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## Panhandle Agriculture Crop Alert

### Current Crop Alerts for NW Florida

Provided By Your County Extension Agents in Northwest Florida

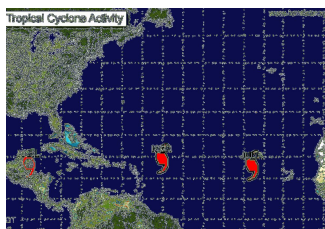


Photo Credits: NOAA, National Hurricane Center

## Weather, Weather Everywhere - But Little Rain For Florida Producers

Weather is still the big story for north Florida farmers and ranchers, and most everyone else in the area. The Atlantic hurricane season at its' peak, but panhandle producers are ensconced under a massive high pressure pool of air. The good news is the dry air is keeping tropical weather systems pushed out into the Atlantic or south into Central America, so far. The bad news is hot, dry air and ill timed rains earlier in the season have been hard on crops. Weather systems have combined to stress crops, promote the growth of mold, and encourage a rouge's gallery of voracious and highly prolific insects.

Hay producers and cattlemen have endured wave after wave of army worms, beating back each assault all-the-while knowing more would appear. Cotton and peanut producers have scouts checking fields and taking samples to monitor the progress of an assortment of opportunistic molds. Even the toxic weeds are putting on their most attractive features in a collective effort to spread their genes by tempting livestock to consume and distribute seed.

Hardship, uncertainty, challenges, and lurking disaster—sounds like a normal year in agriculture. To learn more read on...

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Dry Weather Has Limited Washington County Hay

Photo Credits: Les Harrison

## Washington County Suffering With Dry Spell

**Issue/Alert Affecting Crop:** Drought conditions are taking a toll on pasture, peanuts, soybeans & cotton. Wayne Branch at the Marianna NFREC has stated August 2010 set the record for lowest rainfall since weather records began there in 1952. Lack of rain and high temperatures, well into the 90's, are continuing to make a significant impact on crop yields.

Peanuts in some fields are pulling away from the shells and need to be dug. Normally they would stay in the ground three plus weeks longer before digging. Once the nut dries in the shell, it ceases to grow and mature. If a rain does come after it has dried, the moisture will cause it to sprout in the ground or pull off the vine. In this case it is better to dig early and take the discount in

grade, salvage what is available and stop the fungicide spraying expense. The heat has white mold becoming a growing problem in many fields where vines are deep.

The dry weather is causing soybeans to abort pods and there is significant concern the beans pods that don't abort

may only produce BB size seed, greatly reducing yield. Deer predation is still a significant problem in beans. Army worms are relentless and many cattlemen are concerned they may not have enough hay for the winter. Most area cattlemen have little-to-no stockpiled grass for the coming fall. Local producers are weaning even spring born calves in an effort to put weight on brood cows before winter. Sale barns are seeing a significant increase in cow herd dispersals from area cattlemen looking to the fall and winter with limited feed reserves. This could certainly impact cattle prices early.

Corn harvest should finish up this week.

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Photo Credits: Dam Mullins

## Fall Primetime for Poisonous Plants

One side affect of autumn is slower growing and more stressed pasture grasses, while poisonous plants remain lush and more attractive to livestock. Of the several dozen poisonous plant species found in northwest Florida, many continue to grow and offer tempting fruits until frost arrives.

Livestock producers are encouraged to identify and control poisonous plants, annuals and perennials, in pastures and barnyards. Areas most prone to harboring toxic species include fence lines, dried up water holes, burn piles, last

winter's feeding sites, old trash piles and around the foundations of barns or other outbuildings.

Your UF\IFAS County Extension office has materials to help identify and control poisonous plants on the farm and ranch. Additionally, several IFAS Extension publications offer more detailed information. "Florida Poisonous Pasture Plants of Florida", SP457 is a laminated pocket-sized deck identifying 31 of Florida's most common Poisonous pasture weeds. For ordering go online to [ifasbooks](http://ifasbooks) or call 1-800-226-1764.

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New Queens Are Being Placed In Panhandle Hives When Needed

Photo Credits: Les Harrison

## Some Panhandle Bees Getting New Queens

**Issue/Alert Affecting Crop:** Bees in most areas are trying to keep the hive cool. The heat is delaying some mite treatments since some of the treatments are not recommend when temperatures are above 95 degrees. The dearth is strong outside the city and the heat and lack of rain is delaying the golden rod and aster bloom. Beekeepers should be checking their bee hive food stores and feeding if necessary. There have been reports of queenless colonies. If queenless hives have a good bee population than beekeepers can try to requeen. Weak and queenless colonies should be combined with stronger colonies as we are getting bees ready for the winter. Migratory beekeepers are moving their bees down state to Brazilian pepper.

