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Gin reports

Majority of the early season crop has been ginned, with yields averaging 9.5 – 11.5 bales a hectare. Picking was clean and fibre quality has been very good with the exception of a few high micronaire modules. Yields have been helped along by turnouts of as high as 46%, with the average around 44.5%.

Importance of good crop destruction

Crop destruction is the first step towards preparing a field for the next crop, and is also important for the management of insect pests and diseases.

How much damage can one rogue cotton plant do?

You might think that one lonely little ratoon or volunteer cotton plant can't do much damage when it overwinters in your paddock. But you'd be mistaken. This year, mealybugs have caused extensive damage in cotton crops across Queensland, with reports of them crossing the border into NSW. And many of the mealybug hotspots found in cotton fields can be traced back to one lonesome volunteer or ratoon (you can see an example of this in [this video](#) on mealybug hotspots from QDAF's Paul Grundy)

That's one of the reasons why it's a requirement that cotton crop residues are destroyed as soon as practical after picking.

Any cotton that survives, as either a volunteer or ratoon, also acts as a host during winter for pests and diseases, like mealybug, silverleaf whitefly and cotton bunchy top disease, as well as allowing inoculum to continue to build for Verticillium wilt and Fusarium wilt. It's also a major Bt resistance risk, as the longer *Helicoverpa* are exposed to Bt toxins, the more likely they are to become resistant.

So, here's what you can do to prevent pests like mealybug hibernating on your farm this winter:

- Post-harvest crop management, including the destruction of plants and incorporation of crop residues must be a high priority, maximizing the host free period. When the above ground conditions, including weather and plant quality, start to deteriorate, mealybugs will go below ground and survive on the roots of host plants, including ratoon cotton. It is important that root cutting operations are effective, to both disturb these below ground mealybugs and ensure

ratoons do not allow survival and build up over winter.

- A zero-tolerance approach to cotton volunteers and ratoons is required over winter. Frequently mealybug hot spots can be traced back to one cotton plant.
- Mealybug has a large host range. Aim to keep weeds and weed edges free of weeds over winter.

This year, given mealybug have been so prevalent, here's a reminder on what to do post-harvest to help stop the spread of these pests:

- This season: Minimise the build-up of mealybug in volunteers, ratoons and weeds, particularly in fallows where cotton will be planted; and ensure effective crop destruction and continue to monitor fields post cotton for potential hosts.
- Next season: Avoid early season use of broad spectrum insecticides, helping to preserve natural enemies that may contribute to the control of mealybug infestations.

Want to know more?

- CottonInfo's [insect and mite management](#) and [stewardship](#) pages.
- [Australian Cotton Production Manual](#) (see the IPM and resistance management, and Managing cotton stubbles/residues chapters)
- [Cotton Pest Management Guide](#)
- [myBMP IPM module](#)
- CottonInfo's technical specialists:
 - Integrated pest management: [Sandra Williams](#)
 - Volunteer and ratoon management: [Sharna Holman](#)
 - Bt cotton and insecticide stewardship: [Sally Ceeney](#)

Considerations for Next Seasons Early Sowing

With August only being 4 months away (that should cause a few growers and consultants to have that chilling feeling) it is timely to start thinking about field preparation and sowing considerations.

One of the key learnings from the early sowing research and commercial plantings this season is that to achieve successful establishment during August and ensure that the crop gets away, it is critical that fields are well prepared ahead of time.

Ideally beds need to be made and consolidated well before sowing so that previous residues are well broken down and soil tilth is ideal for planting.

Early sown cotton will come under additional pressure from both cool weather and soil pest and disease organisms. Therefore having a reasonable production break will help break pest and disease cycles. Seed dressings should also be considered a priority particularly Bion®. Seedlings are slow to grow away at that time of year and are exposed to pests and diseases at a susceptible growth stage for longer.

At the June updates we will cover off on the latest findings of this season's research but between now and then for growers considering planting early and emphasis should be given to timely bed preparations.

Turning around cotton crops in June or July for August sowing is unlikely to be ideal from a seed bed, pest and disease viewpoint. It may be better to wait in these fields a little longer until September as part of a process of working back to an early plant. Results from very early September sowing have provided similar benefits as August sowings both this season and previously. The switch in yield potential across the last 4 years has typically been associated with crops that cut out after the 20th of December. These crops have generally been sown from the 10-15th September onwards.

A full update on results will be provided at some stage in June or very early July, but for early planters, your ground should ideally be nearly ready to go by this time.

CSD's Varietal Trial Results Available Online

Results are now [available online](#) for CSD varietal trial sites in Emerald, Springsure and Theodore that have been picked and ginned.

Did you see some familiar faces in the latest edition of Spotlight?



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