

Cotton, July 17

PRETEND REALLY ROUNDUP READY COTTON

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One of our best experiments this year is named "Pretend Really Roundup Ready Cotton." More specifically we are pretending that the the cotton is tolerant to over-the-top Roundup long after the 4-leaf stage. The late, over-the-top applications will hurt yield, but this test is letting us see the weed control that's possible if cotton had complete tolerance.

The 4-leaf restriction is the weakest link of the Roundup Ready system. This year, lots of new weeds germinated between the 4-leaf applications and the early post-directed stage. A good preemergence treatment limited weed germination during that period and made a complete weed control programs.

The reason for our late-over-the-top test is that Monsanto is proceeding on cotton with complete Roundup tolerance. So far, our results, resemble those from Roundup soybeans. Because cotton is planted thinly and grows slowly- it may need an extra application or two. However, the simplicity and ability to control bigger, escaped weeds will be a giant asset.

In an unrelated experiment, we had 6-leaf cotton and had lost our height differential. We sprayed over the top again (risking fruiting damage); however we had no other option. That cotton continues to be extremely clean.

When this cotton becomes available, it will probably be some yield lag because all new herbicide tolerant systems seem to. There is not anything inherently wrong with the herbicide tolerance, it's just that the first few releases must face the army of good stuff that's already out there.

Every year is a nail biter for Roundup cotton- we get close to the 4-leaf stage and hope it doesn't rain before we can get it sprayed. After we spray it, Murphy's law often kicks in, and it gets cool and wet and new weeds start growing. Next thing we know we have 6" cotton and 3" weeds at the very same time that rice needs fertilizing and flooding, corn needs water and beans need planting. Cotton Roundup tolerance will give cotton what it gives soybeans: simplicity.