

New Developments In Cotton Growth: Research Shows Promise

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Dr. Mike Milam, extension agronomy specialist in cotton at Duklin county, Mo. has found new developments in cotton growth. He has also been working on research using overall heat wise and fruiting habits of cotton.

“As most people are aware, heat units are what it takes to drive cotton,” said Milam, “once you put cotton in the ground, as long as you provide inputs it is going to grow.”

According to Milam, the idea is to monitor the cotton plant throughout the growing season to see how things like weather affect the crop throughout the growing season.

“The first week of bloom you don’t have but a small percentage of total bloom. About 94 percent of those will go ahead and set. If everything is fine, such as no insects, you have a dramatic increase in the number of blooms in the second week, then the percentage will drop off to about 77 percent of those that will actually set in bolls,” said Milam.

“In the third week it is about 29 percent of the cotton that will actually set. The rate declines

rapidly during the first four weeks of bloom,” said Milam.

Boll weevil eradication has had an impact on growth according to Milam. “It has made a big impact (boll weevil eradication) because even though it is only a small amount, that amount has made a huge difference since 2001 when we started,” said Milam.

Milam has also been working on the money positions of the cotton plant. “It’s those first main stem nodes that provide about 70 percent of the total cotton produced. The second position adds a little bit more and the third position is in vegetative state,” said Milam.

Milam also said that if you can keep everything growing on the main stem you are in much better shape than if the cotton spreads out excessively.

On the topic of heat units, Milam states that this has been a somewhat unusual year. “We are mixed right now as far as the total number of heat units. We had much better heat units in the middle of the season and as a matter of fact, we were actually ahead of where we were in 2004 which was our record year,” said Milam. Δ



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