



Mycogen Corporation
4980 Carroll Canyon Road
San Diego, California 92121
619 453 8030
FAX: 619 453 0613

The Role Of Selective Insecticides In Alfalfa Pest Management

Thomas C Quick, Ph.D.
Technical Sales Representative
Mycogen Corporation
(800) 745-7476

Abstract

Alfalfa is one of our most important agricultural crops with over a million acres harvested in California each year. Not only is this crop important for farm revenues it provides, alfalfa-based integrated pest management programs have been the model for many pest management systems where the: preservation, augmentation and introduction of beneficial insects is important. The role of beneficial insects in alfalfa production is well documented and preservation of predators and parasites frequently practiced. To achieve such balanced pest management, growers need safe and selective pesticides which allow pest suppression while maintaining predator and parasite populations. Historically *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT-based) insecticides have shown promise for management of lepidopterous pests; however, their adoption has been limited by inconsistent control and cost. Today, new BT-based products have been developed at Mycogen and other companies which overcome many of these early limitations and provide practical and cost effective worm control. Recently, fatty acid insecticides and oils have shown promise as selective insecticides for control of soft bodied pests. Conventional synthetic insecticides have been used at reduced rates or applied at times when beneficial insects and bees are least impacted. In balanced management systems, these tools offer the grower selective pest control with the benefits of: preservation of beneficials, production stability, resistance management, residue and worker safety and increased profitability. As we are faced with increasing problems in Western alfalfa production such as: the whitefly, residue restrictions, decreasing product registrations and increased production costs, safe and selective pesticides are essential to our production systems.