

Field Notes
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We are still getting reports of fields showing our “mystery” malady and today I saw one in a field planted to Wells. This is the first time I have seen it in a variety not from Louisiana. We had quietly been considering the possibility of genetic/environmental interaction because the germplasm of Cypress, Cocodrie, and Cheniere has a lot in common. It was almost a relief to see it in something totally unrelated. Of course, most of our acreage is planted to LSU derived varieties which coupled with the unpredictable nature of the problem’s occurrence it only makes sense that most reports would have been in these varieties. Below are a couple of photographs I took this morning in the Wells field. Dr. Breitenbeck and his crew intend to sample it today or tomorrow.



Field of Wells rice affected with malady.



Roots of affected plants. Note orange color.

Mother Nature always tends to average things out. So now she is making up for the lack of rain for the past couple of months and appears to be trying to do it in two weeks. Rainfall Monday night ranged from less than an inch to around 6 inches and it is raining now. It has been humid since last week which means disease problems are probably going to start showing up. I have heard only a couple of confirmed reports so far.

We have started scouting our verification fields and will continue to do so until heading. By then we should have reached the decision stage and either applied fungicide or elected not to apply it. Our normal method of scouting is to count paces (varies depending on size of field) and stop as a means of randomizing our samples. Then using the familiar “T” made of PVC pipe, examine a section of rice. If any disease is present we record it as a positive stop. At the same time we try to estimate the severity of infestation in the sample and rate it from 1 to 10 with one being from one to a few lesions up to 100 percent infected plants for a 10 rating. As we walk through the field counting paces from one stop to the next if we encounter obvious signs of disease we make a mental note of them.

Using this information and many other factors from the yield potential of the field to the intention to second crop the field we either recommend a fungicide or omit it. Return on investment from a fungicide application is greatest in a field with good yield potential, little or no red rice or other weeds, moderate to heavy disease pressure and the intention to second crop the field. In seed rice fields fungicide is almost an automatic recommendation. Where disease pressure is very light or there is significant red rice or other noxious weeds and yield potential is not very good the likelihood of a good return is less than the first scenario. Varietal reaction to disease was not mentioned because it is considered in the amount of disease present in the field although it should not be discounted entirely. This is one of the most difficult decisions to make all year because it is entirely subjective. This is one of the “essay questions” of farming – no true-false, no multiple-choice, no black and white answer most of the time.

Walking tall rice in the typical summer heat is tedious, monotonous, time consuming and tiring. I sure wish someone would perfect a means of aerial inspection that would work. This year in an effort to cut down the time required we will try something a little different. When we locate a “hot spot” in the field we will mark it with a hand held GPS unit. Then in the succeeding days we will continue our normal method but also go back to the hot spot to gauge the progress of the disease. If the continued scouting correlates well with monitoring the hot spot then we might be able to use it to reduce the total time required. Scouting will still have to be comprehensive until the hot spot is located, but subsequent field visits might only have to be confined to this area rather than examining the entire field each week. This will not be the same as spot checking fields a practice that can lead to mistakes.

Below is a photograph of the PVC “T” being used and of the hand held GPS unit. Both should be quite familiar, but I thought I would show them just the same.

