

**CONTROLLING BOLLWORMS AND FALL ARMYWORMS IN NON-BT COTTON****Dustin Patman****Texas AgriLife Extension Service****Crosbyton, TX****Scott Russell****Texas AgriLife Extension Service****Brownfield, TX****Manda Anderson****Texas AgriLife Extension Service****Seminole, TX****Brant Baugh****Texas AgriLife Extension Service****Lubbock, TX****David Kerns****Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center****Lubbock, TX****Abstract**

Non-Bt cotton comprises approximately 50% of the cotton acreage planted in the Texas High Plains. Damage caused by bollworms, *Helioverpa zea*, and fall armyworms, *Spodoptera fugiperda*, often results in significant yield loss. Prior to August, populations are predominantly bollworms, but by mid-August populations are often mixed with both species. Pyrethroids used to control bollworms work well but are weak on controlling fall armyworms. Armyworm materials also tend to be weak on bollworms. The objective of this study was to evaluate the efficacy of new insecticidal chemistries on mixed populations of bollworms and fall armyworms in non-Bt cotton. Three tests were conducted in 2010-2011 in the Texas High Plains. Pyrethroids were found to be effective towards bollworms but ineffective towards fall armyworms. Benevia (cyazapyr) was found to be effective towards bollworms but was not evaluated against fall armyworms. Blackhawk (spinosad) was ineffective towards bollworms but was not tested against fall armyworm. Prevathon (rynaxypyr) was effective towards both bollworms and fall armyworms. When used alone, Belt (flubendiamide) was considered weak against bollworms and fall armyworms, but was highly effective when tank-mixed with a pyrethroid.

**Introduction**

Non-Bt cotton comprises approximately 50% of the cotton acreage planted in the Texas High Plains. Damage caused by bollworms, *Helioverpa zea*, and fall armyworms, *Spodoptera fugiperda*, often result in significant yield loss. Prior to August, populations are predominantly bollworms, but by mid-August populations are often mixed with both species. Pyrethroids used to control bollworms work well but are weak on controlling fall armyworms. Armyworm materials also tend to be weak on bollworms.

Over the past six years there has been an increase in fall armyworm numbers in the Texas High Plains. It is often difficult to differentiate between bollworms and fall armyworms when they are small; therefore, deciding on the appropriate insecticide to use comes into question.

**Materials and Methods**

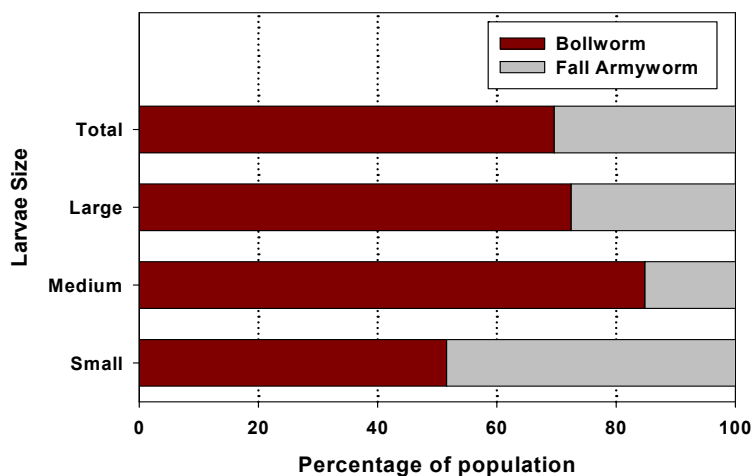
Three tests were conducted in 2010-2011 in the Texas High Plains. All test locations were center pivot irrigated. The first test was conducted in 2010 in Loop, TX. The tests in 2011 were conducted in Brownfield, TX and Hobbs, NM. The 2010 Loop, TX test was planted on 7 May. The 2011 Brownfield, TX was planted on 15 May. Both were planted using 40-inch row spacing. The Hobbs, NM test was planted on 24 May using 36-inch row spacing.

In all tests, plots were 4 rows wide x 50 ft long. Plots were arranged in a randomized complete block design with 4 replicates. All treatments were applied with a CO<sub>2</sub> pressurized hand boom, which was calibrated to deliver 10 gallons/acre. The boom consisted of two hollow cone TX-6 nozzles per row, spaced at 20 inches. All four rows of each plot were treated; data was collected from the middle two rows of each plot.

Worm populations were counted by making whole plant inspections on 10 plants per plot. Due to lower worm numbers in the Brownfield test, 20 plants per plot were counted. All count data were analyzed using ANOVA, and means were separated using an F protected LSD ( $P \leq 0.05$ ).

