Field Notes
July 17, 2007
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In the last issue I discussed drain timing. I think it caused more questions than it answered based on the phone calls I have received and discussions I have had at field tours recently. Last year about this time I discussed the same topic. The photograph below illustrates a sample of panicles from a field that is ready to drain.

The top group of panicles is about ½ straw colored and the bottom is about ¾ straw colored. The top panicles represent the proper time to drain on clay soils or fields that are difficult to dry. The bottom set are typical of what we like to see when we are draining a silt loam soil type or when it is very hot and dry.

Okay, we have been down this road before; why are we discussing it again? As I have mentioned before this a judgment call. What is different this time? This year it looks like it will never stop raining which means we can drain earlier than we would otherwise. I am a fan of keeping water on the field as long as possible because I want the stubble to remain alive as long as possible. The other reason for keeping a field flooded – weed control – no longer is important.

This is a classic example of using judgment. As long as it continues to rain on a daily basis we will have to make an exception to the standard recommendation if we want to harvest the fields in a timely manner and minimize rutting. For this year only, I would drain if the panicles are ½ straw colored on silt loam soils and on clay soils as soon the panicles are about $^{1}/_{3}$ straw colored.

The key is really not soil type, but ability of the field to be drained and dry down enough to be harvested. One of our verification fields is on as heavy a clay soil as possible, but the farmer assures me it can be harvested about two weeks after draining in a "normal" year. He planted a hybrid variety there so that complicates the situation a little, but we expect to pull the plug this week.

Yesterday we tried out our new high moisture meter on a couple of fields. We picked about 10 panicles per sample and took three samples in each field. A straight line can be drawn in any direction with only two points. By adding a third sample we make sure we are consistent. The first field was CL171. Its moisture readings were: 32, 31 and 32%. The second field was the BLOG field on the Rice Research Station which is planted to Cocodrie. Readings for that field were: 33, 32 and 33%. We intend to check the actual moisture by comparing readings to samples dried in an oven. So far, if the meter is wrong it is wrong consistently.

Below are three photographs I took in a field of volunteer Jupiter which has had no fungicide applied to it. Until Dr. Groth confirms it I cannot be sure, but if the lesions you see are not of Narrow Brown Leaf Spot they sure ought to be. We'll let you know when we find out. If they are then the explanation Dr. Groth offered last year concerning volunteer rice in crawfish ponds serving as the source of inoculum that set off the epidemic last year may be valid.

Below and continuing on the following page are photographs of Bengal then RiceTec 723 to which glyphosate was inadvertently applied when the adjacent soybean field was sprayed. In the words of Dr. Webster, “He didn’t get drifted on, he got sprayed.” That may be a slight exaggeration, but in either case it is not a good situation.

In the Bengal field most of the affected area has not and likely will not head out. What panicles do exist are trapped down in the leaf sheath. Some are totally deformed and not even recognizable as a panicle. Apparently the incident occurred when the rice was in mid to late boot because there were no obvious symptoms until the rest of the field began to head out. In the left most photograph no heading is visible in comparison to the right most photograph in which heading appears fairly normal. The center photograph shows the effects on a single panicle.

The hybrid field seemed to tolerate the herbicide better or took a lighter hit than did the Bengal. The area of the field nearest to the soybean field is not headed. As you move away from the soybean field the amount of heading increases until an area is reached that is fairly normal. Panicles that were affected are seriously injured. These symptoms are clear in the three photo graphs on the following page.

The photographs are arranged like those of Bengal. From left to right they are: an affected area, a single affected panicle, and an unaffected area.

By yesterday afternoon Dr. Webster had looked at three cases of glyphosate drift .