Season 5 Episode 7 — Disease Management in Cotton & Peanuts

April 11, 2025

Announcer

The Alabama Crops Report Podcast, your trusted information source for Alabama agriculture.

Scott Graham
Hey, everybody, welcome to another episode of the Alabama Crops Report podcast. We got Scott, Simer and Amanda, all of us on here today. So, how's it going, y'all?

Amanda Scherer
Pretty good. Just getting ready to put field trials in the ground. So, I know producers are itching to get started too for cotton and peanuts, which is the main reason why we're here today, is to talk about some pre-plant considerations, at least from my part from the disease management perspective and some nematodes. And we might throw in some insects just for Scott's benefit.

Simer Virk
Yeah. You know that just makes me jealous that you didn't do corn stuff because then your timeline pushes almost to February, getting started. You know, I'm kind of like already in the middle of it.

Scott Graham
Yeah, we went from Extension season where I was with Simer almost every single day to now, this is the first time I've seen him in like two weeks. It's kind of weird.

Amanda Scherer
It's a good thing we have this podcast.

Scott Graham
Yeah. That's right. All right. So, I got a question for today. It's not quite as good as last week's, but our USDA intended acres report came out on the 31st of March. Today is,

Simer Virk
April.

Scott Graham
April 4th. So, you've had plenty of time to get this right.

Simer Virk
Okay.

Scott Graham
What is going to be our number one cultivated crop in Alabama?

Simer Virk
Corn.

Scott Graham
Corn.

Amanda Scherer
I was just at a peanut meeting yesterday. And I know there's a few folks increasing peanuts. But it's probably going to be corn.

Simer Virk
I remember like 400,000 acres of corn last year.

Scott Graham
No, not of corn, it was about 400,000 acres of cotton.

Simer Virk
Cotton. Okay. But it's not this year for cotton.

Scott Graham
I'm proud to say Alabama is a cotton state, and we're staying that way in ’25.

Simer Virk
Okay, awesome.

Amanda Scherer
There we go.

Scott Graham
So, we will be down 10%. But the intended acres for cotton are 360,000, intended acres for corn is 330,000. That's up 22% from last year. Soybeans are down 14% at 310,000. And then peanuts are up 3% at 195,000. So that brings us to a total of 1,195,000 acres in row crops. Or in our main row crops, down 2% from last year.

Simer Virk
Okay.

Scott Graham
So, whether that 2% is I'm sure a mixture of neighborhoods and developments and potentially some land laying out as well. But.

Simer Virk
Looking at it, that's not a bad number. I feel like anything less than plus -5% is not very…

Scott Graham
Yeah. And that number fluctuates from year to year too. Right. It's never… I've been doing this for five years now or this my six year I guess or fifth. I didn't do the first year because it was already planted when I started. But that number always is somewhere in a 2 to 3% window of plus or minus.

Scott Graham
So we will again and of course, another thing that we were talking about before, I think last year the intended acres for cotton were 350 and we planted 400,000.

Simer Virk
Okay.

Scott Graham
So, we'll see just how right this is soon.

Simer Virk
Yeah.

Scott Graham
But for now, that's what we're intending.

Simer Virk
Good to know. I didn't know that our corn, cotton and soybean acres are that close to each other in a way.

Scott Graham
Yeah, they can be, typically cotton. So, cotton is down 10% from last year. Typically, cotton is pretty clearly our number one crop. And then corn and beans kind of flipped based on the markets, which this year they're not flipping based on the market. Right. Because corn market's not great. And even irrigated corn is going to be tough to pencil out for a lot of people.

Scott Graham
But anyway, yeah, just proud to say we're still a cotton state.

Simer Virk
Yeah. Yeah. All right. Amanda, what's going on in your world?

Amanda Scherer
So just kind of watching the weather outlook right now. I think we're still kind of in chances for more of a wet spring, but warmer temperatures overall. But that doesn't mean we can kind of forget about seedling diseases, especially in cotton. As we start thinking about planting, especially if you plant early. You're going to be more at risk for that if you have soil temperatures that are below, you know, 65 degrees.

