



Pest e-alerts



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False Chinch Bugs in Sorghum

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I'm starting to receive reports of false chinch bug infesting sorghum heads. As sorghum begins to head, it is important to make sure your crop is not being damaged by this insect. False chinch bug nymphs are ash-gray with brown-white mottling on the back and red mottling on the abdomen. Adults measure about 1/8 inch long, are dirty gray, with brown or black markings. This insect injures plants by sucking the liquid in developing seeds when they are in the milk stage. It has a life span of about 40 days (from egg hatch through adult).



SAMPLING

Sorghum heads must be examined to determine the need for control of panicle-feeding bugs. The shake bucket/baggie method of scouting works well for sampling fields (Figure 2). Carefully move to a plant without disturbing it, quickly shake the head into the bucket or plastic bag, and shake it vigorously. Count all false chinch bugs that fall into the bucket or garbage bag. Adult bugs will fly out of the bucket, so be prepared to count “flying” bugs. Inspect at least 1 head per acre of field (minimum 30 samples) and continue scouting sorghum until the head has reached soft dough.



CONTROL SUGGESTIONS

False chinch bugs are not likely to cause economic injury when sorghum matures past the milk stage, so treatment for false chinch bugs after milk stage is not likely to provide economic benefit. Before milk stage, treat when scouting indicates more than 140 false chinch bugs per head. See CR-7170, Management of Sorghum Insects, or E-832, 2012 OSU Extension Agents' Handbook of Insect, Plant disease and Weed Control for current recommendations.

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