Two-spotted Spider Mite

[Tetranychus urticae Koch]

Spider mites feed on the underside of the uppermost leaves and are hard to find because of their tiny size. When spider mites reach high numbers, webbing can be seen around infested leaves. Spider mites can be very serious pests during extended dry periods. Mite problems are most likely to occur next to hedgerows, field borders, and corn fields where populations of these tiny pests build up and move to peanuts after reaching high levels.

Problems with spider mites usually worsen when certain fungicides and insecticides are used. The use of a leafspot advisory system rather than a calendar approach to fungicide sprays has been documented to help reduce mites in peanuts. The use of Lorsban can also increase the likelihood of spider mite outbreaks. Check peanut fields frequently during late July and August, especially if they are next to cornfields. Options for control of spider mites are limited to two miticides at this time—Comite and Danitol. Therefore, it is important to scout fields and use a spray only when necessary.

To check for an active spider mite infestation, look for areas of light-colored (chlorotic) plants, especially along field edges. Look under the top leaves to see if mites are present. Record the number and the degree of infestation. Be careful not to spread spider mites from site to site and field to field. Stand back from plants and brush off pant legs and boots before moving on.

No action threshold has been set for spider mites. Treatment decisions depend on judgment and expectations of changing weather conditions. If hot, dry weather continues, consider control measures. Recent research indicates that the best control is achieved if treatments are applied early in the infestation cycle before a multitude of eggs have been deposited. Rainfall and more humid conditions are likely to lower mite numbers. Check regularly to monitor changes.
Two Spotted Spider Mite Web

Spider mites have a great ability to develop resistance and, until new materials are available, we run the risk of resistance developing to our only available miticides. It is important to remember that like peanut disease problems, spider mites are very much regulated by the weather. Therefore, it is important to look at management of this pest in a manner similar to the way one looks at managing a disease. Spider mites have the ability to bounce back in hot, dry weather. It is important to note that controlling mites usually requires two applications about 3 to 5 days apart. Treating one time often will not stop a spider mite problem because Comite or Danitol will not kill the eggs. If you find the infestation very early, one application may be effective, but usually we don’t see the mites until damage and populations are high. Unless it rains, mites almost certainly will come back with a vengeance in a couple of weeks. Using one spray and taking a “wait and see” approach is often not best unless the problem is caught very early in the season before a lot of eggs are present. With the two-spray technique, the first gets the mites, and the second gets all the mites that have hatched from the eggs present during the first spray.