Amanda Scherer
So, I just kind of want producers' kind of to start thinking about, you know, the seedling disease complex we have, you know, Alabama gets pretty much everything. We have Pythium, Thielaviopsis, Rhizoctonia, as well as Fusarium. And they could…

Scott Graham
Well hang on, let's stop there. So that's damping off, shore shin. What are the other names that non pathologists call it.

Amanda Scherer
So, damping off. Pre-emergent. So, it's pre-emergent or post emergence damping off. So okay before emergence or after emergence. So, Fusarium can happen even all the way up, you know, can cause Fusarium wilt later on in the season. But a lot of your Pythium and Rhizoctonia, are more pre-emergent damping off. They can sometimes cause some post emergence.

Amanda Scherer
So, if you have pre-emergent damping off, that's where you have that severe stand loss where you don't see, you know, a lot of cotton seedlings coming up.

Simer Virk
What is considered early for us?

Scott Graham
Early planting?

Simer Virk
Planting…. before May 1st or.

Scott Graham
Yeah, I would say so. Yeah.

Amanda Scherer
Yeah, that's a good cut off.

Simer Virk
Anything before May 1st?

Scott Graham
Yeah. Yeah. Any April planted cotton. It may be the first couple of days of May but really anything before May 1st I would consider early for Alabama.

Simer Virk
Okay.

Amanda Scherer
And part of that challenge with seedling diseases they can occur in any combination in any soil type. So, unless you really know which one you had previous years, you know, like soil testing, you know, it's kind of a shot in the dark. So, you want to pick really good, high quality treated seed that has more than one active ingredient that can target more than one of those pathogens.

Amanda Scherer
So, we have a good seedling, disease, trial up in Tennessee Valley. And there we kind of flip flop each year whether, you know, Fusarium or Pythium or Rhizoctonia is kind of in the top in that soil type. But overall, what we've seen, if you only have one seed treatment targeting like middle axle targeting Pythium, it's not going to perform as well as something that's going to give you more bang for your buck with more, you know, 3 to 4 active ingredients to kind of target all of those.

Scott Graham
And these seed companies do a really good job of making it hard to figure out what's on the seed. My dad just retired from he was 35 years as a seed treatment specialist, and I, I kid him all the time about how hard they make it to figure it out. But I believe if you look at your bag, if you've got basic, which you probably don't, that would have no fungicide.

Amanda Scherer
Mhm.

Scott Graham
A standard would probably have one fungicide.

Amanda Scherer
Yeah.

Scott Graham
They might have two.

Amanda Scherer
Maybe two.

Scott Graham
But, probably 1 or 2. And then if you have the elite that's where you add multiple fungicides. You've probably got an nematicide on it as well. And then an even higher rate of insecticide as well. So, if you're not sure what you got go look at your tags or whatever. Look, figure out what base it is and then or what treatment code it is.

Scott Graham
And then there's all those A, B, C, D, E, F, Gs on there that tell you what you got. But yeah. So that's something to keep in mind when you're talking about how many fungicides you have, is the bag of seed that you have will tell you.

Amanda Scherer
And part of the older challenge, other challenge too, is that with the basic seed treatment and sometimes with the standard, it can sometimes be that some of the older chemistries that have been around a little bit longer. But then when you get more to that elite, more premium seed treatment, a lot of it's some of the newer chemistries that, you know, have really good high-quality activity.

Simer Virk
So, the more I'm going to ask in general, you guys just talk a bunch of stuff. Okay, so the more I know about enough seed treatments, all that, but the more codes or the elite it is less sprays in the season to manage it? Or what does that equate?

