



Sugarcane Aphid Update for 2016

There have been questions about sugarcane aphid infestations and if we should be concerned in sorghum in far northwest Kansas about this pest.

The sugarcane aphid, although found in the United States since 1977, has become an economically significant pest of grain sorghum in recent years. It was first found feeding on sorghum in Mexico in 2013 and it quickly spread from there.

It is a small pest, about 1/8 inch long and is pale yellow in color. It may be winged or without wings. If you look at it with the naked eye, it may just look like a plain yellow aphid. Look at it under a magnifying glass and you will see its identifying characteristics - dark cornicles (tailpipes) and dark socks on feet (Figure 1).

The sugarcane aphid is found in all sorghum producing states. It was found throughout the central corridor of Kansas in 2016. There were also late infestations found in Decatur and Graham Counties found in mid-November 2016 (Figure 2). These late season infestations were likely due to the warm and open fall that we experienced. However, sugarcane aphid was not positively identified by K-State in Wallace, Sherman or Cheyenne (or neighboring) Counties!

The sugarcane aphid is not adapted to survive the cold winters of Kansas. It survives on green sorghum plant tissue, as the aphids have been doing in south Texas. So, when all of the green sorghum plant material was gone in Kansas, so were the aphids. Therefore, they move into Kansas every year. Their pattern of infestation may be different, but likely not make it to our area in normal years.

The main challenge with sugarcane aphids is the large amounts of honeydew they secrete, when feeding on sorghum. This sticky substance is very detrimental to harvest. It creates sticky combines and headers and makes threshing nearly impossible.

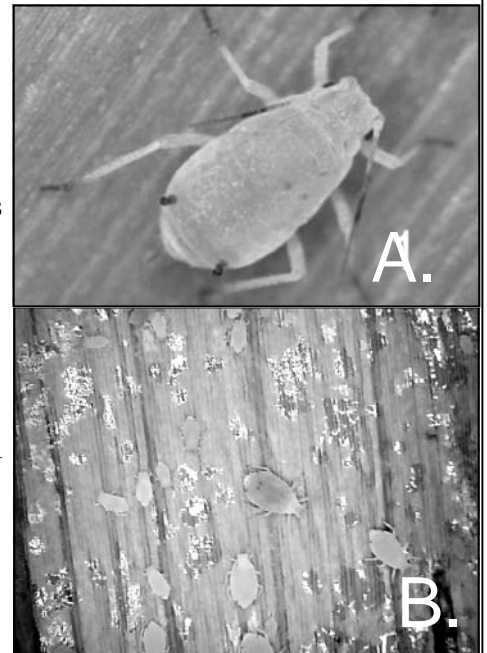


Figure 1. A. Sugarcane Aphid. Distinguishing characteristics are dark tailpipes and dark socks. B. Aphids and Honeydew. Shiny honeydew from sugarcane aphid secretions create challenging harvest.

There are limited treatment options with this pest and K-State is currently researching other compounds. Sivanto 200 SL, an insecticide is currently labeled, provides control of the sugarcane aphid. Transform is an insecticide that was previously labeled, but is no longer.

Hybrid resistance is also an important part of combatting this pest. K-State sorghum breeders & seed companies rate hybrids this last year and will have that data for selecting seed.

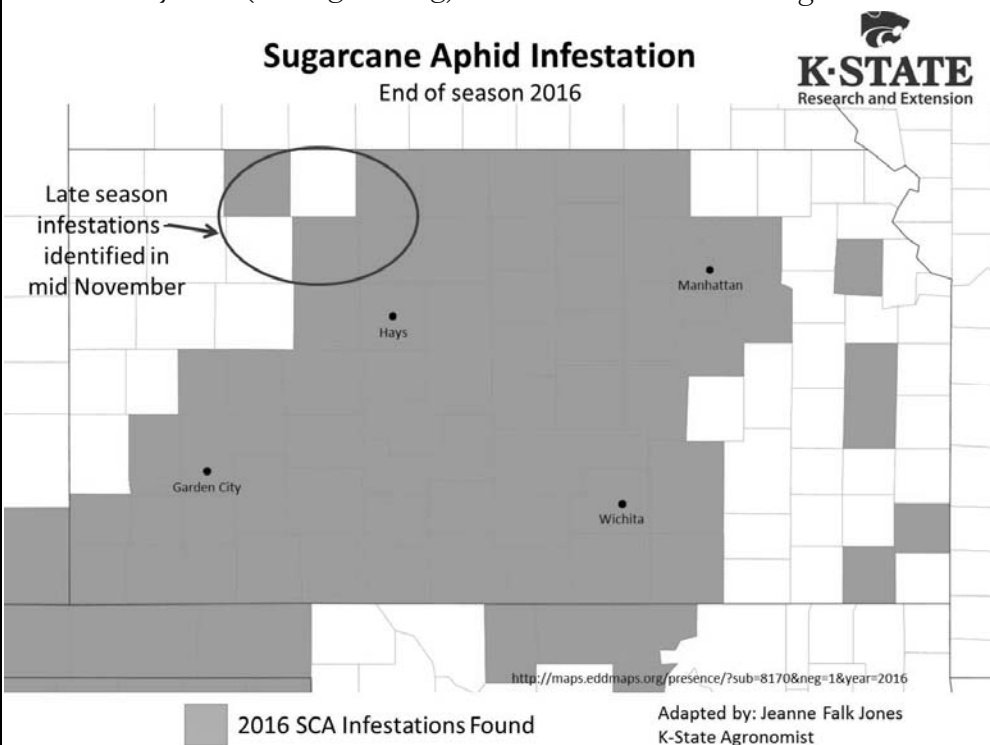


Figure 2. Map of Sugarcane Aphid Infestations At End of Season 2016. This reflects the late infestations of sugarcane aphids with the warm and open fall, allowing continued spread throughout the fall.