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Photo Credits: Libbie Johnson

## Cotton Issues Continue in Escambia County

**Issue/Alert Affecting Crop:** In some areas of Escambia County, rainfall has been plentiful, while in others, rainfall has been lacking. Some cotton is showing signs of leaf spots in the form of stemphylium. This foliar disease starts out as spotting on leaves, progresses to necrotic areas, and eventually leads to defoliation and premature boll ripening. Farmers want to know if timely fungicide applications, foliar potassium applications, or any other procedure will limit the prevalence of the disorder.

**What Does The Specialist Say:** Cotton diseases are prevalent in years when there have been extended periods of wet weather. Areas of west Florida were

very wet for several weeks followed by periods of dry weather. Wet periods promote disease and the leaching of nutrients important for maintaining plant health, such as potassium. Foliar fungicides and adequate potassium will help control the disease. Headline is the only fungicide currently labeled for application on cotton. High potassium fertilizer prices and minimum fertilizer applications have probably resulted in an increase in cotton leaf diseases.

*David L. Wright, Ph.D. and Professor of Agronomy, UF/IFAS North Florida Research and Education Center*

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Photo Credits: Judy Ludlow

## Partridge Pea Problems in Calhoun County

**Issue/Alert Affecting Crop:** This field of partridge peas is being grown for seed to establish wildlife plots. The leaves are folded closed and browning. At least 85% of the field was affected. No nematodes were found and this variety of partridge pea is nematode resistant. Army worms were present and have been treated, but a tiny moth caterpillar was found folded inside the leaves. It may be this moth causing most of the damage. What is it and are there management recommendations?

**What Does The Specialist Say:** . The moth has been identified as a Cassia leaf-

folder, *Polyhymno luteostrigella*. It is 4 millimeters long and three could easily fit end to-end-on a dime. These moths range from Florida to Texas and north to Kentucky and Connecticut. A course of action for this crop/insect combination is currently being studied. *Hank Dankers, Plant Disease Diagnostician, UF/IFAS North Florida Research and Education Center*

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Florida's farmers and ranchers can now use MarketMaker to reach more buyers

Photo Credits: Les Harrison

## New Marketing Option for Florida Growers: MarketMaker

**Issue/Alert Affecting Crop:** I am a small specialty vegetable producer near Tallahassee. I am considering expanding my production next year, and wonder what new marketing options are available for a specialty crop producer. I am especially interested in internet outlets.

**What Does The Specialist Say:** The computer based **MarketMaker** program is about to be launched in Florida. It is an interactive nationwide mapping system that locates businesses and markets of agricultural products, providing an important link between producers and consumers. The goal of **MarketMaker** is

to make the site a resource for all businesses in the food supply chain. We are as interested in helping a grocery

store find farm-fresh produce items as we are helping the farmer find a place to sell them.

**MarketMaker** is rich with demographic and business data that the user can query. Details can be summarized on a map to show concentrations of consumer markets and strategic business partners. Census data is also a feature of the site. For example, a producer wanting to target Hispanic consumers can request a map showing the greatest concentration of upper-income Hispanic households, then request a complete demographic profile of those locations.

More information is available at: <http://fl.marketmaker.uiuc.edu/> *Allen F. Wysocki, Ph.D. Interim Associate Dean & Associate Professor, UF/IFAS College of Agricultural and Life Sciences*

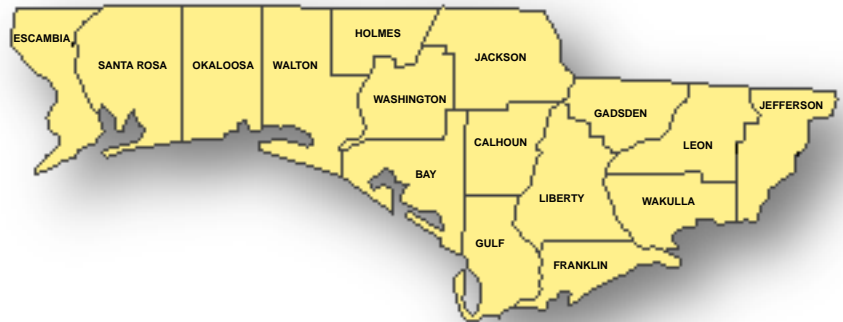
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Contact us for More Information or if You Have Any Questions

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