Scott Graham
[Laughs] That's a loaded question. So, it just depends on the environment. You know, sometimes I could get by on thrips with the base seed treatment, sometimes the elite seed treatments not enough and diseases, I'm sure the exact same they've got their disease tetrahedron or whatever y'all call it now. It just depends on the environment. But I would say as a general statement, the better your seed treatment, the less likely you are to need to react to it during the season. You know…

Simer Virk
So, you're taking…

Scott Graham
In the first, and those seed treatments are only going to take you out about 28 days.

Amanda Sherer
Mhm.

Simer Virk
Oh, Okay.

Scott Graham
Yeah. So…

Simer Virk
Any seed treatment?

Scott Graham
Any seed treatment.

Amanda Scherer
Any seed treatment.

Simer Virk
Okay.

Scott Graham
Yeah, you're going to get about four weeks. And that starts from the moment of ambition in bobs. So, when that seed swells and takes in water the first time that starts your clock.

Simer Virk
Okay, so going back to what you were saying, you know, I heard like our cotton seed prices and all that because there's more and more technology. So, they're going higher and higher. So, is that like your recommendation, is it more look at your fields and then match like what you're going to plant in some of those? Because you don't want to maybe like spend money on high tech seed cost across the whole farm. Is that right?

Amanda Scherer
I mean, that would be ideal, you know, if they can do that. So, if you have like an area that you were that you were in cotton, especially last year and you saw stand loss and suspected seedling disease. Now whether or not you got that confirmed, but maybe you saw some signs of Rhizoctonia, you know, like some lesions, you know, at the soil line on some of those seedlings. That gives you kind of a hint or if you had to replant in the worst-case scenario, you know, rotate away from cotton if you can.

Amanda Scherer
If you can't, and you have to go back into cotton. You know, it's a commodity price driven game there. Then selecting those, you know, high risk fields and more high-quality seed treatment.

Simer Virk
Gotcha.

Amanda Scherer
Maybe in a more low-risk field. You want to scale back sometimes, and in-furrow spray of Quadris can provide you some extra assurance. But again, that's an additional cost.

Amanda Scherer
So, unless you're really high, you know, high risk, you know where you're planting where that soil temperatures below 65, you see in the five-day forecast, it's going to be, you know, cool and wet. You have areas that maybe collect water. You know, those are all things that kind of can elevate your risk for that. Then maybe, you know, an in-furrow application of, you know, Quadris or Priaxor, or another in-furrow fungicide can help you.

Amanda Scherer
Now, in talking about, you know, with cotton diseases later in the season, you know, those seed treatments aren't going to impact if you're going to get light mildew or target spot. You know, so you're still going to have to if you have those. And if it's high risk, you may still have to do a fungicide later.

Amanda Scherer
But the best-case scenario, you don't want to have to go replant. That's extra cost for seed inputs as well as, you know, getting someone out there to go plant it or, you know, just fuel for your tractor. So just yeah, those high-risk areas maybe target that. And if you're going in somewhere where you had peanuts or corn before, you might be more at, like, lower risk.

Simer Virk
Okay. You talked about soil tests earlier and also, I guess now, determining the risk to some of this. So, is the soil test the best way to do that? And when?

Amanda Scherer
So, the best thing to do if you suspect seedling disease is to collect some soil and you would actually submit it to the plant diagnostic lab, where we can do some soil planting to determine, you know, whether you have Pythium or Fusarium. I rarely see producers do that. Normally, it's just okay, we saw a lot of stand loss.

Amanda Scherer
We saw some symptoms, you know, of one of those, pathogens. And so, they just suspect that.

Simer Virk
Okay.

Amanda Scherer
So, they don't. I think it's a underutilized resource. But it is, you know, we easily pull it out of even infected seedlings, in our research trials and just plating with soil assays. So, if you're really concerned about it and you've had a lot of issues, the best time is to do it when it's wet.

Amanda Scherer
And that cotton crop you're starting to see stand loss, because that's showing that those pathogens are active probably right now before planting, you've probably gone out. You've disturbed the soil. You know, you've you know, you started doing some herbicide applications. So those numbers aren't going to be quite as accurate. And so really, it's more when you're seeing disease pressure to select those infected seedlings and then soil close to the root zone.

