

INFLUENCE OF IRRIGATION REGIME ON YIELD OF MAXXA AND PHYTOGEN-72

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If insufficient water is applied to cotton, the resulting plant water stress can reduce yield. On the other hand, over-watering can cause rank growth and reduced yield. Somewhere in between there is a level of water application that produces maximum yield; our goal is to find that optimum level.

The subsurface drip irrigation system in field 41A (project 34) was used this season to apply water at six different and carefully controlled application rates. Water was applied daily. Treatment 4 received a nearly normal depth of water throughout the season using rates determined from previous experiments on crop coefficients (DeTar, 2004). The five other treatments received application depths which were proportional to that of treatment 4. The depth of water applied for all treatments is calculated by the equation

$$A = Ft * Cn * Ep$$

where A = depth of water to apply, inches;

Ep = normal pan evaporation;

Cn = degree of ground cover by the canopy, a decimal fraction; and

Ft = a treatment factor, which is equal to 0.3, 0.5, 0.7, 0.9, 1.1, and 1.3 for treatments 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 respectively.

The applications ranged from 33% of normal for the driest treatment to 144% of normal for the wettest treatment. Figure 1 shows the total depth of water applied this season (2006) to each treatment after planting. In addition to these numbers, there were about 5 inches of water available in the root zone at planting time.

We don't have the yields yet, but we there are some important results to report concerning plant growth characteristics. Figure 2 shows how the plant height for the PhytoGen-72 was affected by the treatments. The plant heights at the end of the season varied from 25 inches for the driest treatment to over 70 inches for the wettest treatment. The date of cutout, based on 5 nodes above white flower (NAWF), was also strongly related to the amount of water applied, as seen in figure 3. The driest treatment cut out 12 days earlier than the normal treatment. Treatment 6 is not shown in figure 3 because the plants stopped blooming before 5 NAWF was reached. The day of year (DOY) at which the plants were ready to defoliate is shown in figure 4. This is based on 4 nodes above cracked boll. At this writing (September 8, 2006), treatments 1, 2, 3, and 4 were ready to defoliate. The normal treatment was a little earlier this year than normal, possibly due to all the hot weather we've had this season. The driest treatment was ready to defoliate 15 days earlier than the normal treatment. Cutting back on the water can shorten the season considerably. Conversely, if the extrapolation holds true, over-watering by 44% could lengthen the season by about 10 days. Figure 5 shows how the soil moisture varied over the season. The soil moisture for treatment 4, the normal, held fairly constant, as it should. In fact, the slight deficit indicated increases irrigation efficiency. The soil moisture in the driest treatments is fast approaching the field wilting point of the soil, which normally averages about 3 inches of water in 5 feet of soil; field capacity is about 8 inches. Figure 6 shows how the final node count is closely related to the irrigation treatment.

We have documented the degree to which moisture regime controls plant height, final node count, and length of season.

LITERATURE CITED:

1. DeTar, W.R. 2004. Using a subsurface drip irrigation system to measure crop water use. Irrig. Sci. 23:111-122.

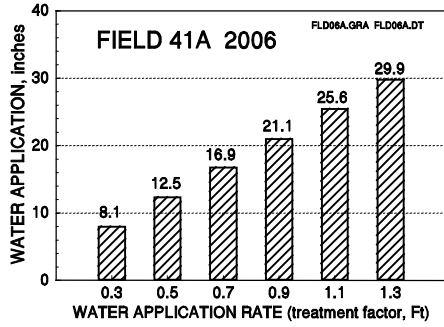


Figure 1. Depth of water applied after planting, in inches, for treatments 1 through 6 (l. to r.) in 2006.

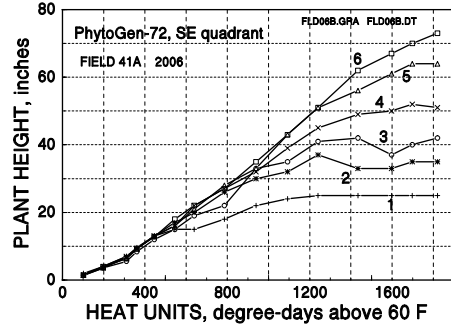


Figure 2. Plant heights vs. heat units for various treatments with PhytoGen-72 in 2006

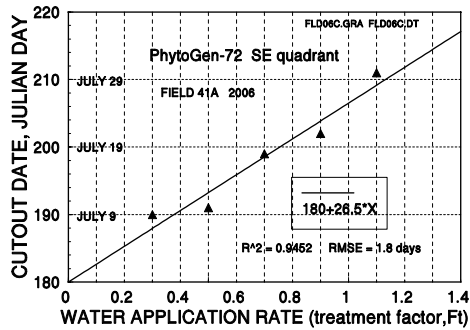


Figure 3. Cutout date as a function of irrigation treatment, PhytoGen-72, 2006

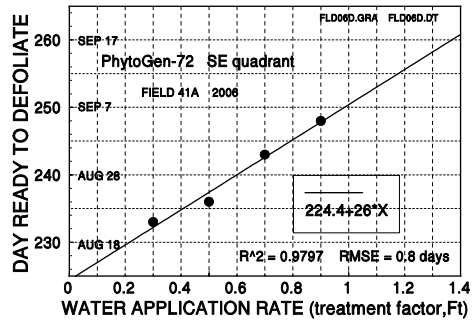


Figure 4. Julian day ready to defoliate as a function of irrigation treatment, 2006.

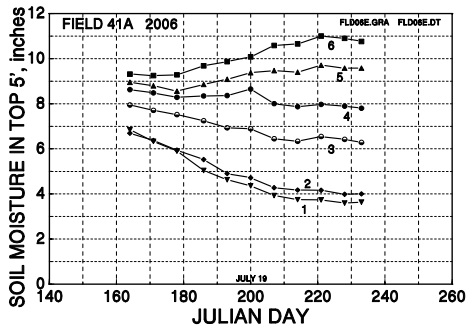


Figure 5. Moisture content of top 5 ft of soil.

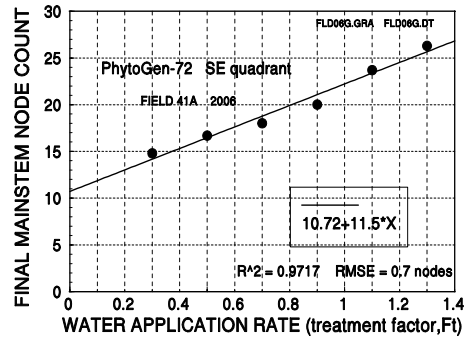


Figure 6. Final main stem node count.