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# FOCUS on South Plains Agriculture

Texas A&M University Agricultural Research and Extension Center at Lubbock  
1102 E. FM 1294, Lubbock, Texas 79403  
(806) 746-6101 <http://lubbock.tamu.edu>

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## Boll Weevil Eradication Update

The state of things as they are now

## Small Grains Agronomy

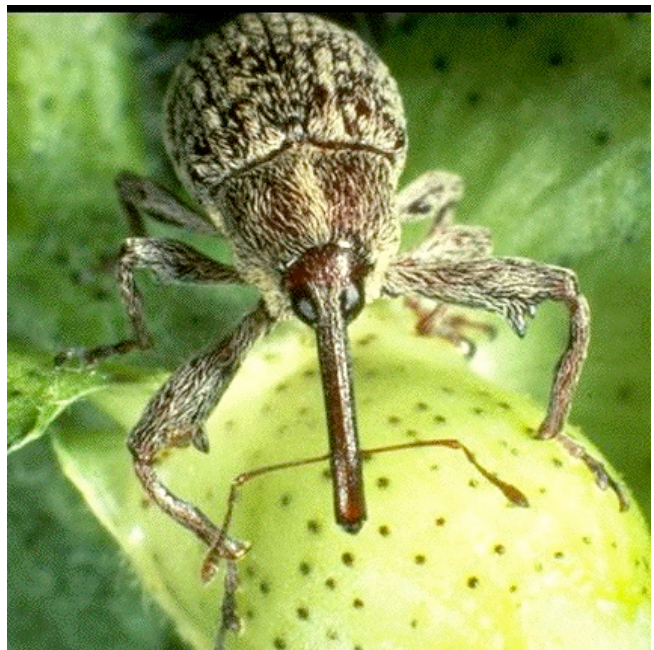
Grain sorghum drying  
Wheat for pasture  
Watch out for white wheat  
Early 2008 contract prices

## Editors' Note

One of our readers asked that we provide an update on the state of the Boll Weevil Eradication Program in Texas. We are happy to do so. The remainder of this issue is devoted to small grains issues. We will continue to publish 2007 editions as needed. RPP

## Eradication Update

Boll weevil eradication in West Texas is getting close to reaching the goal of eliminating the weevil from the region. Through September 16<sup>th</sup> a total of 234 weevils had been caught on the 4,887,700 land acres of cotton mapped in 2007. The majority of these - 149 weevils - were caught as they moved into the south and east side of the Southern Rolling Plains zone during the last three weeks. This zone, around San Angelo, had been previously free of weevils all year long. Boll weevils began showing up in traps there the same week that tropical storm Erin moved through the area. More weevils have been caught each week since then.



*Adult boll weevil on a cotton square*

The St. Lawrence area has made good progress with only 54 weevils caught through mid-September compared with 667 weevils caught through the same period in 2006. Weevil catches in the Permian Basin zone are also well below levels caught there last year. Only 28 weevils have been caught compared with 234 through mid-September last year. The only other captures in West Texas have been a single weevil south of Morton, TX in the Southern High Plains/Caprock zone and 2 weevils in the southwestern part of the Rolling Plains Central zone. Six West Texas zones – El Paso/Trans Pecos, Northern High Plains, Northern Rolling Plains, Northwest Plains, Panhandle and Western High Plains - with over 2 million cotton acres have not caught a single boll weevil this year. Well over 99 percent of the fields in the West Texas region have been trapped all season without catching a boll weevil.

In the five zones in South and East Texas the boll weevil eradication program had many obstacles to overcome during the extremely wet 2007 growing season. Trapping muddy turn rows and getting fields treated as the rains continued week after week were challenges. In addition, the rainy weather made treatments less effective. In spite of these difficulties, boll weevil populations were reduced by over 70 percent in the five South and East Texas zones. Compared with captures through mid-September 2006, the Northern Blacklands and Upper Coastal Bend zones, attained population reductions of over 90 percent - 98.7 and 92 percent, respectively. Southern Blacklands and the Lower Rio Grande Valley were able to reduce weevil captures 75 percent and 68 percent, respectively from 2006. In South Texas/Winter Garden, captures were not reduced. Captures in 2006 through mid-September were 31,447 and through the same period in 2007 49,012 weevils were caught. Seventy-four percent of the fields in the South Texas/Winter Garden area had caught no boll weevils through mid-September. But poor detection because of muddy fields combined with undetected migration of weevils into previously clean fields allowed boll weevils to become estab-

lished in a relatively small number of fields. Relatively high boll weevil captures occurred late in the season in these fields.

Statewide, boll weevil captures were reduced over 71 percent. Still, over one million boll weevils were caught in 2007 and 94 percent of those were caught in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, one of the last zones to begin eradicating the pest. CA

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## Small Grains Agronomy

### Grain Sorghum and Drying

Producers continue to struggle in some cases in getting grain sorghum to dry, or they are dealing with numerous green sucker heads emerging from the top nodes of the plant. Elevators are generally accepting grain sorghum, depending on location, at 13.0-14.5% moisture without dockage.

