

## [Seminole Crop E News 5-23-11](#)

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THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**

Colleges of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences & Family and Consumer Sciences

Seminole Crop E News 5-23-11

### **Farmers and Agribusiness;**

#### **Cotton Problems**

The UGA Extension Cotton Team has been getting several recent reports of poor stands and seedlings having difficulty emerging. There may be several things going on here, but we collectively want to highlight some of the most common situations.

1. Since it has been so dry, many dryland fields were planted rather deep (1.25-1.5 inches) in hopes of utilizing some of the moisture that was (and I emphasize “was”) present at these depths. Anytime cotton is planted this deep, you could expect some difficulty for emerging seedlings. Exceptions may include rather soft soils that do not form a surface crust, with moisture relief in the near forecast. In many of the recent reports, some seedlings germinated/emerged while others did not, primarily resulting from inconsistencies in available moisture at these depths, and also a result of this moisture being depleted more rapidly than anticipated. Some of the seed that did not germinate soon after planting, may in fact still germinate once rains return, and only time will tell. Some seed may have germinated and died before (or soon after) emergence, due to rapid drying. If this is the case, the grower may consider replanting, although this is something that should generally be avoided. The need for replanting must be determined on a case-by-case basis, and potential benefits must be weighed against additional costs for each individual situation. Previous data from Georgia suggests that replanting may be justified if approximately half of the planted area is occupied by 3-foot skips. When determining how many 3-foot skips are present, remember to give appropriate credit to large skips (for example, a 12-foot skip should be considered as four 3-foot skips)
2. Some folks have reported seedlings expressing difficulty emerging through the soil surface with some “broken neck” seedlings observed, where the cotyledons appear stuck in the soil and the hypocotyls break under this pressure. For most situations, I’ve been telling folks to keep the water running in fields where irrigation is an option. We don’t want to flood any cotton, nor irrigate unnecessarily, however it is very important that the soil remain moist until seedlings have fully emerged. These situations must also be monitored very frequently. Also some folks have irrigated already, the recent warm (until Tuesday) and windy weather has dried the soil

surface out very rapidly. Light and frequent irrigation could also improve stands. Yes, there is a risk of herbicide injury in these cases, but establishing a decent stand should be priority at this point. Herbicide injury can be managed in most cases, if a good stand is present. Delays in maturity can be expected, possibly increasing the importance of very frequent monitoring for thrips. If particular fields are crusting over, light rotary hoeing may help seedlings emerge, but this needs to be done in a very timely manner, as it could damage fully emerged seedlings. Switching to a hill-dropped planting system from this point forward could also improve stands in soils that tend to crust.



Photo taken Saturday in Seminole County of thrips injury on young cotton. Grower is spraying for thrips today. Consultant Wes Briggs reports heavy thrips numbers across a large area with a good bit of replanting going on due to various reasons. (Comment by Rome.)

3. Similar to last year, some folks are experiencing extensive herbicide injury with evidence of severe thrips damage. Herbicide injury typically slows seedling growth for a while, allowing thrips to feed longer on developing leaves. We have been experiencing higher than normal thrips infestations, especially in early planted cotton, which tends to exacerbate the problem. In these

cases, growers should monitor for thrips presence very frequently, and should also treat these fields very promptly, if a foliar spray is justified. Keep in mind that seed treatments may not provide optimal suppression in situations where seedlings are not growing rapidly, and one or more foliar sprays may be required.....this can only be determined through frequent monitoring, and unnecessary sprays should be avoided. Additionally, these situations may scare some folks away from the use of some pre-emergent herbicides. This should not be the case!!!! By now, most folks should realize the absolute necessity of every pre-emergent herbicide option we have available for combating pigweed, and this should not change. Prior to Roundup Ready cotton, a little herbicide injury was not uncommon at all. This is nothing new.



Situation here where grower planted dryland cotton and got about half of a stand due to soils drying and maybe some cotton seed in dry dirt. We had some rains last week that got up some more plants, see 2 just emerged plants in foreground. Hopefully he now has a stand. He'll have to decide quickly because thrips are about to kill older plants so if he keeps the stand he'll need to spray an insecticide right away. (Comment by Rome.)

