



Sugarcane Aphid Found in North Carolina Yesterday

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On July 6, 2016, NCSU Extension Entomologist Dominic Reisig reported that the sugarcane aphid (*Melanaphis sacchari*) was found in Stanly County, NC. We first detected this aphid in Virginia in late September 2015 (in Isle of Wight, Prince George, Southampton, Suffolk, Surry, and Sussex Counties), and with its ability to spread and reproduce rapidly, we recommend monitoring for this pest in Virginia sorghum fields.

The sugarcane aphid has recently made a host switch from sugarcane to sorghum (Reisig, 2015). Infestation can stunt or even kill sorghum plants that are in the pre-head stage and after heading the honeydew can interfere with mechanical harvest by plugging up combines. For more detailed information on the sugarcane aphid and its lifecycle please see *Sugarcane Aphid an Emerging Pest of Grain Sorghum* (Brown et al., 2015).

Once the aphid is present in sorghum fields, populations can increase rapidly. Therefore, scouting should begin immediately and be conducted at least weekly. Start with sorghum field edges, especially checking the underside of lower leaves. Once insects are found, scouting should be conducted at shorter intervals to actively monitor population growth. The economic thresholds for insecticide application are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Economic thresholds for treatment of sugarcane aphid in sorghum.

Growth Stage	Threshold
Pre-boot	20% infested plants with localized area of honeydew and established aphid colonies
Boot	20% infested plants with localized area of honeydew and established aphid colonies
Flowering-milk	30% infested plants with localized area of honeydew and established aphid colonies
Soft dough	30% infested plants with localized area of honeydew and established aphid colonies
Dough	30% infested plants with localized area of honeydew and established aphid colonies
Black layer	Heavy honeydew and established aphid colonies in head (treat to avoid problems at harvest)

Thresholds in this table were adapted from Sugarcane Aphid Now Present in NC-2016 by Dominic Reisig, Associate Professor and Extension Specialist, NCSU.

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In Virginia, two insecticides are recommended for sugarcane aphid control in sorghum, Sivanto (which has a FIFRA Section 2(ee) Recommendation for a reduced rate, including Virginia), and Transform WG (which is registered under a Section 18 emergency exemption for Virginia) (Table 2). Repeat applications should rotate chemistries. Good coverage of the plant with insecticides is essential for the effective control. A minimum spray volume of 10 gpa is recommended. Please be sure to carefully read and follow the label.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Insecticides with pyrethroid as the active ingredient are NOT recommended for the control of sugarcane aphid. The efficacy of pyrethroid insecticides against the sugarcane aphid is low and they negatively impact the population of natural predators. This often results in a rapid increase in sugarcane aphid populations immediately following application.

Table 2. Insecticides recommended for the control of sugarcane aphid in sorghum.

Insecticide	Active Ingredient	Application Rate	Max Annual Application Rate	Pre-Harvest Interval
		oz/A	oz/A/year	days
Sivanto	flupyradifurone	4-7	28	7 (forage) AND 21 (grain)
Transform WG	sulfoxaflor	0.75-1.5	3.0	7 (forage) AND 14 (grain)

For more information on the sugarcane aphid, please contact your local extension agent. Contact information can be found at <http://www.ext.vt.edu/offices/index.html>.

References and Resources

Brown, S., D. Kerns, and J. Beuzelin. 2015. [Sugarcane Aphid an Emerging Pest of Grain Sorghum](#). Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service Pub. 3369, Baton Rouge, LA.

Reisig, Dominic. 2015. [First Report of Sugarcane Aphid in NC Sorghum- Already Treating](#). NC Cooperative Extension, Entomology – Insect Biology and Management, Raleigh, NC.

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Sorghum Checkoff. 2016. [Defense Against the Sugarcane Aphid](#). United Sorghum Checkoff Program, Lubbock, TX.

This article was reviewed by Dominic Reisig, Associate Professor and Extension Specialist of Entomology, North Carolina State University, The Vernon James Research & Extension Center, Plymouth, NC.