

2004-2005 SMALL GRAIN PERFORMANCE TESTS

Edited by Paul A. Rose, J. LaDon Day, and Anton E. Coy

The Season

As the Fall of 2004 approached, small grain producers were enduring another very dry August and a potentially very dry small grain seeding season. Dry soils did not persist as Hurricane Frances blew into the state in early September bringing much needed moisture, but ideal field conditions did not last as soggy soil conditions became the norm during the latter part of September after two other Hurricanes, Ivan and Jeanne, followed Frances. Consequently, the effects of torrential rainfall and cloudy drizzle during the next two months delayed the planting of small grain over much of the state; planting of small grain was cancelled in some areas. Wheat acreage planted was 230,000 acres, a decrease of 30% from the previous year. Planted acres of oat and rye were 70,000 and 210,000, a decrease 10,000 and 20,000 acres, respectively.

Rainfall amounts recorded monthly at the six test locations during the 2004-2005 growing season are presented in the following table. Each of the five test locations in Georgia received below average rainfall during the nine month reporting period (average 13% less), while the Florida panhandle site at Marianna received above average (21%) rainfall during the same nine month period. Rainfall during a few of the months and for the season at the Floyd County site and the Limestone Valley area around Calhoun was far below average (about 15 inches less).

2004-2005 Rainfall¹

Month	Year	Calhoun ²	Griffin	Midville	Plains	Tifton	Marianna, FL ³
----- inches -----							
October	2004	1.50	3.41	01.91	0.61	1.03	3.55
November	2004	5.43	6.01	1.62	3.34	4.01	5.23
December	2004	3.42	2.22	1.59	2.21	1.98	2.52
January	2005	1.66	2.56	1.80	3.04	1.80	4.56
February	2005	3.44	5.02	5.56	3.13	2.81	2.67
March	2005	3.50	7.18	6.63	9.29	6.53	8.43
April	2005	3.39	4.91	3.39	5.30	5.96	7.82
May	2005	1.65	1.99	1.61	1.57	1.72	3.71
June	2005	3.35	4.60	5.59	2.56	7.23	8.33
Total (9 months)		27.34	37.90	29.7	31.05	33.07	46.82
Normal (9 months)		42.15	37.96	32.13	36.21	33.45	38.70

1. Data for Georgia sites collected by Dr. G. Hoogenboom, Griffin Campus, Griffin, GA.

2. Floyd County location.

3. University of Florida North Florida Research and Education Center location.

The 2004-2005 small grain growing season in Georgia was characterized by mild weather and intermittent dry and wet periods during the winter and spring. Lack of vernalization was a problem especially for late maturing varieties. The mild winter stimulated a buildup of insect populations. Most small grain diseases were a problem throughout the growing season. One disease, stripe rust on wheat, continues to increase in intensity. Plant resistance is the sole control for stripe rust; therefore, wheat breeders have redoubled their efforts to find varietal resistance.

The small grain crops were in great shape during the two months before harvest was to begin in late May to early June. A record crop of wheat was anticipated but by early June wet weather had returned to the state. Tropical downpours and persistent drizzle and cloudy weather throughout the month of June delayed harvest due to wet soil and caused high grain moisture and seed sprouting in the grain head. Grain quality declined dramatically and many acres of small grain were abandoned. All of our sites in the variety testing program experienced some weather related problems, but the one with the most consequences was the wheat test at Midville. Wet soils and persistent cloudy weather delayed harvest at Midville, thus increasing exposure to deer predation. Total wheat harvested acres increased over last season and produced 34% more grain than during 2004, but quality of grain was a problem. Oat and rye harvested acres decreased 17% and 50% from 2004, respectively, and production of both these crops was 25% less than last year.