

Pest Control

Winter Weed Vegetation Control Can Ease Plant Bug Problems

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Keeping plant bugs at bay is one of the main interests of Dr. Gus Lorenz, University of Arkansas Extension Entomologist.

“Our biggest pest in Arkansas obviously is the plant bug and it’s one that we are continually seeking to find a more economical, profitable way to control this pest,” he said. “In spots in Arkansas and even up in this area, plant bugs can get up to very high levels and it’s one of the most difficult pests right now to control for a lot of reasons.”

Timing and other factors that go into getting good control, such as spray application and products, are very important. There is a little resistance to some of the standard chemistries, so finding some solutions for growers to control this pest economically and effectively is a big issue.

“Plant bugs are going to continue to be a pest for us,” Lorenz said. “We’re going to have to find ways to do a better job. We’re spending right now somewhere between \$20-\$25 an acre every year; that’s on average, we have some growers that are spending \$50-\$60 and they’re making 10 or 12 applications.”

Researchers continue to look at ways to manage this pest better and Lorenz said it all starts with winter weed control, getting those broadleaf weeds knocked down well before planting season.

“If we can do that we can manage our plant bugs a lot better. Our broadleaf weeds are where our problems are starting, so we need to get the message out that weed control from that aspect is just as important as it is later in the season with these resistant pigweeds. We can avoid a lot of the problems that we’re facing with plant bugs, or at least lessen the severity, by controlling winter weed vegetation.”

Lorenz cited a 600-700 pound yield loss in fields where plant bugs are not controlled.

“While some of these guys are making 12 applications a year, we looked at where we sprayed half that many times and realize a 300 or 400 pound yield loss,” he said. “A lot of people say that’s too many applications, but it’s not for those growers that have this severe problem with plant bugs; it may take 10-12 applications to get control.

“Another problem is boll worm control,” Lorenz continued. “We’re looking at some new products that are out there; up in this area in

northeast Arkansas the worm pressure isn’t nearly what it is in the middle eastern half of the state or even the southern half of the state. We have some conventional varieties out there that might be very effective for growers looking for control. “When we talk to growers we find they’re looking for some solutions to get around paying that big tech fee, particularly for technology that doesn’t work as good as it did a year or two years ago; so when they’re spending over \$500 for a bag of seed and they can go with a conventional variety that costs about \$100 a bag, that’s quite a bit of savings.

“There are some new products out there that



Dr. Gus Lorenz, University of Arkansas Extension Entomologist talks about the plant bug which is Arkansas’ biggest pest.

Photo by John LaRose, Jr.

are very effective for boll worm control; one is Rynaxapyr, others are Flubendiamide, coragen/prevathon and Belt, and these products have outstanding residual control,” he added. “They’re very good on all caterpillar type pests and really open the door for us to consider planting at least part of our acreage in some of these high yield and conventional varieties. We’re just looking for ways that growers can produce their crop more economically and realize more value and more profit.”

Lorenz said that boll weevil eradication is just about complete in Arkansas. Only two or three weevils were caught the past season down around St. Francis/Lee county, so Arkansas is about weevil free.

“We’re just on a maintenance schedule now so everything looks good there,” he said. Δ

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