

FIVE STEPS FOR MANAGING SUGARCANE APHIDS WITHOUT SACRIFICING YIELD POTENTIAL OR AGRONOMICS

Hybrid Selection Remains Your Most Important Management Decision

Sugarcane aphids were first observed in grain sorghum fields in 2013. Since then, the pest has spread rapidly across the major sorghum-growing regions in the U.S. The sugarcane aphid reproduces exponentially on sorghum in a matter of days, severely stressing plants by sucking moisture out of leaves and depositing sticky honeydew that causes mold to grow, reducing photosynthesis.

Follow these five steps for managing sugarcane aphids:

1. SELECT THE RIGHT PRODUCTS

When making sorghum hybrid decisions, remember these important considerations to help maximize yield potential:

- Place the right hybrid in each sorghum field – and manage fertility and planting rates accordingly
- Select hybrids for important agronomics like standability, head exertion, disease resistance and drought tolerance

No sorghum hybrid is “aphid proof” but Pioneer® brand hybrids are available in a range of maturities and several have demonstrated tolerance to sugarcane aphids. Look for hybrids with the Pioneer Protector® technology designation, which means that product is above average in its tolerance to sugarcane aphids.



2. CONTROL VOLUNTEER SORGHUM AND WEEDS AFTER HARVEST

Sugarcane aphids can overwinter on volunteer sorghum plants and weeds such as johnsongrass, setting up the following year’s sorghum crop for an early infestation.

3. HAVE A PLANTING PLAN

Aphids tend to become more active as temperatures increase. They seek out the newest sorghum plants. Planting early and using an insecticide seed treatment can

give seedlings a head start before aphid populations multiply; planting too late can make the field more of a target for hungry aphids.

4. SCOUT EARLY AND OFTEN

Sugarcane aphids are light-colored with dark feet and cornicles; adults may develop stripes and green wings. In high numbers, they can cause significant yield loss.

Scout for aphids once a week after emergence and at least twice a week after aphids appear. They tend to feed first on the underside of leaves and then move to all plant surfaces.

5. APPLY INSECTICIDE AT THE RIGHT TIME

An insecticide seed treatment can provide early protection from aphids without harming beneficial predators.

During the growing season, consider spraying an insecticide, such as Transform® WG, when thresholds reach more than 50 aphids per leaf on more than 20% of the plants in a field. Spraying earlier could result in problematic aphid infestations before harvest.

Avoid spraying pyrethroid insecticides, which are harmful to beneficial insects.



Infested sorghum leaf with all stages of sugarcane aphids present.

PIONEER: INDUSTRY-LEADING SORGHUM RESEARCH

Our researchers are continually developing new sorghum hybrids from our elite germplasm with enhanced sugarcane aphid tolerance traits. They go well beyond field observations to help ensure yield potential under aphid pressure.

- Cutting-edge breeding program is focused on identifying aphid-tolerant markers
- More than 60,000 data points have been collected on aphid tolerance in the last three years
- Aphid tolerance screening is conducted at three dedicated nurseries and in dozens of on-farm trials
- Our entomologists screen up to 400 hybrids per month for aphid tolerance

Ask your local Pioneer sales representative about the best sugarcane aphid-tolerant sorghum hybrids for your acres. Learn more at Pioneer.com/SCA.