

Field Notes  
June 9, 2008  
Johnny Saichuk



Last week we were called to a field to diagnose and recommend a course of action to control a grass. It was the first time I have seen a rice field completely infested with the grass shown in these photographs. The massive rhizomes in the photo at right are very diagnostic. The panicles shown in the lower right hand photo confirm its identity. The individual plant shown below is so general in appearance as to be confused with several species. The grass is Torpedograss. It can take on many forms. I have seen it in rice on occasion, but only in scattered areas where it can be as tall as rice. It is a perennial problem in turf even on golf greens mowed to extremely short heights. We do not have a current recommendation for this pest because we have not been able to evaluate it. We'll tell you if what we tried works.





Every year near mid-season we begin to see plants like the two shown above where lower leaves “fire” especially on one side of the leaf blade. This is a consequence of the feeding of what I have called Black Rice Bugs in the past. Some question of the correct identity of these bugs has been brought up, so we collected several to be taken to a specialist in taxonomy of stink bugs and their relatives. Regardless of identity, they cause sporadic injury and seldom if ever warrant control measures.

The third photograph is of a sugarcane borer in rice. This has become the most common borer in rice over the past few years. If you are in the western parishes and you find a borer that is not quite like this one in that instead of dots down its back it has what looks like two rows of dashes let us know. We are on the lookout for the Mexican rice borer which so far has not crossed the Sabine River.





We are finding a lot of rice at or beyond the growth stage shown at left. The left most plant has a panicle about 2 mm (about 1/16 inch) long and the one next to it about 4 mm long. The panicle 2 mm stage is also called panicle differentiation because it is the stage at which the terminal bud has developed the extremely miniature panicle that can be seen with a 10X hand lens. The panicle at right is 4 mm long and the individual panicle branches can be seen without magnification.

Below is a panicle about 2 inches long. When panicles an inch long or longer can be found we start using the term “boot” to refer to the formation of the panicle within the flag leaf sheath. The flag leaf is the last leaf to form; its sheath is the boot. Plants with small panicles like this one are said to be in “early boot”.

Boot stages are used to time fungicide applications. This was discussed at length last week. As I have told several callers, I do not get real precise about panicle length because there is so much variation within a field and panicle development at this time is very rapid. The point is to use common sense. When using a fungicide that contains propiconazole it must not be applied to any heads. So it is timed for late boot applications to prevent Narrow Brown Leaf Spot complex, Kernel Smut and False Smut none of which give us any real warning. If these diseases are not a problem or if no propiconazole use is intended then other fungicides can be applied to headed rice based on severity of disease development.