Simer Virk
Okay.

Scott Graham
And so, you know, at this point seed's been ordered a long time ago. Right. And so, in an ideal world you could say we're going to plant next week. Let's get this seed. And maybe you could finagle your ordering some to be able to do that. And because you were talking about, you know, that added cost to the better seed treatment.

Scott Graham
But at this point I would say all the decisions are just… Should, run something in-furrow if I can, right? Yeah. And then I don't know if you have any thoughts or any observations on, adding an in-furrow to an elite seed treatment or not? You know, I don't know if y'all. I know the belt wide. All of y'all do a really good seed treatment trial on seedling diseases, but there's probably not any in-furrows in that.

Amanda Scherer
So, we have another separate one. That's not part of that large trial that we look at like 15 treatments. And what we've seen when we've added, you know, an elite seed treatment with, Quadris, so Azoxystrobin, you don't really see a huge increase in, you know, stand in germination or yield. It's more if you have a lower tier seed treatment.

Scott Graham
So how about this. If I've got enough seed of a standard seed treatment and an elite seed treatment to plant the same field, and I feel like I'm going into a situation where there's going to be a lot of seedling disease. Is it better to do the elite or to do the standard with Azoxystrobin with it?

Amanda Scherer
We see it better to do with the elite just because you have multiple modes of action in that seed treatment.

Scott Graham
Okay. Yeah. Makes sense.

Amanda Scherer
But you know, if you're kind of… if you're going into an area that maybe you saw an issue two years ago, but you had, say, corn or peanut last year, you could probably get away with, you know, that lower seed treatment, and then an Azoxystrobin.

Scott Graham
So, in the insect world Simer we tend to get a little bit more consistent control from an in-furrow application than we do seed treatment alone. So that was kind of what I was asking that question.

Simer Virk
Yeah. That's interesting. That's what I was thinking, that if you already have more money in a high, tech seed, then putting another something in-furrow is just more and more.

Scott Graham
That's right. Yeah. Just an added cost.

Amanda Scherer
We see the most benefit with an in-furrow spray, especially if you have, you know, poor germination rates. We see the most benefit there. But if you're purchasing high quality seed, you know, it should in theory, right. Have pretty good germination. And so that's why we don't see always that that added benefit for that cost. But Azoxystrobin is pretty cheap.

Scott Graham
Yeah. Yeah.

Amanda Scherer
So, you know you could still do it just as extra assurance. But it's not always necessary unless your risk is very, very high.

Scott Graham
And in that situation I would say just don't plant. Let it dry out a little bit. Right.

Amanda Scherer
Yeah. I would wait.

Scott Graham
Let conditions get better instead of adding that extra cost this year particularly, I would just wait.

Simer Virk
Yeah, I'm just thinking from a planter's perspective. What do you guys think? I haven't seen a lot of cotton planters outfitted to do any…

Scott Graham
We don't…

Simer Virk
In-furrow…

Scott Graham
We don't have a lot of people set up for it. In the peanut world more so.

Simer Virk
Peanut they're usually…

Amanda Scherer
Yes.

Scott Graham
Yeah, but you get outside of the peanut world, there's not a lot of in-furrow set up. And that, I mean, that shift started 30 years ago now.

Simer Virk
Okay.

Scott Graham
You know.

Simer Virk
So, when we're talking about in-furrow in cotton, let's say, are we talking about on the seed in the furrow? Or more like two by two to the side? Or something like that?

Scott Graham
No, it's on top of that.

Simer Virk
On top of the in-furrow. Okay.

Scott Graham
Yeah.

Simer Virk
Yeah. So, we want to talk about some peanuts too. Some considerations for that.

Amanda Scherer
Yeah. Just, really for, for peanuts. The two biggest things before you plant is going to be tomato-spotted wilt and nematode pressure. For both of those, you're most at risk for, especially with tomato-spotted wilt, if you're planting before May 1st, and so, you know, we always recommend from a disease standpoint to utilize something like Georgia 12 Y or another similar variety that has a really good tomato-spotted wilt tolerance.