Glyphosate at 1-2 pints/acre has been used in some cases to hasten killing the plant so that grain moisture can decline. Most recent formulations of Roundup have targeted 22 fluid ounces/A. In spite of glyphosate applications some producers are still reporting slow drydown. With plants dying due to spray then lodging may increase.

Paraquat is not labeled for use in grain sorghum as a desiccant. The alternative to Roundup is sodium chlorate, which hybrid seed production companies routinely use to dry seed production fields. Sodium chlorate is applied at high gallonage per acre to achieve ~7-8 lbs. of chemical per acre. Applications are made at seed moisture near 25%. This approach desiccates or dries out only the leaves that are contacted by the spray, and the plants are not killed. Industry reports that harvest can generally be hastened about 7 days, though Texas A&M research from the Rolling Plains casts doubt on whether sodium

chlorate actually reduces seed moisture much in comparison to untreated test plots.

Producers who wish to plant wheat after grain sorghum and hope to do so without major tillage operations may wish to spray glyphosate to kill the sorghum stubble. This will decrease loss of soil moisture and probably more quickly open up the sorghum canopy for sunlight on the soil for emerging wheat.

## Wheat

### Pasture for Grazing

The crop is in fair to good condition at this point but the hot weather is ultimately hurting growth, and excessive water use is going to affect forage yields later as the limited soil moisture near the surface is being exhausted prior to deeper rooting. Growers should ensure application of fall N to speed growth and foster all-important tillering for forage production.

### Wheat for Grain

Producers continue to ask questions about varieties and seed availability (see pricing comments below). Refer to the [August 31 edition](#) of FOCUS for primary wheat grain production information. Additional information on beardless wheat for grain, which is not recommended, is in the [Sept. 14th edition](#).

### Avoid White Wheat Varieties or White Wheat Contamination if Going to Grain

Several fields in the western and northwestern South Plains in 2006-2007 were contaminated with white wheat. All of our commercial grain in the region is hard red winter wheat (HRWW). Hard winter white wheat is common in Kansas and parts of Oklahoma. White wheat requires separate delivery facilities and is usually grown under contract. Federal grain standards limit the presence of white wheat in HRWW to

10%, though I consider this high. White wheat has different milling and baking qualities, and too much can diminish the value of HRWW. In spite of federal grain standards for HRWW it is the discretion of buying points, grain brokers, and elevators to limit the percentage of white wheat in HRWW. They may implement their own scale of discounts or reject HRWW altogether if white wheat is present.

[Tests kits such as that offered by Kansas Grain & Feed Association](#) can be used to identify white wheat in HRWW samples. A similar test can be used using potassium hydroxide (KOH) to accomplish the same goal.

Several elevators from Levelland to Hereford tested for white wheat in the 2007 harvest. In numerous cases 1-5% of the wheat was determined to be white wheat, and in several loads the white wheat was over 10%, and some were rejected. A few loads of wheat delivered in Bailey and Parmer Counties were 40-80%. They were not allowed to dump.

### How did White Wheat Get in Our Seed?

With the great wheat seed shortage in Fall 2006, more wheat was probably brought in from outside the region than ever before. Some bin run type seed could have been delivered into the region for use as planting cover crop wheat and never intended to go to grain. But with all the rain we had, good cover wheat made wheat grain producers out of some farmers, and that wheat was harvested. But for now white wheat should be avoided both for grain production (no delivery points in Texas) and as a contaminant in regular seed for grazing or cover.

### Common White Wheats—Variety Names to Watch Out For

Texas A&M has tested several white wheat varieties since 2000 to determine if they might add value to Texas producers. To this point

growers can still achieve top yields with traditional hard red winter wheat varieties. White wheat varieties of commercial importance marketed in Kansas and also Oklahoma include Aspen, Platte, Platte2, RonL, Avalanche, Trego, Guymon, and Intrada.

### **Early 2008 Contract Prices for Wheat, Grain Sorghum, Sunflower are High**

Several elevators and grain brokers are now offering pounds-based contract prices for 2008 new crop. Examples include:

Grain sorghum at \$0.30/bushel under Dec08 corn (current price as 10/4)—\$6.45/cwt. Wheat at \$0.60/bushel under Jul08 (KCBT, current price as of 10/4)—\$6.27/bu.

Industry representatives are aware of the unsuitability of conventional pounds contracts for dryland producers and assure me that some contract options for dryland producers may be available for 2008 new crop though these are not necessarily acre contracts.

Early sunflower confectionary sunflower crop prices for Texas High Plains delivery have been offered as high \$24/16 based on larger seed size being retained by a 20/64" screen. No bid is currently available on oilseed sunflower for 2008.  
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## Editors

Michelle Coffman, Associate Editor  
David Kerns and Patrick Porter, Co-editors

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## Contributing Authors

Charles Allen, Program Director, Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation, Inc.  
Calvin Trostle, Extension Agronomist

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