

TALKIN' COTTON

By Dr. J.C. Banks

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The recent hot weather has caused rapid growth of cotton--if plenty of moisture is available. Irrigated cotton is just at first bloom now, and other than the first fruiting branch being about a node higher on the plant than normal, the plant is progressing rapidly. The number of nodes above white flower is a good indicator of plant vigor, and usually this number is 7 or 8 at first bloom. This year, it looks like the NAWF will be 9 to 11, which reflects a very rapidly developing plant. Irrigated cotton should have a growth regulator application by now, but if not, it needs to be applied soon. If the irrigated cotton is not developing rapidly, it needs to be inspected to determine what is holding it back. I have had several people call and say the fruiting looks thin in the plant, but when looked at more closely, the squares are located at every position they should be, but the plant is so large that they are spread out.

One thing I have noticed when looking at dryland cotton is that the vigor is closely related to water availability to the plant. Of course, this is normal for dryland cotton, but it seems like most of the vigorous fields are no-till fields that have been planted into good residue cover. Most conventional tilled fields have stressed cotton that has been damaged by wind, and much of the moisture has been lost due to the tillage. With our equipment and weed control solutions, no-till is becoming the best way to produce cotton, especially on some of our highly erodible soils. Even on irrigated soils, wind and blowing sand protection provided by the residue will allow a much more vigorous plant prior to bloom. Past experience has shown that a vigorous plant going into bloom has a much higher chance of making a good yield than one that has been stressed prior to blooming. A good general rain in the next week or so is really needed for us to take this crop to a good finish.

TALKIN' COTTON is produced by NTOK Cotton, a cotton industry partnership which supports and encourages increased cotton production in the Rolling Plains of North Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas. For more information on the cotton scene, see okiecotton.org and ntokcotton.org. For questions or comments on Talkin' Cotton, contact eventerprise1@hughes.net.