

Soybean Damaging Kudzu Bug Inching Closer To Arkansas

LONOKE, ARK.

The kudzu bug, an insect that has caused up to 20 percent yield losses in some untreated soybean fields in North Carolina, is inching its way nearer to Arkansas, said Gus Lorenz, extension entomologist for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

The kudzu bug is native to India and China and was first found in the United States in 2009. It's a tiny insect – just one-sixth to one-quarter of an inch long and is olive green with brown speckles. They waddle when they walk, but are excellent fliers.

“The kudzu bug has been a serious pest of soybeans in Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, Florida, Alabama and Tennessee has now been found in Vicksburg, Miss.,” he said. “That’s too close for comfort for us in Arkansas and the rest of the Mississippi Delta.

“It’s only a matter of time before the bug finds its way to Arkansas,” Lorenz said. A map of its current distribution can be found here: http://www.kudzubug.org/distribution_map.cfm

Surveys done in 2012 along I-40 in Crittenden County; U.S. 49 in Phillips County and Arkansas 159, U.S. 65 and U.S. 82 in Ashley and Chicot counties indicated no bugs.

The bugs can overwinter in houses and other structures and in early spring become active, seeking places to lay eggs in emerging kudzu or soybean plants.

The bugs, both in the adult and nymph form, “gather in large groups and suck sap from a host plant, weakening and stunting the plant’s growth,” he said. “Severe infestations can cause the plant to lose its leaves.” The insects can also reduce the number of soybean pods per plant,



This tiny kudzu bug has caused big problems for soybean growers across the South. It may just be a matter of time before this pest shows up in Arkansas.

Image courtesy Marlin E. Rice, Pioneer Seed.

reduce the number of beans per pod or reduce the size of the beans in the pods.

The bugs are tricky to control. Lorenz said that any treatment must be done carefully since treating for kudzu bugs can interfere with beneficial insects and provide an opening for other pests such as corn earworms, soybean loopers and armyworms.

Timing control methods is very important, he said. When scouting for this pest, “we are suggesting a threshold of one immature kudzu bug per sweep.”

Kudzu bugs are also a pest to homeowners, and can congregate in large numbers in homes. Entomologists recommend vacuuming the insects up and preventing them from releasing a noxious chemical that can also stain home interiors.

See: www.kudzubug.org/docs/GAkudzubugalert2012.pdf Δ