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RICE BRIEFS

August 2008

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According to the latest USDA crop progress report (July 27, 2008), condition of CA rice is 16% excellent, 51% good, 27% fair, 5% poor and 1% very poor. About 10% of fields are heading, a 2% reduction when compared to the same date last year.

In this issue of Rice Briefs I'm including information regarding blast and the causes for panicle blanking. This is the time of the year when you'll expect to see blast lesions. Some areas in Colusa and Glenn Counties are more conducive to blast because of local climate conditions. Look for leaf lesions and focal infections near the edge of the field where the fertilizer application was overlapped.

Also, I am including the invitation to the 2008 Rice Experiment Station Field Day and a message from the Directors of the Colusa County Department of Health and Human Services and the Colusa Mosquito Abatement District to Colusa County growers.

Remember, if you have internet access you can subscribe and download this newsletter and other information at:

http://cecolusa.ucdavis.edu/rice/

ANNUAL CALIFORNIA RICE FIELD DAY

Wednesday, August 27, 2008
7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Rice Experiment Station, 955 Butte City Highway (Hwy 162)

The annual Rice Field Day will be Wednesday, August 27, 2008, at the Rice Experiment Station (RES), Biggs, California. We cordially invite you and your associates to join us for this event. The purpose of the Rice Field Day is to give rice growers and others an opportunity to observe and discuss research in progress at RES. Rice Field Day is sponsored by the California Cooperative Rice Research Foundation (CCRRF) and University of California (UC). We also seek and receive support from many agricultural businesses. Following is a brief outline of the Rice Field Day program.

7:30 - 8:30 A.M. **REGISTRATION**

- *Posters and Demonstrations*

8:30 - 9:15 A.M. **GENERAL SESSION**

- *CCRRF Annual Membership Meeting*
- *D. Marlin Brandon Rice Research Fellowship*
- *California Rice Industry Award*

9:30 - NOON **FIELD TOURS OF RICE RESEARCH**

- *Variety Improvement*
- *Disease Resistance*
- *Insects and Control*
- *Weeds and Control*

12:00 - NOON **LUNCH**

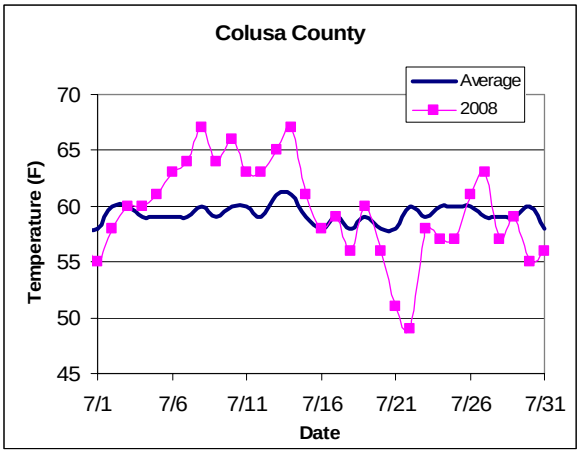
The program will begin at 8:30 a.m. with a General Session that serves as the Annual CCRRF Membership Meeting. Posters and demonstrations will be in place during registration until after lunch. Field tours of research will emphasize progress in rice variety improvement, disease, insect, and weed control. The program will conclude at noon with a lunch that includes rice.

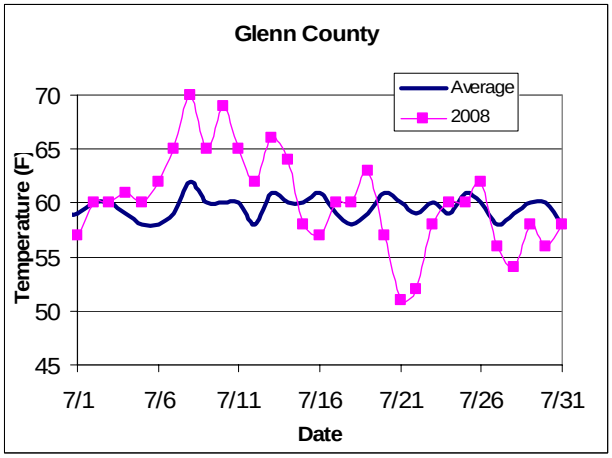
We hope to see you August 27. The RES is located at 955 Butte City Highway (Hwy. 162), approximately two and one half miles west of Highway 99 north of Biggs, California.

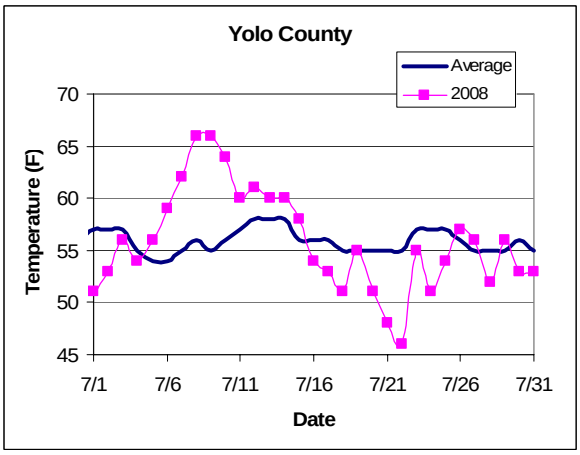
Panicle Blanking

Blanking is caused mainly by low night temperatures during PD (panicle differentiation, when the developing panicle becomes visible). When pollen is being formed, the panicle is most sensitive to low temperatures.

