

SECTION 4  
AREA ROUNDUP

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# Southern NSW

By James Hill

The area for the 2008–09 cotton crop saw a further reduction when compared to the previous years with a total area of approximately 3053 hectares (2007–08 was 3300 hectares). Of this, 950 hectares was planted in the Murrumbidgee valley and 2050 in the Hillston/Lachlan valley area.

The two valleys had a zero allocation on the river, so all cotton was grown using groundwater.

### Season activities

This year there has been a number of field walks aimed at new growers and farmers interested in cot-

ton. Field walks included, IPM with Robert Mensah, cut out Pix, defoliation, soil health and the main field day. All of the days were well attended.

### Weather

The weather was less than favourable for growing cotton in terms of temperature with a total of 2140 day degrees (from October 1 to March 30) for Hillston. While this was the coolest season since 2004 it was the extremes experienced that was the issue. There were 52 hot shock days and 32 cold shock days. During the last week of January and the first week of February the daily temperature did not drop below 41°C and was over 44°C most days in this period.

The Murrumbidgee had 2033 day degrees (from October 1 to March 30). There were 39 hot shock days and 42 cold shock days. Therefore it was the two weeks of extremely hot weather that made the season day degrees artificially high.

### Establishment

Establishment was generally very good yet this really did depend on planting date and soil type.

### Insects

Wireworm pressure was heavy early yet only in limited areas. Helicoverpa pressure was again extremely low with no sprays applied except on the small area of conventional crops. Mirids required controlling at least once across the area. Spray oils as per Robert Mensah's work were used across the region.

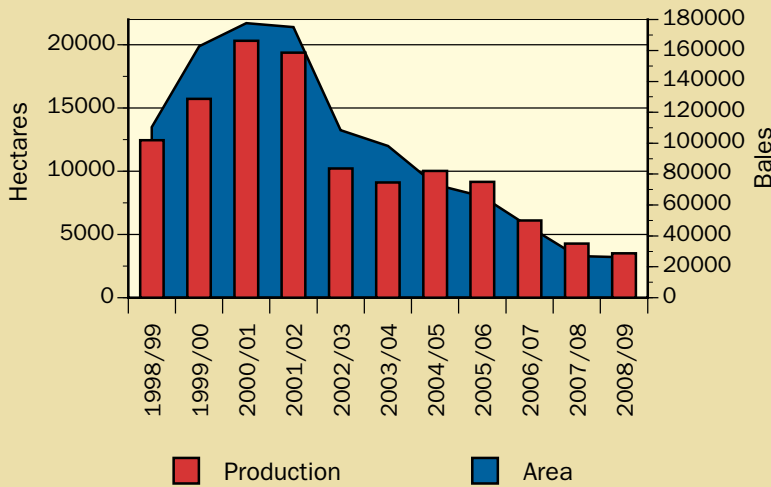
### Disease

The area once again was relatively disease free with only isolated patches of black root rot.

### Water/irrigation

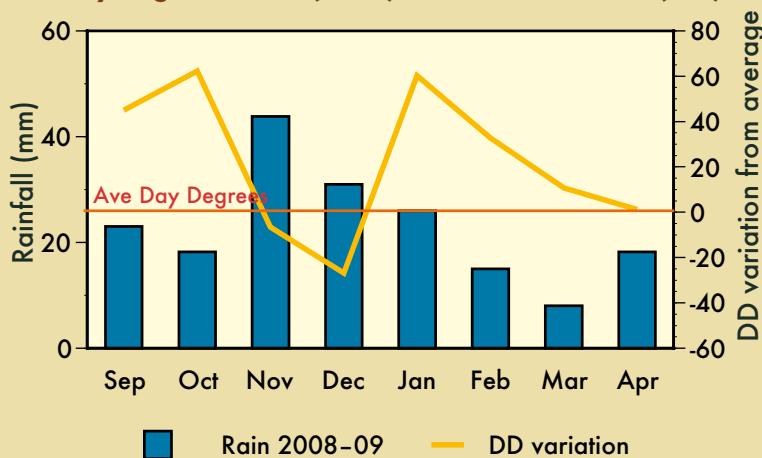
There was very little summer rain with only a few patchy storms in December. With no soil moisture at planting the majority of crops were watered up with some being pre-watered. Water use varies between

**Southern NSW/Tandou: Area and production**



**Hillston 2008–09 seasonal climate**

Total Day Degrees: 2535 (+179); Total rain: 183 mm (-67)



	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
Cold shock	24	13	6	4	1	0	4	13	65 (-10)
Hot shock	0	1	3	4	18	11	1	0	38 (+8)

\* Average day degrees from 1957 to 2009.  
Source: CSIRO Plant Industry.

## Southern NSW





only 8.0 and 12 megalitres per hectare, depending on the rainfall received, soil type, irrigation method and yield.

**Weeds**

Many of the growers opted for a residual herbicide layby spray to support the Roundup. In addition, grass herbicides were also used to control barnyard grass.

**Spraydrift**

Southern NSW lost 200 hectares of cotton as a consequence of drift in late December (first major drift issue for southern NSW). In addition many crops across the region had symptoms of spray drift (including grape vines). Due to the diversity of crops

and the presence of horticulture, drift was something that we did not think would be a major concern in this region. The education campaign is already under way to try and ensure such events do not occur this coming season.

**Defoliation**

The area had a reasonable finish yet cool conditions prevailed just as defoliation commenced. The majority of crops were shut down with a large rate of growth regulant early. But some crops were left to run, trying to capitalise on a warm finish that has been experienced for the past few seasons. Later crops had problems with showery cold weather causing problems with boll opening and leaf contamination. These crops required a third application of defoliant. Picking started about mid April and was completed by the end of June.

**Yield/quality**

The average yield for the southern area was 9.1 bales per hectare. The quality was generally good yet there were crops that had quality issues due to cold weather at defoliation and rain during late May and June (unfortunately there has been no rain since).

**Next season**

As with last season's report there is little chance for an expansion of cotton area in the Murrumbidgee. Once again all areas in the south are facing a zero percentage general allocation on the rivers (Lachlan and Murrumbidgee).

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