



Pest e-alerts



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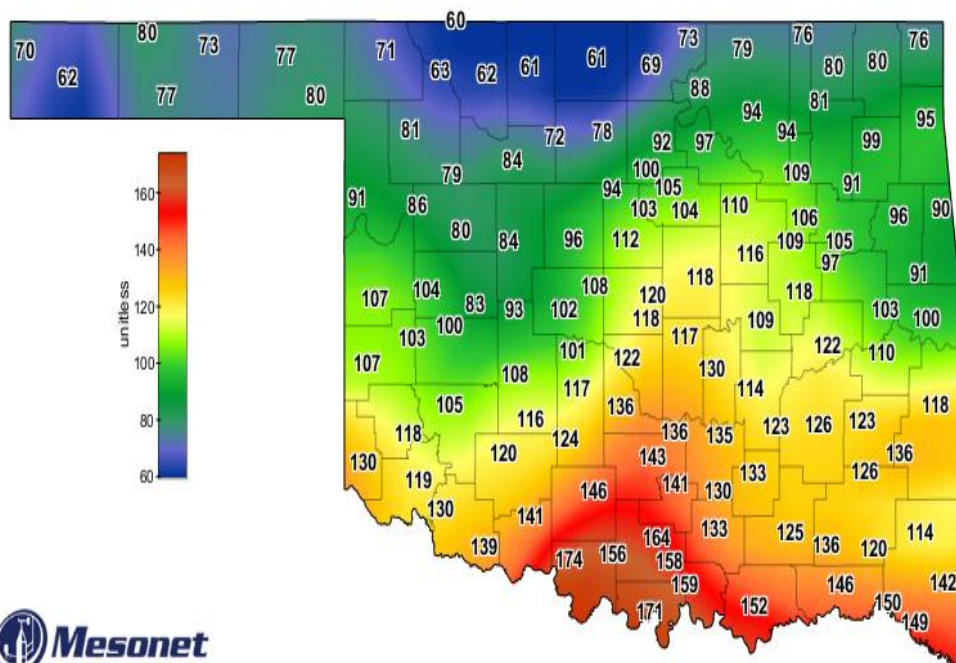
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Alfalfa Insect Activity and Winter Production Reminders

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While the past few days has gotten us thinking about warmer weather just around the corner, as we transition into February, more winter-type weather is on the horizon. As the snow falls it might be a good time for alfalfa growers to start monitoring degree day accumulation from the Oklahoma Mesonet, Alfalfa Weevil Model. Degree day accumulation from January 1st provides a starting point for field monitoring by alfalfa growers and scouts. The magic number (for egg hatch) we look for is 150. Degree day numbers in the southern part of the state, along



the Red River, are currently approaching or surpassed 150 (Figure 1); however, upcoming freezing temperatures with precipitation and windchills in the teens should help to suppress alfalfa insect activity a bit longer. As the weather allows in the next week or so, Dr. Mulder and I will be making a run throughout the state collecting crown samples for alfalfa weevil egg counts. Although not a definite indicator of the upcoming weevil season, it gives a snapshot in time of what's going on in fields around the state. It also gives us an opportunity to be out in multiple areas and get an eye on anything out of the ordinary that might be going on.



Cumulative 48 F Heat Units Days Since January 1

through February 3, 2020 CST

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Figure 1 Degree Days since January 1

A new area of focus this year is getting information out in a timelier manner. Educator feedback from programs this past year indicated a need for a quick reference source for alfalfa management. The newly created alfalfa workgroup is in the process of developing an alfalfa management calendar in the form of a factsheet for educators and growers providing quick reference to management and production topics throughout the season. The factsheet will also provide information on additional reference material and specialist contact information per topic. In addition to the upcoming factsheet, I will provide monthly updates on general topic areas in pest e-Alert reports.

Winter Production Tips for February

When you drive by alfalfa fields this time of year it appears there may not be much going on. However, you might be surprised by what's happening in those fields that look so brown from the road. Many things occurring now can affect the production through the rest of the year and possibly the life of the stand.



Figure 2 Alfalfa before breaking dormancy

Plants are accumulating nutrients in their roots and crowns for a quick start when warm weather arrives for good and dormancy breaks (Figure 2). Plants cannot accumulate the needed carbohydrate or protein if they are stressed by inadequate soil fertility.

Insects and weeds are also getting ready for spring in dormant alfalfa fields. It is amazing to find how that tiny weed or insects can survive temperatures well below freezing, but they can.

A general checklist of things alfalfa producers can do the next few weeks to get ready for the upcoming hay season include:

- Check for cool-season weeds
- Soil test and fertilize
- Check for insects
- Evaluate stand density
- Identify fields where alfalfa may be sown next fall. Fertilize for alfalfa and choose herbicides carefully.

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