

Cotton thrips posed big problem for some South Plains farmers

January 2 2012, By Blair Fannin

It happened so fast, some South Plains cotton growers assumed it was drought and extreme heat that withered away their crops.

However, Dr. David Kerns, Texas AgriLife Extension Service [entomologist](#), told [producers](#) at the Texas Plant Protection Association conference recently about an invasion of cotton thrips. Known as *Kurtomathrips morilli*, they literally wiped out a field within a week.

“Growers didn’t know, it took them totally by surprise,” Kerns said. “They just thought it was drought and they couldn’t keep their crops watered enough. But it was thrips exacerbating the drought, and in one week when a farmer was waiting to decide to spray, it was too late.”

The *Kurtomathrips* have a sculpted appearance and don’t “take flight or scurry around that much,” Kerns said.

Some farmers didn’t take any chances and immediately treated [crops](#) with acephate, Orthene, while others used Trimax Pro or generic brands of imidacloprid.

“These things are easy to kill overall,” Kerns said. “A lot of guys already had acephate in their barn. Some guys didn’t take any chances and put the premium choice of insecticide out, Intruder, but by in large the most applications were generic imidacloprid at 1.8 (fluid ounce per) acre.”

The problem began to subside as the fall season began across the state.

“Cooler, wet weather seems to stop this pest dead in its tracks,” Kerns said.

He told attendees that the thrips’ reservoir is most likely from wild hosts in southwestern New Mexico and Arizona. The first reported case in Texas cotton was in late July.

Kerns said the thrips will attach to both stressed and non-stressed [cotton](#), causing the plant leaves to curl up with a ghost-like appearance. He said the thrips first appeared in Gaines County, and then quickly spread through Yoakum, Terry and throughout the South Plains.

Kerns advised that if the thrips appear early in the season, he recommends Vydate, which “targets nematodes and will help suppress these thrips, especially at the rate of 17 ounces per acre.”

Provided by Texas A&M AgriLife

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