

Cotton, November 29, 2001
PALMER TALK IS CHEAP
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Someone recently said that Palmer amaranth wasn't a big problem in cotton. This contrasts with a lot of people who say it's the worst problem. We continue to keep Palmer amaranth as a focus of our cotton weed control efforts. Unfortunately, our answers tend to be dull.

The people who claim that they can control Palmer are right: If the weather is cooperative, and you do things when they're supposed to be done, Palmer amaranth can be controlled with many programs. Many growers continue to have successful pigweed control with the BXN system, even though this pigweed is one of Buctril's weaker points. I don't think anyone uses the tricky, early post-directed Cotoran + MSMA treatment anymore- but it still works for us when the weather is cooperative.

The people who say they can't control it are right too. We often tell growers the herbicides that are good on Palmer amaranth and they answer that they're already tried them all and still have problems. This is confirmed in years like this one when we have Palmer amaranth in all of our test plots- regardless of what's been sprayed.

With any herbicide or program, a recurring factor is that 99% control of a million weeds, isn't good enough. You may have heard about a some newer herbicides with good Palmer activity. We're testing tem, but so far, they aren't head's and shoulders better than anything else.

Roundup Ready cotton has been a big help. Right now Roundup is the one, postemergence herbicide that does a reliable job on Palmer. Of course, Roundup may also be responsible for the fields that seem to have a renegade Palmer plant every few hundred feet. Palmer control requires a good residual herbicide in the program. Preplant or preemergence herbicides still work, even though the tendency is to put the residual herbicide in the post directed spray. The older, triazine and urea-type chemicals (Caparol, Cotoran, Direx and Linex) are good, but the best Palmer treatments have been the Goal and Cobra type chemistires. A couple of similar chemicals are under development. They will be good choices, but again, the weed control activity is more or less the same as what we have now.

Residual herbicides are not the final answer for producers on the really sandy soils. Palmer amaranth is especially bad on watermelon-sand soils. On these soils, residual herbicides dissipate quickly, and in most cases you started with a lower herbicide rate. The saving grace on these soils is that big rainfalls won't keep you out of the field very long. You can usually spray a sandy field on time.

The new generation, completely-tolerant, Roundup-Ready cotton is supposed to be progressing. This is something we really need. On occasion and untimely rain allows Palmer to blow by 4-leaf cotton. In fact, the only clean test plots we had this year were ones where we sprayed Roundup later than we should have. The ability to spray Roundup over the top of bigger cotton

will be a big step forward in flexibility.