

Suwannee Valley Watermelon Crop Update- May 9th, 2020
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This update is for your urgent attention:

Downy mildew update

Powdery mildew continues

Rindworms starting to be more of a concern

Hello watermelon growers and allied industry as well. I am providing this update a little earlier as a result of spending the day yesterday with Mark Warren (separate vehicles, of course) surveying fields for diseases. This update is provided by your Extension agents in the Suwannee Valley and IFAS state Extension specialists.

Disease update: This is a critical time and diseases are of greater concern now. Powdery mildew continues and downy mildew has gotten started too.

Downy and Powdery Mildew: There have been several confirmations of the incidence of downy mildew this past week (thanks to Anthony Drew and Mark Warren for their keen eyes on this). This is the disease traditionally known as “wildfire” and arrived last year this same time of year. Because of the high risk of damage and movement throughout the region, we are expressing our highest level of concern to plan to spray if you have not already initiated a program targeted at downy mildew, especially in the southern parts of the Suwannee Valley region (Levy and Gilchrist County is where the confirmations were found). However, it is expected to continue to move north to Suwannee, Lafayette, Columbia and Union Counties next. Contact your Extension Agent if you see areas of the field where the plants look blighted (dried up leaves sticking straight up in the mid part of the canopy). The leaves in more advanced stages will quickly become “crispy” with the leaf veins being the only part of the leaf to become crispy and dry. You should consider adding one of these two to your program this week. The two best choices are Ranman or Orondis Ultra and should be added to a broader spectrum mancozeb (Manzate or Penncozeb) spray plus either Quintec, Procure, or Torino for the continued pressure from powdery mildew. Good luck with this additional challenge. For those fields where downy has been confirmed, we have suggested starting with Orondis Ultra this week and Ranman next week. Where downy mildew has not yet been detected, you could start with Ranman or Orondis Ultra. It appears we are past any serious bacterial threat and I suggest dropping copper out of your program.

Rindworms: We are getting reports now of rindworm feeding damage. It is worth repeating, management strategies are much more complicated now due to new label restrictions to protect pollinators (that is a good thing). Once we get high pressure and you begin to see more symptoms of damage, the better materials include the higher labeled rates Intrepid or Coragen (as a spray only) which are also safe to pollinators. Do not use pyrethroids (bifenthrin, Asana, Lambda, etc.) for control of

rindworms as there is a very high level of resistance to that class and they are very toxic to bees. Contact us if problems persist. I can only say, it is much easier to prevent rindworms than to clean them up once they start.

Summary: As we approach harvest, it appears that our spray programs will have to be ramped up and will be expensive. I wish we could “hedge our bets” somewhat, however, the three main concerns are **downy mildew, powdery mildew and rindworms**, and unfortunately, none of these three problems can be hedged. We will have to manage these straight on with the best materials available and try to protect against them preventatively.