### **Results and Discussion**

In 2010, August 17 pre-treatment counts of total larvae did not significantly differ between treatments. The worm population for this test was estimated to be ~70% bollworms (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Species composition at Loop, TX 2010**

At 7-DAT, all of the treatments had fewer medium and large bollworms than the untreated, with the exception of Belt at the lower rate (2.0 fl-oz/acre). There were no differences among the other treatments. Belt is thought to be more efficacious toward fall armyworms than bollworms. As expected, at its lowest labeled rate, Belt did not provide effective bollworm control (Figure 2).

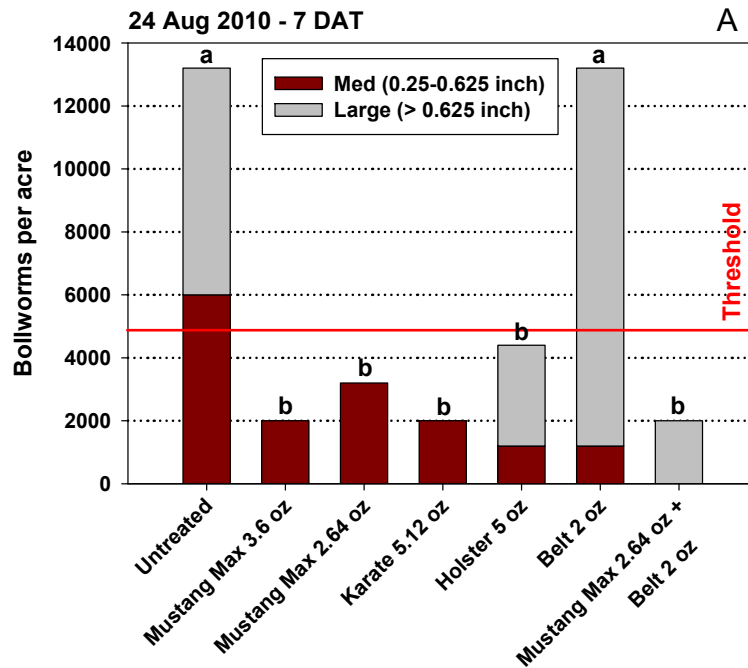


Figure 2. Number of bollworms per acre at 7-DAT. Loop, TX 2010. Bars capped the same letter are not significantly different.

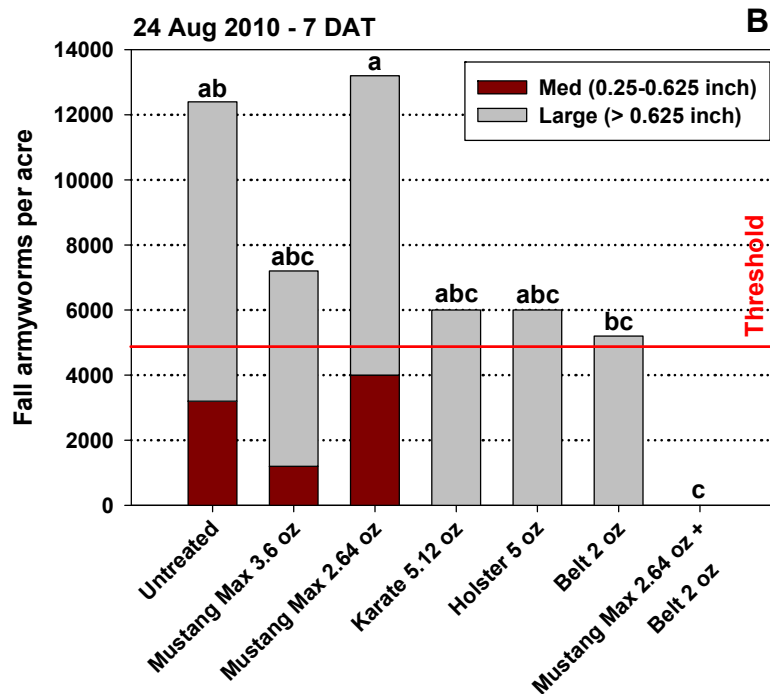
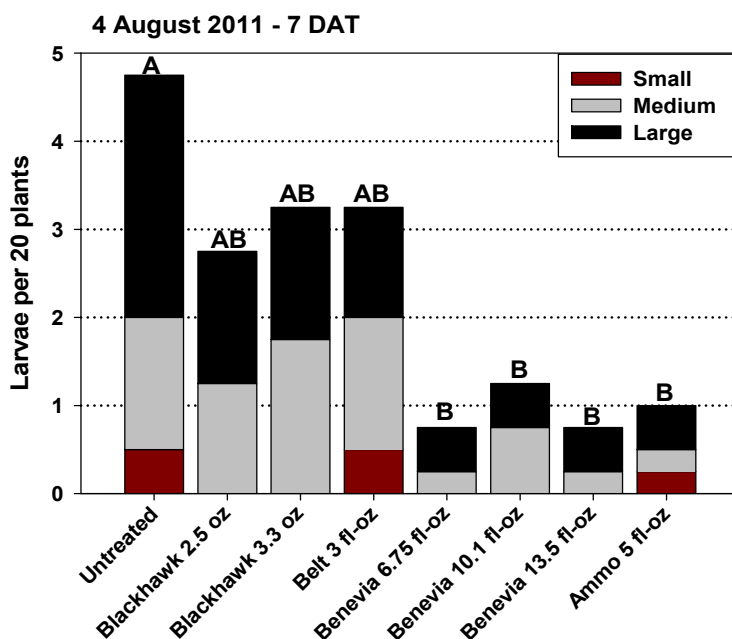


