

UPDATE ON APHIDS IN CALIFORNIA ALFALFA

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ABSTRACT

Spotted alfalfa aphids and blue alfalfa aphids have provided employment opportunities for U.S. entomologists for the past 75 and 50 years respectively. Much success in combatting these pests have been through the usage of resistant alfalfa varieties combined with beneficial insects and effective insecticides. The past two years have noted problems with all four of the main pest alfalfa aphids (pea aphid, blue alfalfa aphid, cowpea aphid and to a lesser extent spotted alfalfa aphid) in various parts of California. Winter rains and snows throughout much of California during the winters of 2022-2023, and 2023-2024 have also resulted in changes in normal aphid population peaks and dominant species in the low desert. Peaks of appearance and duration of cowpea aphid numbers were lower in desert alfalfa, and blue alfalfa aphids also had lower populations and developed damaging populations later than normal. Pea aphids were more numerous during the springs of 2023 and 2024 than in years without the winter rains, and were noted in some low desert areas through much of April, several weeks later than normal but allowed data on insecticide efficacy for this species to be developed using some previously unevaluated alfalfa aphicides. A currently unverified aphid (thought to be a *Macrosiphum* spp., awaiting species determination) was noted earlier in the year, preceding blue alfalfa aphids and pea aphids, and were present in adequate numbers for insecticide efficacy testing.

Key words: Alfalfa, aphids

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