We had some unusual cold nights during July. The figures to the right and below show 2008 and historical average lowest temperatures registered in Colusa (Colusa station), Glenn (Orland station) and Yolo (Zamora station) Counties during July. Blanking can be severe when temperatures fall below 55 ^{o}F during 4 or 5 consecutive days. Blanking in a normal year can amount to 12%.







Water management is the only practice that can prevent blanking due to cold temperatures. Water should be raised to protect the panicle. Excessive nitrogen fertilization also can increase sterility. However, its effect is not as important as cold temperatures. Some herbicides may also have an effect on grain filling.

Armyworms can injure the panicle and cause blanking. Entire panicles or parts of them can be blanked. To confirm armyworm damage carefully inspect affected panicles. Look for feeding marks at the base of the florets or panicle. Find the armyworms at the base of the plants, next to the water. If they are not present, they might have completed their development and treatment will not be necessary. If panicle injury amounts to 10% and armyworms are present, a treatment may be needed.

Identifying Leaf Blast

In some areas, this is the time of the year when blast starts appearing. Blast can cause lesions in leaves, leaf collar, stems, nodes, panicles and grains. Conditions that favor blast development are extended periods of free moisture on plant surfaces and night temperatures between 63-73 ^{o}F. Scout your fields – look for leaf lesions, especially in areas where nitrogen has been over applied.

Leaf lesions are usually diamond shaped with a grey or white center and brown or reddish brown border and are between 1/3 to 1/2".

Blast is favored by excessive nitrogen fertilization. Infections can start in areas where fertilizer has been over applied, like at the edge of the field where overpasses of fertilizer occur. These areas can serve as focus of spore production that, if given the right environmental conditions, can infect the rest of the field. If blast lesions are present and increasing just before the boot stage, protect the panicles as they emerge from the boot with a fungicide application.

Blast leaf lesions

Blast affected area near edge of field

Rice Growers Have an Opportunity to Fight West Nile Virus in Colusa County

Beth Robey, Director Colusa County Department of Health and Human Services and
Dave Whitesell, Director, Colusa Mosquito Abatement District

Every summer, rice growers in the Sacramento Valley flood over 500,000 acres, creating a prime habitat for mosquitoes, and increasing the West Nile Virus public health concern. Most areas in the valley have long-standing mosquito control districts, and rice growers have helped fund these districts through property taxes and assessments. However, not all of Colusa County is covered by a mosquito control district. In fact, Colusa County is one of the few counties in the entire state without a county-wide mosquito control program!

In Colusa County, the Colusa Mosquito Abatement District (the "District") has been providing comprehensive mosquito control services and public health protection services

within its boundaries since 1958. The District's current boundary consists of 140 square miles in eastern Colusa County, including the City of Colusa, and 20 square miles in the western portion of Sutter County. Hence, significant rice growing areas and populated areas, largely along Interstate 5 in central Colusa County (including the communities of Arbuckle, Grimes, Maxwell, Princeton, and Williams) do not currently receive year-round, comprehensive mosquito control services. The District desires to provide mosquito and disease prevention services to these currently unprotected areas and is proposing a new assessment on all properties within the unprotected areas. If property owners approve the proposed assessment, the District will annex these areas into its boundaries, and will provide mosquito control services in these areas.

The District has many years of experience working cooperatively with rice growers within its current boundaries and believes it has earned a solid reputation. Over the last 50 years, the District has developed some of the most-effective, environmentally safe methods in the State to control mosquitoes in rice growing areas. District General Manager Dave Whitesell, a former rice grower himself, is very sensitive to the economic challenges facing rice growers. He agrees fully with California Rice Commission President Tim Johnson, who has pointed out that, "You can't solve the West Nile problem on the back of the rice industry. "The District, working closely with Colusa County, is insisting that all different types of property owners pay their fair share. A formula was devised which essentially placing 1/3 of the cost on single family homes, 1/3 on agricultural lands, and 1/3 on all other (commercial, government owned, etc).

The engineering study supporting the assessment indicates that single family homeowners would be asked to invest $69.00 per year, while farmers would be asked to invest $0.58 per acre per year for mosquito control services. Other property types would be assessed differently based on their use, size, etc. For example, commercial/industrial property would be assessed $34.50 per quarter acre, while owners of vacant lots would pay $17.25 per year.

Most importantly:

1) The assessment would allow the District to provide an equal level of service for all properties being assessed, including rice farms, and not just to populated areas, and

2) 100% of these funds will go directly to the Colusa Mosquito Abatement District and can not be used for any other purpose.

Rice growers are well aware of the potential for employee illness and its effect on productivity. Since employees working in the fields begin their work at dawn, they are particularly vulnerable to illness spread by mosquitoes. This assessment would ensure that all properties in the currently unprotected area will receive the services that are necessary to control mosquitoes and protect the health of employees, livestock and family pets. In addition, families will be better able to enjoy outdoor activities without being hampered by mosquitoes.

Ballots are scheduled to be mailed out in late summer.

For more information about West Nile Virus, please contact Public Health at 458-0380. For more information about mosquito abatement services please contact Colusa Mosquito Abatement District at 458-4966. For more information about the ballot measure, please contact SCI Consulting Engineers at 800-273-5167.

To receive this newsletter electronically or for suggestions/questions send an email to: laespino@ucdavis.edu, or go to http://cecolusa.ucdavis.edu/rice/

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