

Field Notes  
April 24, 2009  
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I did not publish any Field Notes the last couple of weeks because everything had stopped as cold weather and rain moved into the state. That was the lull before the storm. In spite of from 3.5 to 7 inches of rain last weekend I had to use the “F” word in two of our verification fields. I had to recommend flushing. In both instances it was to soften the crust that formed after the heavy rain then subsequent high winds that dried the surface into a hard crust. I might be acting over cautiously, but if we do not start out with a decent stand we have to start over or live with reduced yield potential from day one.

We looked at a field that was water seeded into clear water with presprouted seed. The field was drained at the right time, but heavy rains followed on two consecutive weekends. What resulted was one of the worst cases of seed drift I have seen. To add insult to injury he flew in additional seed which did little good because almost none of it survived. We suspect cold and water mold were the culprits. The whole thing started because the seedbed slicked over after flooding and rainfall. In the photo at right are the tracks made by a seismograph crew when they walked through the field. In the background every depression is outlined with rice. The rest is bare soil.



On Thursday, April 16, we visited our verification field in Evangeline parish to check water level. At that time it was exactly what we needed. About seven inches later it looked like the plants on the right. When it looks like this the best to do is nothing. If the field is drained and the blades stick to the soil it is much more difficult for the rice to recover. In fact we had a couple of high spots that were exposed so we were going to add a half pound of zinc chelate and raise the water level a little. I was a little hesitant on the zinc, but the soil has a high pH and it should perk it up a little.

This field is the first one this grower has tried pinpoint flooding. So far we have **no herbicide** on the field and no weeds. I do expect we will eventually have to apply something. The farmer has seen the advantages of weed control and the disadvantages of getting and keeping the water just right. We will let you know how it all turns out.



On the next page are a series of photographs of a “new weed”. At least it is new to me. Dr. Harrell asked me to take a look at his plots on the station to help him make a decision on herbicide application. When he showed the no till plots to me they were all covered with the weed you see. They looked like the top left photograph. I had no idea what it was. We were able to find plants in flower so I planned to go out the next morning, collect some plants, and try to key them out. When I returned to the plots none were in flower. I knew some plants flower at different times of the day so I went back in late afternoon and sure enough the flowers were open. In spite of its unusual leaves (filiform (long and skinny) and arranged in whorl at each node) the flowers were very simple enabling me to key them out. I confirmed the identity with a real taxonomist. According to the USDA’s plant database it has been reported in Lafayette and Acadia parishes and six other parishes.

The common names include Corn Spurry, Devil’s Gut, Pickpurse and Sandweed. The appropriate common name is Corn Spurry. The scientific name is *Spergula arvensis*. I hope it is just an oddity and not the beginning of another problem. Because it is flowering now it must be a cool season species. In addition, the plots are all drill seeded and a delayed flood is planned. I suspect flooding will probably do them in. A gallon of propanil + 1.5 pints of Basagran did not kill it. However, the crop oil was omitted from the mix and that could have played a role.





A number of years ago someone with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality told me the designated use of the streams (a.k.a. bayous, coulees, canals) were classified as “recreational”. Because of that classification rice fields came under scrutiny and the LSU AgCenter eventually developed some of the guidelines we use today to reduce the sediment loading of the streams. That was a good thing to do.

However, when one of our verification farmers pumped water from one of these “pristine” streams he loaded up his rice field (at least within 50 feet of the riser) with everything from the ubiquitous beer can to six species of fish (carp, catfish, brim, sac-au-lait, Choupique, and gar) and congo eels or lamper eels. These are really large salamanders and contrary to tradition are not poisonous but can inflict a painful bite. They are also supposed to be edible. I’ll never know on purpose.

All of this detritus had taken on a wonderful aroma which brought the last critter and one of his/her siblings out to enjoy the buffet.

I know this does not have anything to do with rice, but I could not pass it up.