall panicum control in sugarcane. Fall panicum is an annual that emerges in the spring and summer. In sugarcane, fall panicum typically reaches a height of 4 ft or more if not controlled.

Actively growing fall panicum can effectively be controlled with Asulox at 6 to 8 pt/A plus NIS (0.25%v/v) in sugarcane at least 14 inches tall. Envoke at 0.3 lb/a plus NIS (0.25%v/v) will control fall panicum less than 6 inches tall. Larger fall panicum plants (< 12 inches tall) can be controlled using a tank-mix of asulox and envoke applied at 4 pt/A and 0.3 oz/A, respectively along with NIS (0.25% v/v).

Some growers wait for fall panicum to be 'big enough' before herbicide application. They typically use a hot herbicide combination for such populations. The combination is usually a tank-mix of asulam and envoke at 8 pt/A and 0.3 oz?A, respectively plus NIS (0.25% v/v). This treatment combination result in sugarcane injury especially during drier periods with high temperatures. It is important that timely application of these herbicides for fall panicum control be adhered to in order to minimize sugarcane injury. Consequently, making decisions on when to spray is very important. Always consider the cost of delaying weed control, i.e.., letting weeds to grow and be 'big enough.' Fall panicum allowed to be 'big enough' before spraying will compete with the sugarcane for a much longer period and produce seed that will replenish the soil seed bank and be a source of infestation in subsequent years. Therefore, fall panicum should be treated when small and actively growing.

Sugarcane injury from using hot combination of Asulam and Envoke.

Photo by D. Calvin Odero

Calendar

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June 12-15 **American forage and Grassland Council 2011 conference.** French Lick, IN
http://www.afgc.org/

June 20-24 **2011 Florida Cattleman's Association Convention..** Marco Island, FL
http://www.floridacattlemen.org/convention.html

Jul. 3-9 **Caribbean Food Crops Society meeting**, Two Mile Hill, St. Michael, Barbados,.
http://www.cfcs2011barbados.org/

Jul. 15-17 **Florida Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Conference**, Kissimmee, FL.
http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/smallfarms/index.html

Oct. 3-5 **Southeast Herbicide Applicator Conference**, Panama City Beach, FL
http://conference. ifas.ufl.edu/sehac/index.html

Oct. 16-19 **American Society of Agronoy Annual meeting,** San Antonio, TX
https://www.acsmeetings.org