

Choosing The Right Harvest Aids For Your Cotton

MILAN, TENN.

At the Milan No-Till Field Day, University of Tennessee Professor Dr. Owen Gwathmey and University of Arkansas Professor Dr. Tom Barber will examine commercial defoliant and the proper ways and scenarios in which they should be used. Selected and applied correctly, harvest aids improve harvesting efficiency and preserve lint quality.

"Really the value of growing this crop for Tennessee producers is in the value of the lint," says Gwathmey. "We want to make sure producers do not incur discounts due to fiber quality. Dockage for such things as leaf content or color grade discounts can be avoided with the proper use of harvest aids."

Commercial defoliant have herbicidal or hormonal modes of action. Herbicidal defoliant injure the plant, causing it to produce ethylene, which promotes defoliation, but at rates too high for the temperature, these defoliant can kill leaves, increasing leaf trash in harvested lint. Hormonal defoliant also increase ethylene production, which prompts defoliation, but are not very effective when daytime temperatures are at or below 60 degrees.

"We're trying to show how we can use the mode of action of different materials in different scenarios to get the best effect," says Gwathmey. "Depending on what scenario you face, you're going to want to favor one mode of action over the other."

Gwathmey and Barber will highlight several common scenarios for Mid-South cotton grow-

ers, including early, drought-stressed cotton, late cotton with rank growth, and harvesting after an early freeze. They will make recommendations on which harvest aids are most appropriate for each situation.

"One reason we talk about harvest aids in July, is this is the time to get stocked up on materials you think you most likely need for the coming season," says Gwathmey. "It's better to think about what crop you have and what scenario you're likely to get into and get your order in before October."

This tour stop will also focus on properly budgeting for harvest aids. While harvest aids and the application are a relatively minor part of the overall costs of cotton production, the costs can vary greatly between different modes of action. Experts stress the importance of setting aside an appropriate amount of money for your crop.

"By setting aside the right amount, you're maximizing the fiber quality in the bales you're trying to sell," says Gwathmey.

The "Harvest Aids for Cotton" presentation is part of Tour G: No-Till Cotton Production at the Milan No-Till Field Day on Thursday, July 22, 2010. This tour includes three other informative sessions. The field day will be held at the AgResearch & Education Center at Milan. Admission is free and open to the public. For more information, visit the website: <http://milan.tennessee.edu> or call 731-686-7362. Δ