

News Column
Stacy Campbell
K-State Research & Extension
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Sugarcane aphid now confirmed in 8 Kansas counties

Sugarcane aphid (SCA) infestations were confirmed on commercial grain sorghum fields near the Sumner/Cowley County border during the week of July 18-22. Based on the size of the aphid populations observed, which included several plants that were producing winged aphids, this field was first infested approximately 3-4 weeks ago, according to KSU Extension Entomologists. A significant number of natural enemies were observed feeding on aphids, which can help slow aphid growth.

As of August 3rd SCA has been confirmed in additional counties in Kansas: Marion, Sedgwick, Labette, Meade, Haskell, and Ford. Populations first reported in Sumner and Cowley counties have reached threshold levels (30% of plants infested with visible signs of honeydew on leaves) and are being treated with insecticides. Scouting fields early will help determine the need for an insecticide application before losses occur. Treating too soon will increase the chance additional insecticide treatments are needed, as populations can rebound based on immigration events. Scout often, as densities can change quickly.

Furthermore SCA can pose significant yield loss to milo all the way through soft dough stage. During heading, up to 67% yield loss with no treatment if populations reach economic threshold levels and 21% yield loss at soft dough stage if left untreated.

A new web based resource has been created by the K-State Research & Extension Entomology department. It has many resources available, one of its' main purposes is for producers, consultants, and county agents to be able to submit reports/findings of field crop pests in Kansas and to receive notifications, at real time. For myFields.info users, submit reports using the Pest Sampler module (https://www.myfields.info/pest_sampler). To receive pest alerts about sugarcane aphid, create an account (<https://www.myfields.info/user/register>) and include your state and county information to receive notifications specific to your area.

When scouting, make sure you correctly identify the SCA. It can be confused with greenbugs or yellow sugarcane aphid. The SCA is light yellow, with dark, paired "tailpipes" called cornicles and dark "feet" called tarsi. Greenbugs have dark feet, dark antennae, but light colored cornicles (tail pipes). Greenbugs will often have a green stripe down their backs, but this can be hard to see in light-colored aphids. The SCA also has dark feet and darker antennae; however it has dark cornicles and no green stripe down its back. The yellow sugarcane aphid is bright yellow with many hairs on its body and no extended cornicles. It is very hard to see these differences without a magnifying lens.

Quite a bit was learned in Kansas last year about treatment thresholds and management of the SCA on sorghum. The current guidelines and how to identify the SCA are available on <https://www.myfields.info/sca/> or by contacting your local County Extension Office.

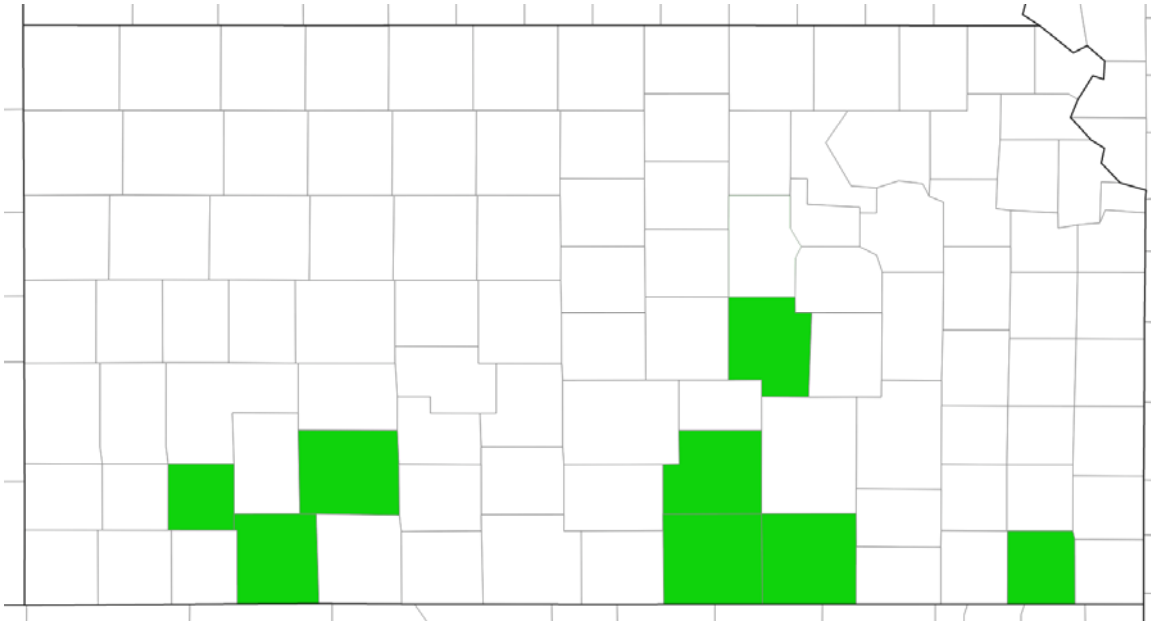


Figure 1. Current counties in Kansas confirmed with sugarcane aphid in green.

Two insecticides, Sivanto 200 SL, and Transform WD, provide superior control of SCA. Sivanto can be applied at 4-7 fluid ounces per acre. Transform WG can be applied at 0.75-1.5 oz. per acre. It is important to achieve complete coverage of the crop in order to obtain the most effective control. It is recommended to apply 15 -20 gallons of water from a ground rig. Application from the air is less effective, as it will not permit application of these materials in sufficient volume to obtain the coverage necessary for good efficacy. Based on field trials Transform, is the least toxic alternative for aphid natural enemies.

One of the problems some producers in Kansas faced last year was what to do if both headworms (also known as corn earworm) and SCA were present at treatment thresholds. Sivanto and Transform are not effective on headworms. The pyrethroid insecticides most commonly used for headworm control, methomyl and chlorpyrifos, are effective against the SCA, but will also kill beneficial insects. It was not uncommon last year to see SCA populations explode a few days after the application of a pyrethroid insecticide. Flubendiamide (Belt), chlorantraniliprole (Prevathon), and spinosad (Blackhawk) are non-pyrethroid insecticides which are effective on headworms, but have low impact on beneficial insects. Prevathon has been found to be compatible with Transform in a tank mix; all other combinations should be tested first for compatibility by mixing small amounts in a jar to ensure no precipitate forms. Read the label carefully before you spray.

If sorghum has to be treated more than once or twice with an insecticide, producers may hesitate since the cost can add up quickly. However, SCA and headworms can cause significant yield losses, which can make the field even less profitable than if multiple insecticide applications were made to help protect yields. It's not an easy choice to make, by any means.

For more information on sampling procedures, action thresholds, or effective insecticides, visit <https://www.myfields.info/sca/>

Information provided by K-State Extension Entomologists.

