

TALKIN' COTTON

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October 5, 2009

It's time to start planning for cotton harvest. Some harvest aids have been applied, and most of our cotton will be ready for application in the next two weeks. In most areas, we have potential for a good yield in both dryland and irrigated areas. A lot of the cotton has shown a reddish leaf color much earlier than normal and this is caused primarily by the large boll load on the plant, and the plant has either developed a potassium deficiency due to developing boll demand, or the plant has been stressed enough to allow late season verticillium wilt to affect the plant more than normal. Verticillium wilt can be identified by appearance of brown streaks in the lower part of the main stem of the plant. Both of these conditions look bad, and could possibly affect late season boll development, but the symptoms have developed due to a large boll load, and are normally in cotton that will have high yields. Another problem that has shown up in the last week or so is that plants in dryland areas that have received rainfall have started to grow again now that the bolls are mature and are no longer pulling the plant down. All the above conditions can influence how the plant responds to harvest aid application.

OSU has conducted some harvest aid demonstrations in the area, and those applications with a combination of boll opener plus defoliant have been performing the best, even when most of the bolls are already open. Finish, Prep, or other ethephon based boll openers seem to make the defoliant material work more effectively. Finish will work more quickly than other boll openers, but other openers applied at a higher rate will be almost as effective. The best treatments at this time are Finish at 1.5 to two pints per acre plus Def at 1 pint per acre. Other effective treatments include other ethephon based boll openers at 2 pints plus either Def at 1 pint per acre or Ginstar at 6 to 8 ounces per acre. The Ginstar application works more slowly, but is probably the best choice in the areas where plants have had a surge of late season growth. Some of the boll opener products have come down in price recently, and their use at a higher rate can be easily justified. With stripper harvesting, it is likely that a desiccant will need to be applied at about a week following the initial treatment to further condition the plant for harvest. If we receive a freeze that should take care of the conditioning of the plant. Desiccants can be Gramoxone, Aim, ET, or Blizzard if there is no danger of drift to areas planted to wheat, but if there is any danger of drift to small grains, Gramoxone should not be used.