

Stinkbugs in Cotton

Maxwell Smith

Several reports of stinkbugs have come in over the past few days. Some sprays have already been made and more to come. Stinkbugs have piercing-sucking mouthparts that they use to feed on the boll, which can lead to yield and quality decreases.

Several species of stinkbugs can affect cotton, but the species I am currently hearing the most about is the Green Stinkbug (Fig. 1). Stinkbugs can be difficult to scout for. Adult stinkbugs tend to aggregate and can be highly concentrated within a field (Texas A&M AgriLife Extension).



Figure 1. Stinkbugs on cotton leaf

Photo Credit: Jenny Dudak

When scouting, look for stinkbugs and damage caused by stinkbugs. Small dark lesions can be caused on the outside of the boll. When scouting for stinkbugs, pulling bolls off the plant and inspecting the inside of the boll is important because stained fibers and “warts” on the inside of the boll can be caused by stinkbugs. This internal injury is what causes yield and quality to decrease. Control decisions should be made when damage meets the action threshold. Action thresholds are 10-15 percent boll injury during weeks 3-5 of bloom, 20 percent during weeks 2 and 6, and 30 percent or more 7 weeks after bloom (Vyavhare et al. 2019). Use an insecticide labelled for control of stinkbugs in cotton. Scouting is important following insecticide applications to monitor for “flare-ups” of other pests, such as aphids.



Figure 2. Stinkbug injury on cotton boll

Photo credit: NC State University

References:

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension (n.d.) Cotton Insect Management Guide Stink Bugs. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. <https://cottonbugs.tamu.edu/fruit-feeding-pests/stinkbugs/> Accessed: July 31, 2023.

Vyavhare, S.S., Kerns, D., Allen, C., Bowling, R., Brewer, M. & Parajulee, M. (2019) Managing Cotton Insects in Texas. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. <https://extensionentomology.tamu.edu/files/2018/03/ENTO075.pdf> Accessed: July 31, 2023.