4. We've been getting a lot of questions regarding the decision to "dust-in" cotton and wait on rainfall prior to the insurance cut-off date. There are two ways to approach this. One approach is a risk management and business decision based on prior experience and the rapidly approaching insurance cutoff date. This approach may result in variable business decisions from grower to grower. The other approach is from an agronomic standpoint. Some folks may dust in cotton, and get a rain two to three weeks later and achieve optimal stands. Others may have poor stands. This is largely dependent on how much (if any) moisture is available at planting, how deep this moisture is, temperatures after planting, and how much rain occurs when it finally does rain. Due to this variability, it is very difficult to recommend that a grower dust-in cotton unless a rain event is almost guaranteed within a few days (usually a tropical depression or a wide-spread front / storm system that covers most of the state). Some folks have dusted in cotton in fields that had some very marginal moisture in the zone where seed was placed. In many cases this has led to erratic stands and other complications. Keep in mind that replanting should be generally avoided, so it is important to get it right the first time, speaking from an agronomic standpoint. Additionally, if a grower decides to dust in cotton, the seed should be placed in a zone without moisture and relatively shallow to allow rainfall to reach the seed and begin germination. We have 11 more days before the insurance cutoff date. As of today, there is little chance of rain until next weekend (May 28th), although this forecast can change rapidly. The number of acres that a grower has left to plant varies from grower to grower, but watching this forecast closely over the next week may provide some additional insight on the likelihood of rainfall before the insurance cutoff date. Hopefully, we will get some rain in time for growers to plant the remainder of their crop by May 31st. Of course, there is always the risk that conditions will remain dry to the end of our planting window, however we can achieve acceptable yields if germination occurs by June 15th if we have good weather throughout most of our growing season, so we still have some time. However, preventing delays in maturity may become more important if cotton is planted towards the end of our planting window. At these later planting dates, rapid germination and stand establishment becomes more critical, as we have lost most of our flexibility by that point in time.

5. As we are in the second half of our planting window, some folks have asked when they should start planting earlier maturing cultivars. There are several things to consider here as well. Historically, approximately 20 percent of our cotton is planted in the first two weeks of June, even when DP 555 BR was widely planted. Not all June planted cotton was planted to DP 555 BR, but some likely was. Late June planting was not necessarily uncommon in far South Georgia, however this may have been risky in some circumstances. We now have a rather wide range of maturity amongst our currently available varieties, but it is important to remember that essentially all of our newer varieties are earlier maturing than DP 555 BR to some degree. Additionally, there is no magical date when we need to convert over to earlier maturing varieties for several reasons. Keep in mind that even an early maturing variety may have late maturing tendencies if it is over-fertilized and over-watered, with little or no PGR management. Thrips and herbicide injury may also delay maturity. Other varieties may behave like an early and a late maturing variety depending on the environment in which it is grown. For early June planted cotton, naturally we will have to focus more on developing a crop in a shorter season environment, but this encompasses more than just variety maturity alone. Therefore these decisions should be made more in regards to management and environment as opposed to simply making these decisions based on variety maturity. At later planting dates (first 2 weeks of June),

possible delays in maturity should be prevented or managed, and growth should be monitored very frequently to prevent excessive growth, regardless of the variety planted. For later planted cotton, more attention and/or management may need to be given to mid/full-season or growthy varieties, but variety decisions should still be made based on yield potential in particular environments (dryland versus irrigated). For example, it may be unwise to plant a very early maturing variety in a dryland situation (if its performance is likely to be reduced) just because it is planted late.....on the other hand, a grower may not want to plant a late maturing growthy variety in a heavily irrigated situation of if he is not likely to manage it for a shorter season environment.

Rapid emergence is also imperative for later planted cotton. As the planting window comes to an end, replanting may no longer be an option, therefore irrigation may be necessary for rapid emergence and stand establishment. Slightly increasing seedling rate may be necessary in some cases in order to offset the risk of standloss. Remember that we tend to lose a lot of flexibility during the latter part of our planting window. Additionally, waiting on rain during this time will further delay emergence and maturity of this late planted cotton. Keep in mind that soil temperatures during this time are usually quite a bit hotter, and soil moisture may deplete much quicker.

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UGA Extension Cotton Team Scientists

Sincerely,

Rome

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Seminole County Extension Coordinator

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