Stink Bugs

For the past several seasons we've encountered problems with stink bugs in the Coastal Bend and Upper Gulf Coast regions of Texas. Due to boll weevil eradication and the widespread adoption of transgenic resistance to worms we've experienced a reduction in the use of broad-spectrum insecticides. Consequently, secondary pests such as the southern green stink bug and brown stink bug have become a problem. Research conducted by Danny Fromme (Extension Agent – Integrated Pest Management in the Upper Gulf Coast) and others across the Cotton Belt has shown that feeding on bolls less than 12 days old can result in abscission. When stinkbugs attack older bolls they will remain on the plant, but will cause damage to seed, lint staining and yield reductions. Stink bugs can damage bolls that are less than 22 to 24 days old or have not reached 450 heat units of age. Because stink bugs are very mobile, scouting can be a difficult task. One scouting method is to examine six row feet at several locations in the field. When there is an average of one or more stink bugs per six feet of row, you have reached the threshold and both nympths and adults can inflict damage. However, according to Fromme, the best method for determining stinkbug infestations is to examine bolls for external and internal damage. Stinkbugs cause a "wart-like" structure to form on the internal carpel wall. When 20 percent of "quarter-sized" bolls show internal damage insecticide applications are justified. Research has shown that Bidrin, Vydate and Orthene are effective on both brown and southern green stinkbugs, while pyrethroids are effective on the southern green stinkbug only. Although stinkbugs can be somewhat of a "phantom pest", sampling bolls to determine internal damage takes much of the guesswork out of the process.