

Cotton Growers Keeping An Eye Out For Boll Rot

LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

Arkansas cotton growers are keeping an eye on their fields to see if the plentiful rain of the last two weeks has promoted boll rot, said Dr. Tom Barber, extension cotton agronomist with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture.

Farmers have received much-needed rain, but that much water can be a double-edged sword for Arkansas' cotton growers, said Barber.

"We had a lot of rain in the southeast – anywhere from 2 to 10 or 11 inches in downpours," Barber said.

"The fields that are receiving the highest amounts of water seem to be in a rainfall cycle, where we're seeing it every four to five days," Barber said. "Because of this, in these irrigated fields, with a dense cotton canopy and long periods of cloudy weather, boll rot will definitely increase on the lower position bolls.

"Depending on the extent of the rot, we could see a yield decrease because the majority of our crop is set toward the bottom of the plant," he said. "Sunshine is the best cure for this."

The rain is giving cost-battered growers a

chance to stop spending.

"It's saving us money right now. We're not having to turn the wells on," Barber said.

There are a couple of ways the recent downpours could cause a little trouble. Boll rot may become the biggest issue on irrigated cotton with all the rainfall.

On fields without irrigation, re-growth could be troublesome.

"About 15 percent of the crop is non-irrigated, and on these areas is where we'll get a lot of re-growth in the top of the plants from the moisture," he said.

"Now that we've got rain, we have some residual nitrogen and fertility under the crop without moisture," Barber said. With the rain, "it'll cause a green-up period, and it'll cause the plants to bush out there with not much on it."

According to the Arkansas Agricultural Statistics Service's crop report for the week ending Aug. 24, cotton opening bolls reached 7 percent by week's end. The service also said top soil moisture supplies were 5 percent short, 70 percent adequate and 25 percent had a surplus. Δ