Amanda Scherer
And so, they're not fully resistant. They're still going to get, you know, some, you know, tomato-spotted wilt. But it's not going to be severe. Like if you were to plant say you know Flo runner 331 early. So, 12 y can really withstand a lot of that early and it has a longer maturity date.

Amanda Scherer
So, it really fits well in those early planting scenarios, there's other challenges to managing 12 Y, which Kris Balkcom has talked about on previous podcast episodes. But you know, just utilizing those more tolerant varieties early. And then if you have, if you're really high risk. This is where Scott could talk a little bit about, you know, in-furrow insecticides. In that case.

Scott Graham
Yeah, so you have got a couple of options. There all, you know, pretty good, honestly. Imidacloprid would probably be the cheapest. It is going to have the least ability to reduce your tomato-spotted wilt virus, and could even increase it in some cases, according to the label. But as far as reducing thrips injury, it does a good enough job there.

Scott Graham
AG logic is very, very good. Gives you nematodes as well. It cost a little bit more… a lot more [laughs] than Imidacloprid, but it's very good. You know, I think we've got some varying data sets out there that, you know, sometimes it looks like it can actually help virus. Sometimes it looks like it doesn't, and then Thimet is one, obviously, that's going to have the best ability to reduce tomato-spotted wilt virus and, you know, reduce thrips pressure or injury as well.

Scott Graham
But, no nematode action there. So part of that might just depend on can you go liquid, can you go dry or, are you concerned about nematodes at all.

Simer Virk
Yeah. You were talking about variety earlier like 12 y and stuff like that. Am I right in saying that even Alabama, we're still like Georgia O6, you know, so most of the growers are still planting that. What would be some of the considerations for that if a grower is still going with that one?

Amanda Scherer
So, you know what we really recommend? And Kris Balkcom, our peanut agronomist, recommends to kind of try to diversify those varieties across planting dates. So, if you want to plant O6G and majority of your fields are O6G. That's fine. Just don't... I wouldn't recommend planting; you know before May 1st. O6G is really great on those like mid-planting dates.

Amanda Scherer
And, then if you're planting later. So, kind of mid-to-late May, you increase your leaf spot risk. So, something more like AU 17, you know, is a good thing to plant much later. So just diversifying those you know, across your planting dates. O6G has pretty decent tomato-spot wilt tolerance. But it's still kind of one of those that's kind of in the middle of the pack, closer to 12 y, but nowhere near as good as 12 y.

Simer Virk
Okay.

Amanda Scherer
And so that's kind of where we kind of recommend. And majority of our producers don't plant, you know, before may most of their fields. So, it's really easy to, you know, kind of diversify that, if you want to plant still a majority of O6G.

Simer Virk
Gotcha. What. I know, but Kim Wright emphasized so much peanut RX because it's got all these other factors, I guess variety rotation. A few of those things are accounted for at the very high top of that.

Amanda Scherer
Yeah, along with tillage practices.

Simer Virk
Tillage practice.

Amanda Scherer
And so all that, you know if you use the peanut RX. So for those of you who haven't utilized it before, it's just simply Google peanut RX. You can sometimes add UGA, but all of us across, you know, the southeastern peanut belt, so to speak, all contribute to that RX guide every December we meet in Georgia.

Amanda Scherer
Look at all of our variety trial data. We have our entomologists look at their insecticide results as well as their variety data across planting dates. And so, it's really good research based, unbiased resource. And I believe we've added four varieties to the peanut RX. I know Arni is one of them. And then the Tiff NVHG, which is looking really good.

Simer Virk
Yeah.

Amanda Scherer
It has a really nice just overall disease package. So, it does pretty well on tomato-spotted wilt as well. You know, they always ask, you know, well what's going to replace O6G. And it's going to be a challenge.

Simer Virk
Yeah.

