



COTTON GALORE: When gins are still covered with cotton modules, it's a sure sign that USDA cotton classing offices will still run many weeks to get the crop graded. The 2007 Texas crop is among the best ever.

Bumper cotton harvest pushes gins, classing offices to the limit

By J.T. SMITH

WHEN New Year 2008 arrived, the USDA cotton classing office in Abilene already had classed about 1.25 million bales of cotton.

Nevertheless, John Fox, area director of the Agricultural Marketing Service classing office, figures the office was merely half done. That's because cotton classing will go many weeks into 2008, and Fox expects about 2½ million bales to be classed before all the cotton from the 2007 crop is finally graded.

"That just won't surprise me at all," Fox notes.

The director is known for being conservative, so that's likely a very solid number.

In any case, it will smash the previous record of 2,000,075 cotton bales classed from the 2005 crop year at the Abilene office.

Fox and crew have been

Key Points

- Classing offices are running wide open to class big crop.
- Some gins are challenged to finish ginning cotton.
- With big crop, some gins are approaching permit limits.

going seven days per week to class the 2007 crop.

Kenny Day, area director of the USDA office in Lubbock, was expected to class about 3.7 million bales, while the Lamesa classing office was anticipating at least 1.3 million bales.

The gins keep humming, and the cotton keeps flowing to classing offices.

The good news — beyond the bumper cotton crop — has been the excellent grades being recorded for the cotton fiber.

Gins are challenged

According to the Texas Cotton Ginners' Association, cotton gins are being pushed to the

limit. Many will be ginning cotton several weeks into 2008.

Some facilities had finished ginning as the new year arrived, but some gins around Lubbock and south of the city still had a long way to go.

TCGA notes that a few years ago the Midland Regional Office of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality inspected every gin in that region. The big 2004 cotton crop resulted in numerous citations for ginning more cotton than permits allowed.

Gin has limits

TCGA points out that every cotton gin permit has a bales-per-year limit. Most gins are permitted for stripper cotton. For example, a gin's permit might state it was limited to 40,000 bales of stripper cotton per year.

Emission factors are based on whether the cotton

ginned had been harvested with pickers, burr-extractor equipped strippers, or non-burr extractor equipped strippers.

TCGA notes that if a gin is limited to 40,000 bales of stripper cotton, it can gin about 60,000 bales legally, if it is all burr-extracted, stripper cotton.

In "Special Condition 3" on a gin's permit, it will spell out that a gin can exceed the number of bales listed on the permit, as long as the gin doesn't exceed the emission limitation listed.

There is a formula provided. But gins that feel they may be on the borderline of exceeding their permit this ginning season can call the TCGA office in Austin at 512-476-8388, and the office will be able to determine a gin's permit limit.

Cotton gins are required to keep records of bales ginned in a particular season for 24 months.

2007 varied on control of cotton worms

By J.T. SMITH

TEXAS and Oklahoma are coming off one of the greatest cotton harvests ever in the Southwest. But as growers look to 2008, what can they expect from insect pressure?

Evidence from 2007 shows that Bollgard II cotton still kept worms under control. Bollgard II cotton was planted on about 3.5 million acres in the Cotton Belt in 2007, which was double the 2006 acreage.

Now for 2008, Monsanto forecasts that will increase to 5 million acres of Bollgard II planted.

Under a wide range of worm pressures, Bollgard II protected farmers' cotton fields against bollworms in 2007. In fact, most growers with Bollgard II cotton did not have to treat their crop with insecticides at all.

There was some worm pressure from late-season salt marsh caterpillars in West Texas.

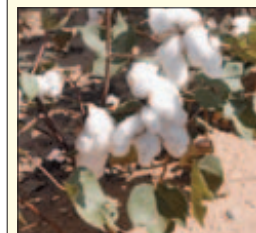
"This pest infested a large number of fields, but the Bollgard II held up very well against it," reports Walt Mullins, Monsanto cotton traits technical manager.

Bollgard II cotton offers built-in worm control to stop most leaf- and boll-feeding worm species, including bollworms, budworms, armyworms, loopers, saltmarsh caterpillars and cotton leaf perforators.

Mullins says in East Texas, worm pressure ranged from extremely heavy for bollworm to light or moderate infestations. Pressure in West Texas was about average, at light to moderate.

Parts of South Texas saw moderate pressure from beet armyworms, but the rest of Texas only endured relatively light pressure from beet and fall armyworms, he notes.

In West Texas, very heavy populations of salt marsh caterpillars moved into some areas and infested a number of fields.



HARDY COTTON: While worms attempted to attack some Southwest cotton in 2007, Bollgard II cotton held up well against the pressure.

Syngenta to market Axial XL in U.S.

THE U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has granted registration for Axial XL herbicide for use in spring wheat, winter wheat and barley. It will be available for the 2008 growing season.

New Axial XL combines Axial and a spray adjuvant into one convenient formulation for

use on cereal crops.

"Our goal is to provide growers with top-performing products that are also easy to use," says Shawn Potter, herbicide brand manager for Syngenta.

"With Axial XL, growers are getting the same great mixed grass control, but without the

hassle of having to mix multiple jugs. And the single-use rate of 16.4 ounces per acre for all weeds makes determining rates much simpler," Potter explains.

Like the original formulation, Axial XL provides the same broad-spectrum control of troublesome grass weeds, including yellow and green fox-

tails, Italian ryegrass, wild oat, and Persian darnel.

It also offers growers a wide application window on both crops and grass weeds, with good crop safety in wheat and barley.

Potter says Axial XL combines performance and convenience into one product.