Field Notes
May 12, 2008
Johnny Saichuk

In both photographs at the right and below are struggling seedlings. At the right the seed were flown into a flooded field where the water was allowed to stand for about 48 hours then drained. Seeds germinated successfully, but when the field began to dry and required flushing many seedlings were uprooted because the farmer was unable to properly prepare the seed bed. This same field produced 60 barrels (216 bushels) per acre last year. Before the farmer could prepare the field for this year it was flooded for duck hunting. The wet spring prevented him from working it dry and heavy clay soils do not lend themselves to working in the water. He tried. The seedling below is from the field in Madison parish we mentioned last week where either rainfall or flushing would be necessary for successful emergence. He got the rain, barely in time and the field has an excellent stand.

Before the introduction of Clearfield rice the only means of managing red rice was water seeding. Most of the time this meant flooding or holding water to remove soil oxygen by saturation with water so red rice would not germinate. Then it was a trick to try to plant, encourage the seed to germinate, drain and re-flood before any red rice could germinate. In every case the system was far from perfect. Every high spot in the field eventually got enough oxygen into it to get rice going. That is what happened in our verification field in Jeff Davis parish. In spite of very careful water management red rice is now showing up along the high side of the field. Of course this is the side most in public view. We also have a little alligatorweed on the opposite end of the field, but the real concern is the red rice. We might use a little 2,4-D on the alligatorweed if we decide it is going to be a problem. We cannot do anything about the red rice this year.

That is not red rice in the photograph at right. This is the second photograph of our verification field in Avoyelles parish where the seedbed could not be prepared properly because it remained too wet too long. The farmer attempted to work it in a flooded state, but quickly found he could only make one pass. When he attempted the second pass he ran into problems as was expected. I have been criticized for saying heavy clay soils could not be worked in a flooded state, but most farmers I know have found out the hard way it is not the same as working silt loam soils that have a hard pan. In this case tractors starting sinking on the second pass. Aside from making serious ruts they could not pull the implement, a simple "water buffalo". The green strips are volunteer rice resulting from the field having been flooded all winter which protected the stubble. It will not be as serious as red rice, but it will not do any good either.

In St. Landry parish rice was drilled into sorghum stubble. We were not sure about its possible effects on rice growth. At this point it is clear the rice crop is doing very well even though it has been a slow process. We think the slow progress does not have anything to do with sorghum, but with the cooler temperatures we have experienced. We are finally getting the permanent flood established on the field. Last week we looked carefully for rice water weevils without finding any. We looked through our records of past verification fields since 1998 and found only a couple that did not require some sort of treatment to control rice water weevils. We sure hope that will be the case here. The only problem is that it is much easier to find and treat them than it is to continue to have to scout very carefully each week with the hope that we either do not miss them or that the problem does not develop. We'll see.

As can be seen in the photograph at left, a lot of debris remains in the same field. In a few low areas the stalks are floating over seedlings. At this point, we are not concerned because the plants are large enough to compete. The soil type is heavy clay, but not the same as in Avoyelles parish. This begs the question, "Why could the field in Avoyelles parish not also have been drill seeded with a no-till drill. We did discuss that option. The key difference between this field and the one in Avoyelles parish is that this field dried out to the point of easily supporting equipment because it was not flooded throughout the winter months. The field in Avoyelles parish never dried to that point and would have had to sit for another three or four weeks to reach that point. If the young plants become established in Avoyelles we will be okay.

If we figure out what happened in the field shown above we will let you know. Several of us looked at it last Friday and could not come to a complete consensus. We took some samples to be analyzed for nutrient problems and also plan to send in other samples for herbicide drift which seems to be the problem "de jour" lately. Too much wind for too long.

Command injury is shown in the photograph at left on the next page. We have had a lot of calls complaining of unusual Command behavior. At application (often three or four weeks ago) rice did not exhibit any symptoms, but upon establishing permanent flood white plants showed up all over the field. The best explanation I can offer is that under the dry cool conditions we have been experiencing little uptake or activity occurred. Once it warmed up and a permanent flood was established Command was taken up producing the characteristic symptoms. One of the striking things about Command is the appearance of the symptoms on the base to the middle of the leaf while the upper portion of the leaf remains green. If injury is severe brownish necrotic lesions will show up within the chlorotic areas. In this case the crop should grow out fine.

This is the last week we will show Mississippi River gauges because water is now falling rapidly. Every time this type of thing happens I gain a new respect for nature's powers and our struggle to manage this river.

02025
64
63
62
61
60
59