

Crop and Pest Alerts

Agricultural Extension Service, The University of Tennessee (June 9, 2003)

Slugs in Cotton (Scott Stewart): “What’s eating on my cotton?” is a question I’ve had a bunch in the last couple of days. It may be slugs that are hiding and hard to find during the daytime. The pictures below show the type of damage slugs may cause. They are making large, irregular shaped holes in leaves (picture left), and in some cases, cutting the stems much like a cutworm (picture right). Slugs are only being reported in no-till fields and are unusually common this year. They can be distinguished from snails by the lack of a shell. Thus far, there have been reports of slugs from Carroll, Crockett, Lauderdale, Haywood, Shelby, and Fayette Counties, and they are also being found in soybean. For the most part, the injury appears to be cosmetic, but I’ve visited one field where feeding damage may cause a replanting to soybeans.



The results of a quick and dirty pesticide test are shown below. The test included relatively high rates of insecticide from several classes. These plots were rated only two days after treatment, so control may improve with time. However, insecticides were not providing good control of slugs when the plots were evaluated. Dead slugs were observed in the plots, but no treatment caused a significant reduction in slug numbers compared to untreated plots. Probably the best thing to do is sit tight and hope for some sunshine and warmer weather. With warm weather, I feel like once cotton hits the first true-leaf stage, it should be fairly tolerant to slug damage.

Several questions about whether applying fertilizer (i.e., essentially an application of salt) would have any benefit. There is some anecdotal evidence this may kill slugs, but I have no information how effective it would be. My hunch is that enough to do any real good may injure cotton. Fertilizer was applied to the test below on the day after insecticides were applied. This may account for the dead slugs, but there were still quite of few apparently healthy slugs found in the plots.

Results of slug insecticide evaluation in cotyledonary stage cotton (Scott Stewart, Jerry Parker)

Location: Lauderdale county, sprayed 6/6/03, evaluated 6/8/03

Plots: 4 rows by 50 feet; 3 reps per treatment (except 5 reps for check); Completely randomized design

Application: broadcast, CO2 backpack, 15 gal/acre (8002 nozzles, 2 nozzles per row)

Counts: Number of slugs per 6 row feet (\pm 6 inches of furrow)

Mean number of slugs per

6 row feet (Std error)*

Treatment

5.333 (1.45) a	Bidrin (0.5 lb ai/a)
5.000 (2.08) a	Sevin (1.5 lb ai/a)
4.200 (1.24) a	Check (untreated)
3.667 (1.86) a	Lorsban 4E (1 lb ai/a)
3.333 (0.88) a	Slug Bait (58 lbs bait per acre); 3.5% metaldehyde, 4.5% carbaryl
3.000 (1.15) a	Mustang Max (0.022 lb ai/a)

*Means with the same letter are not significantly different (LSD, $P < 0.05$).

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