Figure 3. Number of fall armyworms at 7-DAT. Loop, TX 2010. Bars capped by the same letter are not significantly different.

Against fall armyworms, the only treatment that differed from the untreated was the tank mix of Mustang Max + Belt. Pyrethroids are generally considered weak against fall armyworms. Belt is known to have activity toward fall armyworms, but activity in cotton is uncertain. In this test Belt at the low rate (2.0 fl-oz/acre) failed to achieve

adequate control (Figure 3).

In Brownfield, TX 2011, July 27 pre-treatment counts of total larvae did not significantly differ between treatments. The worm population in this test was comprised of all bollworms. Due to the low infestation, 20 plants per plot were sampled. In 2010, at the low labeled rate (2.0 fl-oz/acre), Belt did not show adequate control of bollworms or fall armyworms. In 2011, Belt was added to the treatment list using the high labeled rate (3.0 fl-oz/acre). At 7-DAT, Blackhawk at the low and high rates and Belt at the high rate did not significantly differ from the untreated check. However, Benevia at the low, medium, and high rates, and the standard pyrethroid Ammo were significantly different from the untreated check. As mentioned above, Belt did not perform well at the low rate; however, the high rate of Belt did not perform as expected on controlling bollworms (Figure 4).



**Figure 4. Number of larvae per 20 plants at 7-DAT. Brownfield, TX 2011. Bars capped by the same letter are not significantly different**

In Hobbs, NM 2011, August 18 pre-treatment counts of total larvae showed no significant differences between treatments. The worm population at this test site was estimated to ~60% fall armyworms (Figure 5).

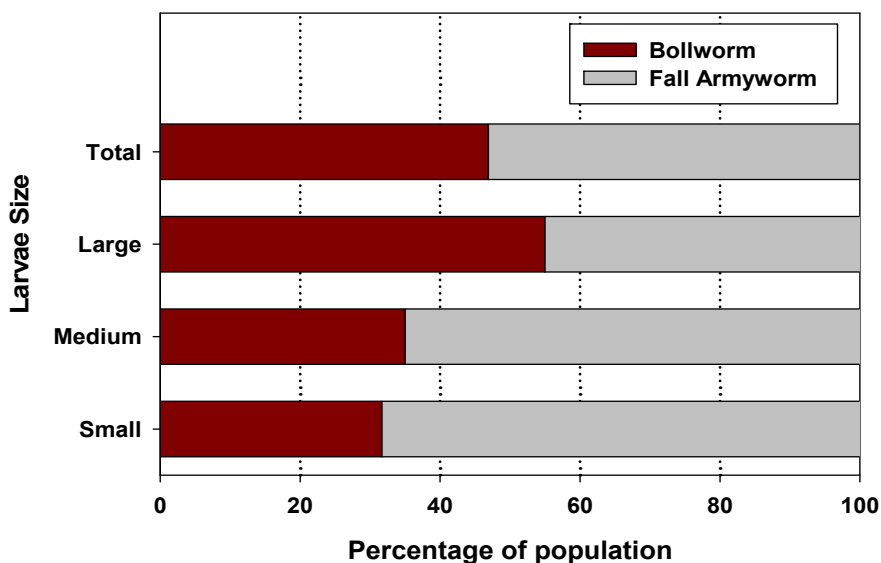


Figure 5. Percentage of population. Hobbs, NM 2011.

At 11-DAT, all treatments had fewer medium and large bollworms than the untreated check. Although Belt did significantly differ from the untreated check, it still did not provide adequate control of bollworms. However, Prevathon and Mustang Max demonstrated good control against bollworms (Figure 6).

