

NewsWatch



**LINDY PATTON**, executive director of the Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation, points out the 6,773,675 GPS-mapped acres that were part of the TBWEF effort in Texas and New Mexico for the 2005 crop. About 1,800 people work in the boll weevil eradication program.

# No place to hide

By J.T. SMITH

**W**HAT a battle it has been. But the boll weevil is finding itself out-matched.

Back-to-back record cotton crops in Texas in 2004 and 2005 are evidence the menacing pest that once put farmers — indeed, entire regions — out of the cotton business is no longer a major-league player.

Some 20 zones in Texas and New Mexico are involved in the boll weevil eradication effort under the Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation. Lindy Patton, TBWEF executive director, Abilene, says the program covered 6,773,675 GPS-mapped acres in 2005.

The effort started with a pilot program in Virginia in 1978 with an aim to eventually arrive in Texas to drive the weevil back south of the border, where it was said to have come into the United States from Mexico in 1892. Driving it back south — out of Texas — and keeping it on the run with cooperation from Mexico essentially will return the weevil “home.”

For Texas, the effort started when the

**Key Points**

- Texas and New Mexico close in on boll weevil’s hiding places.
- TBWEF weevil eradication now involves 20 zones in two states.
- Zones meet stringent guidelines before being declared eradicated.

Texas Legislature passed an enabling law for the program in 1993. A diapause program followed in 1994 as the eradication effort began.

So where’s the effort now? The war is going well. The Southern Rolling Plains and Rolling Plains Central zones have been declared functionally eradicated of boll weevils by the Texas Department of Agriculture, Patton notes.

Eight other zones have been classified as suppressed of weevils. That’s good, because it helps a vast region progress in a uniform way. This, in turn, keeps the territory in the same quarantine status, helping farmers in adjoining regions. These declarations by Texas Commissioner of Agriculture Susan Combs provide quarantine protection

to zones that have made great progress. “This is key in not reintroducing weevils into a clean area,” Patton says.

**Weevil terminology**

Patton notes terms in the program such as “suppressed,” “functionally eradicated” and “eradicated” are precise definitions, and it’s important to have that in the weevil war.

If you’re a cotton grower, you hear those words a whole bunch nowadays depending on the zone where you are growing cotton. Here’s exactly what each term means in the boll weevil program:

■ **Suppressed area.** An area in which some boll weevil reproduction may be present in the area or a portion thereof, and in which the movement of regulated articles presents a threat to the success of the boll weevil eradication program. The boll weevil population must be equal to or less than 0.025 boll weevils per trap per week for the cotton growing season as measured by boll weevil pheromone traps operated by TBWEF or other government agency.

■ **Functionally eradicated area.** An area meeting the trapping criteria for a suppressed area with no confirmed evidence of boll weevil reproduction occurring in the area and no oviposition in the squares, and in which the movement of regulated articles presents a threat to the success of the boll weevil eradication program. The boll weevil population must be equal to or less than an average 0.001 boll weevils per trap per week for the cotton growing season as measured by boll weevil pheromone traps operated by TBWEF or other government agency.

■ **Eradicated area.** An area apparently free of boll weevil or for which scientific documentation acceptable to the department has been provided indicating no boll weevils were captured for at least one cotton growing season in weevil pheromone traps operated by TBWEF or other governmental agency.

TDA has the benefit of using data

## Next mission: pink bollworm

**J**UST before his recent retirement from a long and distinguished career, Texas A&M Extension entomologist Jim Leser, Lubbock, noted even the few pink bollworms found in deep West Texas along the New Mexico state line were cause to take action. The worm can annihilate a cotton field overnight. Leser had seen what the pest could do in Arizona. It could make the boll weevil look like fun.

An outbreak of pinkies across the High Plains would devastate the cotton industry, and the Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation now has taken on the pink bollworm battle to stop its eastward movement. All TBWEF employees in the West Texas region where pink bollworms have been detected are wearing two hats — working to eradicate both boll weevils and the worms.

Lindy Patton, TBWEF executive director, Abilene, says the foundation is working to eradicate pinkies in the El Paso-Trans Pecos region. The aim is to keep the worm from spreading into the vast cotton acreage of the Texas High Plains and Rolling Plains.

Besides trapping, a key part of the effort includes releasing sterile moths reared in a laboratory in Phoenix. The release includes parts of California, Arizona, New Mexico and West Texas. “Millions of sterile moths are released each week in an effort to rid the infested areas of the worm,” notes Patton.



**PATTON HAS** the big picture of the boll weevil war at his fingertips on his computer at the Abilene state office.

from TBWEF, as well as from government agencies and top entomologists like Tom Fuchs, state Integrated Pest Management coordinator, San Angelo, who serves as chairman of the TBWEF Technical Advisory Committee.

He follows Jim Leser, Texas A&M Extension entomologist, Lubbock, who retired earlier this year.

**Work continues**

At this stage of the game, the program must focus on not reintroducing weevils into areas that already are largely cleaned up — especially those that have been declared functionally eradicated.

A cooperative effort exists among many farmers growing cotton on both sides of the Red River in Oklahoma and Texas. The effort has allowed the movement of cotton equipment back and forth across the river — except for pink bollworm restrictions. The pinkies have not been found in Oklahoma but have been discovered in deep West Texas.

Vol. 96 No. 8

**Fast find:**

- NewsWatch 1
- Letters & Opinions 6
- Natural Resources 8
- Crops 10
- Marketplace/Classified M1
- Life in the Great Southwest 19
- Machinery 23
- Livestock 24
- Property Management 30
- Marketing 32

Keep up on ag news in the region; check out [www.TheFarmerStockman.com](http://www.TheFarmerStockman.com). We feature updates on a wide range of topics, marketing data and weather information you can put to work in your operation.

**Contact us:**

**Editor:** J.T. Smith  
[jtsmith@farmprogress.com](mailto:jtsmith@farmprogress.com)  
 433 Graham St.  
 P.O. Box 459  
 Tuscola, TX 79562-0459  
 Phone: (325) 554-7388  
 Fax: (325) 554-7389

**Contributing Editors:**  
 John Spittler, Livestock; John Otte, Economics;  
 Arlan Suderman, Marketing & Management

**Executive Editor:** Dan Crummett

**Corporate Editorial Director:** Willie Vogt,  
 (651) 454-6994, [wvogt@farmprogress.com](mailto:wvogt@farmprogress.com)

**Sales:** Jerry Lucht. Phone: (512) 864-7424

**Subscription Questions:** (800) 441-1410

**For additional sales and company information,** see last page of marketplace section.