CONCEPT TO DELIVERY: A POCKET-SIZED DECISION AID FOR STINK BUG SCOUTING IN THE SOUTHEAST

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<u>Abstract</u>

A pocket-sized scouting device was developed and distributed in 2010 for use in the Southeast to encourage 1) a higher adoption of stink bug scouting in cotton, 2) better field identification of boll damage symptoms, and 3) that proper scouting protocols are followed, The template described herein is based on a new dynamic threshold and is designed to be an essentially "self-contained" scouting guide. This plastic scouting tool provides a "dynamic threshold by week of bloom" table, lists scouting procedures, provides measuring holes to help select the correct boll size range for damage assessments, and contains images of internal and external boll damage. The device should improve stink bug management based on the stages of maximum crop susceptibility through lower thresholds during weeks 3 through 5 of the bloom period and utilizing higher thresholds during cotton stages of lower vulnerability to stink bug damage (weeks 1 to 2 and weeks 6 to 9 of the bloom period).

One side of the 3x5-inch scouting device lists the recommended dynamic threshold by week of bloom. The asterisks for weeks 4 and 5 of the bloom period permit nuances in scouting frequency recommendations by the various SE states. The template holes provides cotton scouts with an efficient method of ensuring they sample correct sized bolls. Scouts should target bolls with an outside diameter between 0.9 to 1.1 inches. Bolls in this diameter range are best correlated with recent stink bug damage. All internal boll wall surfaces must be inspected for internal warts and the locks examined for stained lint. A brief outline of the recommended scouting procedures is listed on the left side of the front face of the field guide. These recommended procedures include selecting bolls in the correct size range, assessing an adequate sample size of bolls, examining externally damaged bolls first to determine if the internal damage threshold is met prior to opening all of the sampled bolls, and treating only if the threshold has been met for that week. The reverse side of the scouting template provides images of internal warts, stained lint and external damage symptoms. The devices are fitted with lanyards that are worn around the scouts' necks; they have quick disconnects adjacent to the cards to facilitate using the device for boll sizing.

These plastic cards were produced for each of the Southeast states (VA; 300, SC; 700; NC: 1,000 and GA; 2,000) with their respective extension logos in the spring of 2010 and distributed to county agents, consultants, and summer scouts for use during the growing season. Current plans are to produce additional set field templates for the 2011 season, evaluate the applicability of these cards in the Midsouth, and conduct a thorough evaluation of the impact of these cards in addressing the three goals stated above.

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