Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants and Extension Personnel

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Alfalfa Update

Adult alfalfa weevils are still active and, in many fields, still relatively common. These weevils will stay active until the hay is picked up and, if they are numerous enough, will slow regrowth. This will be especially evident in those areas of the fields where windrows were. Adult weevils will feed on the new growth around the crowns and, if there is none, they will feed on the stems causing the characteristic "barking". In either case it will delay regrowth.

Alfalfa weevil adult stem barking

Potato leafhoppers have also been observed in alfalfa fields and there is some "hopper burn" – areas on the leaves that turn yellow or copper colored in response to potato leafhopper feeding (See photos). Fields that are within 7-10 days of swathing should be swathed a little early rather than sprayed. This will remove all life stages of the leafhoppers. However, potato leafhoppers have arrived early this year so populations are likely to rebuild quickly as they continue to migrate in. For more information on stubble treatment thresholds please see the Alfalfa Insect Management Guide:
http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/library/ENTML2/MF809.pdf

Jeff Whitworth *Holly Davis*

Honey Bee Swarm Season

Swarm season is here! 2012 is looking like a great swarm year for many beekeepers who have been busy answering calls during the last two-to-three weeks.

One reason honey bee swarms occur is when the bee colony increases in size and is in need of more space. There are other triggers such as food and water supply, but this year has been good for pollen and nectar due to the unusually warm spring. A swarm is a loose group of honey bees consisting of 30% to 70% of the hive it has left including workers, drones and the queen; usually found hanging on tree limbs, eaves of homes, rails or other objects. By nature, swarms are usually not a threat since these honey bees do not have a hive or food to defend and are looking for a new place to relocate to. These bees can cause a source of panic for some and may even be considered an emergency if near an area where a person who is allergic needs to live or work. The key is to stay calm, and do not disturb the swarm. Instead, people who find swarms should try to contact a beekeeper to remove the bees.

Swarm on a tree limb

Swarm on (and in) Construction Crane caterpillars

Many beekeepers welcome the opportunity to increase the number of colonies they have by catching these swarms and giving them a new home in a hive. A list of beekeepers who want swarm calls can be found at http://www.entomology.ksu.edu/p.aspx?tabid=687. In addition to these names which have given us permission to list them on the KSU Entomology website, there is a list from the Kansas Honey Producer's Association (KHPA) or I can put homeowners in contact with members of KHPA. Several beekeepers are also registered with local police and fire departments for swarm catching. While some beekeepers are willing to collect swarms for free, other may charge mileage or removal fees. Homeowners will need to work with the beekeeper and should ask if there is a fee associated with bee removal.

Some swarms eventually make their way into unwanted areas such as under house siding or in tree holes. Honey bees which make their hives in these settings are more difficult to remove, require more equipment to do so, and only a few beekeepers are willing to complete this type of work. On the KSU Swarm Catcher's list, there are notes for those who are willing to do wall void work. There is usually a charge associated with wall void and bee tree removal. Many will require the homeowner to hire their own contractor to repair work after the bee and hive removal is complete which can add additional costs to the homeowner.

Honey bees entering wall void between 2nd and 3rd floors of an apartment building

If you need help finding a beekeeper in your area or need more information, please contact Sharon Dobesh at sdobesh@ksu.edu or by calling 785-532-1340.

Sharon Dobesh

Report from the Kansas State University Insect Diagnostic Laboratory:

The following samples were submitted to the Insect Diagnostic Laboratory from May 7th to May 10th.

May 7 – Reno County – Springtails around home
May 7 – Leavenworth County – Red velvet mites in home
May 7 – McPherson County – Army cutworm moths and common stalk borer in corn
May 7 – Meade County – Variegated cutworms around home and garden

May 8 – Sedgwick County – Flea beetles around home
May 9 – Grant County – Looper caterpillars in mint
May 9 – McPherson County – Variegated cutworms
May 9 – Lyon County – Woolly aphid on woody plant
May 9 – Wilson County – Burrowing bug nymphs in compost pile
May 10 – Norton County – Male American dog tick on human

If there are any questions regarding these samples or about the identification of any arthropod please contact the Insect Diagnostician at (785) 532-4739 or GotBugs@ksu.edu.

Holly Davis

Sincerely,

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