

TAKEAWAYS



Cross-Commodity Management of Silverleaf Whitefly in Georgia

Phillip Roberts

*Professor and Extension Entomologist,
University of Georgia, Tifton*

- The sweet potato whitefly (*Bemisia tabaci*), also known as the silverleaf whitefly (SLWF), is an economically important pest and must be managed to preserve yield and quality.
- SLWF reproduces on more than 500 plant hosts and remains active year-round in Georgia. Populations move from one cropping system to another according to a seasonal cycle.
- Cotton is a preferred host of SLWF during the summer, and growers should make all efforts to minimize the risk of infestation. Risk factors include leaf pubescence (hairiness), late planting, and proximity to SLWF-infested crops.
- Environmental factors that influence SLWF population development include winter freezes and tropical weather systems.
- Management of SLWF in individual cropping systems affects infestations in subsequent systems because of the whiteflies' movement. Failure to properly manage SLWF in any one of these systems can have negative consequences in subsequent systems.
- The goal of cross-commodity management programs is to minimize SLWF populations across all cropping systems:
 - In-season management practices should include IPM (conservation of natural enemies, proper timing and location of plantings) and frequent scouting and timely applications of insecticides.
 - Postharvest management practices should include thorough and timely destruction of host crops.
- In cotton, the objective of managing SLWF with insecticides is to initiate control measures just before the period of most rapid population development. Timing of initial applications is critical and relies on frequent scouting and use of thresholds.
- Management of SLWF in cotton must include defoliation and picking cotton in a timely manner. Late defoliation extends the time that bolls are exposed to honeydew and allows buildup of the SLFW population.
- Management of SLWF must be a priority in all agronomic and horticultural crops. Cross-commodity cooperation and management will benefit all Georgia growers.