

Field Notes
August 9, 2005
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Once the combines start running the phone usually stops ringing, but that has not been the case this year. In the southern part of the state harvest is now in full swing and yields so far look pretty good. Most reports are in the 40 to 50 barrel (144 to 180 bushel) range with a few below and a few above.

We just finished harvesting the verification field in Vermilion parish and were pleasantly surprised because it broke 40 barrels per acre even though it was heavily infested with red rice. On August 2nd we took a hand sample which averaged 20% moisture. At that point we recommended sodium chlorate with the intention of desiccating the red rice which was still green in hopes of getting it to shatter as well as make harvest easier. It worked better than I have ever seen it work, by yesterday, August 9th the moisture had dropped to 13.4% in the hand sample and 14.8% in the combine sample. How much was actually due to the application of sodium chlorate we cannot say with certainty. One thing is certain, it caused the red rice to shatter heavily as can be seen in the photograph below.



Shattered red rice seeds behind combine pass.



Harvesting Vermilion parish verification field.

Last week we were asked to look at a field in northeast Louisiana where a consultant was contacted by a farmer who said some of the panicles of his rice were not filled and were tan colored. From the telephone conversation we expected to find either stem borers or panicle blast because we have seen quite a bit of both lately. The problem was identified before we got out of the truck. As we turned onto the field road leading to the affected field small, but dense flocks of blackbirds began to exit the field.

Over the last few years we have observed an increasing amount of blackbird damage on headed rice during the month of August which is much earlier than we were previously accustomed to experiencing the problem. In south Louisiana we have long had problems with blackbirds on seeded rice in the spring and in ratoon crop rice later in the fall, but damage to rice in late summer is a little different. Another thing we have noticed is the bird's preference for rice in the milk to soft dough stage. Often they will move from a field that is ripening to one of less maturity where it appears to be easier for them to feed because the damage is often much more extensive in rice at that stage than rice in the hard dough stage.



Blackbird damage to headed rice.



Stage blackbirds appear to prefer.