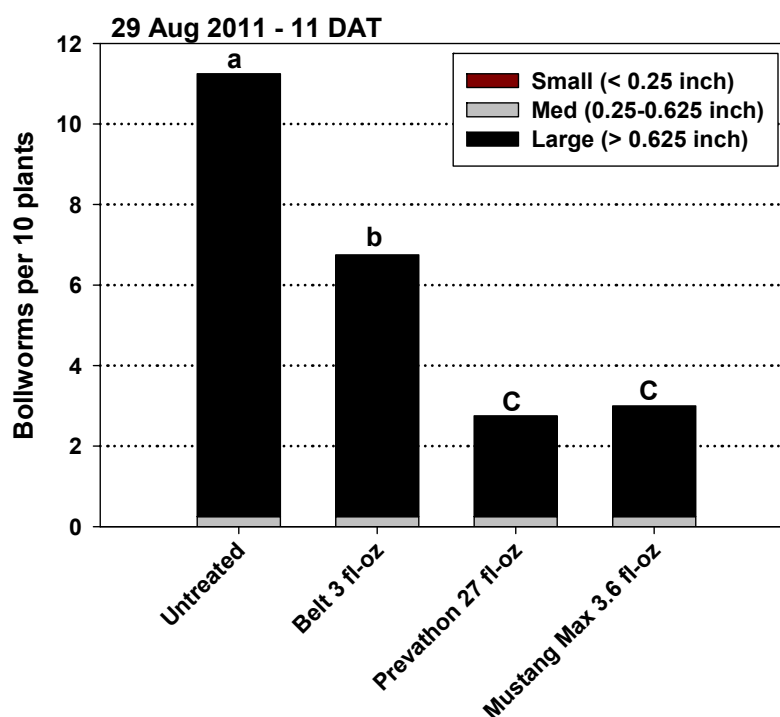
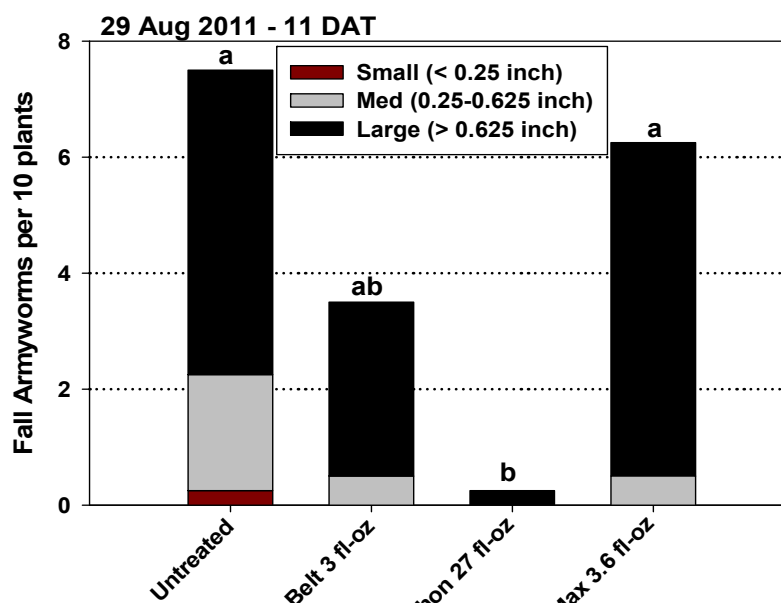


Figure 6. Number of bollworms per 10 plants at 7-DAT. Hobbs, NM 2011. Bars capped by the same letter are not significantly different.

Against fall armyworms, the only treatment to differ from the untreated check was Prevathon. As expected, pyrethroids tend to be weaker toward fall armyworms than bollworms. However, Belt at the high rate (3.0 fl-oz/acre) did not provide proper control of fall armyworms (Figure 7). Based on these data, Belt should be mixed with a pyrethroid when targeting mixed populations of bollworms and fall armyworms in cotton.



**Figure 7. Number of fall armyworms per 10 plants at 7-DAT. Hobbs, NM 2011. Bars capped by the same letter are not significantly different.**

### Summary

As expected the pyrethroids in all three tests continue to be highly effective towards controlling bollworms. In all three tests where Belt was tested at both the low (2 fl-oz/ac) and high rate (3 fl-oz/ac), it appeared to be weak towards controlling both bollworms and fall armyworms. However, when mixed with a pyrethroid, it was highly effective towards both species. Prevathon at a high rate (27 fl-oz/ac) was significantly different when compared to the untreated check in controlling both bollworms and fall armyworms. Benevia, at the low (6.75 fl-oz/ac), medium (10.1 fl-oz/ac) and high (13.5 fl-oz/ac) rates, was only tested against bollworms and it appeared effective in that test. Benevia could possibly be efficacious towards fall armyworms but more research would need to be conducted. Blackhawk, at both the high rate (3.3 fl-oz/ac) and low rate (2.5 fl-oz/ac), was not significantly different from the untreated check and does not look to be a promising material for controlling bollworms.

### Acknowledgements

This project was funded in part by Plains Cotton Growers, Inc.