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STRAIGHTHEAD IN RICE

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Until 2001, Missouri had very little straighthead in rice. And, the straighthead we did see was usually not "true physiological straighthead", but damage from herbicide drift. However, in 2002 straighthead was much more common in both Missouri and Arkansas. Most of this straighthead is attributed to the wide-spread adoption of the variety Cocodrie, which isn't straighthead resistant.

We've been getting questions about whether rice should be planted into former cotton fields. The issue with cotton is that "in the olden days" straighthead could be worsened if rice was planted into long-time cotton field. The problem was caused by residues of DSMA and MSMA. Before the Roundup Cotton era, we often used as much as 6 lb ai/A total of DSMA or MSMA. We now use much less DSMA and MSMA in cotton- it's still a good product, but Staple, Buctril and Roundup have eliminated early D/MSMA application and D/MSMA shares Roundups strongest points- grasses and cocklebur. Over the last several years, many acres of rice have been planted in former cotton fields and straighthead was not widespread until last year.

Drift is another possible cause of the straighthead outbreak. Certainly we sprayed more Roundup/glyphosate than ever last year and it was a bad drift year. But again, we've sprayed a lot of glyphosate over the past several years without the straighthead we had last year. So, we attribute most of the problem to Cocodrie which was planted wide scale for the first time last year.

If you plan to grow Cocodrie, you may want to seriously consider an "official" straighthead drain. Unfortunately, Cocodrie should be drained very shortly after the establishment of the permanent flood. With all straighthead drains, the soil needs to be kept dry for at over a week and the soil should dry and crack. Missouri's DD-50 program does not give draining dates, Arkansas' program does.

An early drain like this is rather harmful to weed control and fertility. Plus, getting fields flooded and gates set once takes a lot of work and can take several days. Doing it twice is worse! Thanks to Dr. Chuck Wilson, Arkansas Rice Specialist, The Delta Center Staff and MU Extension for contributing information for this article.