Field Notes
April   4, 2007
Johnny Saichuk

Last week we were called to look at a field of rice with an uneven stand. Of course it had to be "bad seed" because I have never been to a field with a poor stand that the seed was not blamed. This field belonged to a friend of mine so I told him the same thing. He did not see the humor! The real culprit was rice seed midge.

The field fit the profile for seed midge in that it was flooded about seven days prior to water seeding with dry seed, then water was held on the field for an additional seven days because of low temperatures. In these situations, especially where there is clear water, seed midges flourish. As soon as the seed hit the soil line they begin to feed usually completely removing the embryo. In this instance many of the seed we found had started to germinate then the midge ate away the young radicle (immature root) leaving a short nub of tissue not likely to produce another root. In this case it was necessary to add more seed to the field with the admonition not to keep it flooded as long. We do not have any other recommended control measure for this insect.

The photograph above illustrates damage by the rice seed midge. In each seed the germination process had begun then the midge larvae fed on the young root.

The image to the left is of another midge larva commonly called a blood worm. The common name is derived from its bright red color. It is not the same midge as the rice seed midge larvae. Those of the rice seed midge are much smaller and are not brightly colored.

I did not even see the other critter in the photograph until I viewed in on my computer. I have no idea what it is and in the words of one of my colleagues who always said when he encountered a pest he didn't know, "I don't know, but it's not a problem."

According to entomologists the blood worm is not a pest of rice seeds.

A discussion of the next three photographs follows on the next page.

I was also called about a “grass” a couple of guys could not identify when they found it in a field in Allen parish. I could not identify it from their description over the phone so asked them to bring in a sample. The first two photographs are of the samples.

If you look carefully at both the first and second photographs the seedling resembles a grass seedling, but in fact is not a member of the grass family *(Poaceae* or *Gramineae*). There is not even a hint of a ligule and no mid-vein. The tissue has a spongy appearance too.

The best clue to me was where it was found. Once I knew it was not a grass and that it was in Allen parish I recognized it as Swamp Dayflower (*Murdannia keisak*).

The image at left was taken a couple of years ago when we found the plant at a later stage of growth and eventually in flower.

More information on this plant can be found on our web page at: www.lsuagcenter.com/crops_livestock/rice/weed+control/swamp+dayflower+Murdannia+keisak.htm.

The creature in the photograph on the following page should be familiar to most. In the course of installing a flow meter Bill Leonards found this one in a hydrant. From comments of others they have been particularly plentiful this year.

This is an image of the Black Widow spider. I understand it has a close relative now making its appearance in Louisiana called the Brown Widow. Both are characterized by the classic red hour glass mark on their undersides. Both are poisonous.

I am passing this along because many of you are handling irrigation pipe and supplies that has been stored outside where there are likely to be spiders, harmless as well as harmful. They, like snakes, are not something to get paranoid about, just respect their potential.