

Snails Slime Cotton Fields In Jefferson And Desha Counties

PINE BLUFF, ARK.

Snails are rearing their ugly heads, or whatever they have, in cotton fields in Jefferson and Desha County. Experts say snails are an unusual pest in cotton.

Don Plunkett, Jefferson County extension staff chair with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, said a worried farmer called him recently to report the problem.

Plunkett and Dr. Scott Akin, extension entomologist, checked the field and found an infestation of snails under the leaves. Akin said a farm consultant called him later to report that he found high numbers of snails in a cotton field in Desha County.

Plunkett said another consultant also found snails in a different part of Jefferson County.

"Slugs and snails are typically more problematic in no-till fields or cotton following corn or sorghum the previous year. They can also thrive in wet planting conditions," Akin said.

"The good news is that snails are rarely known to cause economic damage or need an insecticide treatment," he said.

Plunkett said nearly every plant in the Jefferson County field had at least one snail, while some plants had 22 snails on a single leaf. Even with high numbers of snails, he said, there were few holes in leaves across the entire field, and economic damage isn't likely to occur.

Akin anticipates warm weather will get the cotton growing again, and it will outgrow the small amount of injury. "In the coming days, these critters will eventually be behind us," he added.

Akin said slugs, which don't have shells, can be a more serious threat and high numbers of them can cut a plant off at the ground.

"For high numbers of slugs or snails, where

it's believed yields or stands are truly threatened, no conventional insecticide would do a good job of controlling either pest," he said.

Aiken said a bait called Deadline MP (met-aldehyde) is labeled for use against slugs and snails in row crops and seed crops. However,



the product is expensive, and it's only advisable to use it when high numbers of slug populations threaten to cause stand losses. △