

Missouri Cotton Producers Should Prepare Now for the 2010 Crop

By *Allen Wrather*

I realize that harvest of the 2009 Missouri cotton crop has just started and is much later compared to previous years. However, farmers should now start preparations for the 2010 cotton crop. The following is a check list of items to consider.

- identify areas where yields of cotton this year were less than acceptable and then take the time to troubleshoot these areas to determine why yields were low.
- Dig cotton roots after harvest this fall in areas of the field where nematode problems are suspected and examine them for root-knot nematode (RKN) galls. University of Missouri research shows that root gall severity due to RKN is a reliable indicator of the presence of this nematode and the severity of RKN damage to cotton. Producers should complete this soon after harvest because the roots begin to rot by December. Contact me for more information about this method. If RKN is a problem, farmers

should make decisions this winter about how to manage it in 2010.

- Select the fields you intend to plant to cotton in 2010 and test a sample of the soil from each field for pH and nutrients if this has not been done since 2006.
- Apply needed lime, phosphorus, and potassium fertilizer this fall or early next spring.
- Break hardpans by subsoiling, it is probably too wet to do this until early next spring.
- Improve drainage of the fields this fall or next spring to reduce wet soil problems for the 2010 crop.
- Select varieties for planting in 2010 based on University of Missouri cotton variety yield trials and the yields of varieties in your own and your neighbor's fields. The University of Missouri cotton variety yield trial results for 2009 will be available by early-November on the web at <http://aes.missouri.edu/delta/cotton/index.stm>,

- Select treatments to add to seed before planting next year. There are several different treatments available including those to protect the seedling from diseases, insects, and nematodes. Your selections should be based on the problems with pests anticipated next year.
- Hire a cotton scout or consultant to weekly inspect your 2010 crop for pests.

Following these suggested procedures will give Missouri cotton producers a better chance of producing higher yields and greater profits in 2010. For more information contact Allen Wrather at the University of Missouri Delta Center (Phone: 573-379-5431, E-mail: wratherj@missouri.edu) or check the Delta Center Web Page (aes.missouri.edu/delta).

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