Scott Graham
Yeah.

Amanda Scherer
But, the good thing is we do have a lot more options now. And there's a lot to choose from to help you diversify that. And the other thing about Tiff NVHG, it has good nematode resistance. And so that's the other thing that I want peanut producers to think about. Hopefully they've done their soil testing the optimal time, regardless of if it's cotton or peanut, is really August, you know, kind of to October, towards the end of the season to get your, your nematode counts.

Amanda Scherer
If you have anything that's above for root, not nematode. You know, 250 and above, you really want to consider either crop rotation to bring those numbers down or plant resistant varieties. So, if you still have to go back into peanuts, utilize something like Tiff NVHG, 14 N… Georgia 14 N or I don't think there's much seed of it, but the 19 HP had some nematode resistance, but and TIF-NV High O/L also has some nematode resistance. Those are going to basically serve as a crop rotation.

Simer Virk
Yeah.

Amanda Scherer
So, in some cases they may just yield similar to O6G. But they're going to fight that hidden enemy that you can't see and help, you know, keep you in the peanut business longer. We had a research trial in Wiregrass last year where if you looked at our non-treated plots, we had 2400 root, not nematode counts per 100 cc's of soil, which was pretty high.

Amanda Scherer
And we had O6G with, you know, your Velum for nematicides, AG logic, Vydate and what we did see is that those reduced maybe nematode populations, maybe by about 46%, but you're still above 1200. So, way above that 250 threshold. But then when you utilize one of those resistant varieties, you get to under 100 nematode counts.

Amanda Scherer
And so that's going to have a longer-term effect on that soil than going in with a susceptible variety like O6G. And the nematicide, you know, if you're below that threshold, you know, maybe around 100 in terms of your counts from your soil assay, you could go with O6G and nematicide, and you'll get good yield protection there.

Amanda Scherer
But just again, with the cost of everything being a heavy consideration going into this season, if you have those high nematode counts, you already have to buy seed anyway.

Simer Virk
Yeah.

Amanda Scherer
Just utilize a resistant variety.

Simer Virk
And we do have growers this year that are going peanut to peanut. Right. And I just remember when you said rotation earlier, agronomic versus economic.

Scott Graham
That's right. Yeah. Marshall talked about it. That's right.

Simer Virk
And that kind of make sense this year that even though your yield may be lower or something, it would still be a better. Right.

Scott Graham
But I feel like this USDA intended acres is probably pretty good for peanuts. And it's only 5000 acres more, which potentially means we may or may not be doing a whole bunch of peanuts. We may be sticking to our rotations in the peanut world, which would be good if we can do that.

Simer Virk
So, at around 190, what you said.

Scott Graham
So last year was 190, this year 195.

Simer Virk
Okay.

Scott Graham
So, one other point I wanted to make or get your comments on Amanda on the peanut RX is it's not just tomato-spotted wilt, it's also white mold, maybe the leaf spots.

Amanda Scherer
Yes.

Scott Graham
There are several diseases. And if you look at it Simer, there's like 12 different things that affect your score, but really only like two of them we can do anything about.

Simer Virk
Controllable factors.

Scott Graham
Planting date and variety because it's twin row versus single row. Well, you're not going to change that up this year. Tillage. No tillage. If you're no till, you're not going to go buy, you know, a plow. Planting date, and we've talked a lot about planting dates this morning because of how important that is for seedling diseases.

Scott Graham
But planting date can also apparently… Amanda, [both laugh] can also impact late leaf spot or white mold later in the season than peanuts.

Amanda Scherer
So that's the challenge, right? There's no perfect planting date. Unfortunately, that'll, you know, cover all your problems. So, what's nice about the peanut RX, it'll give you your risk points for each. You know, each disease separate so you'll have a calendar of planning dates for tomato-spotted wilt, based on your selections. White mold or stem rot depending on who's listening and what part of the peanut area you're in.

Amanda Scherer
And then leaf spot diseases. And so that includes early and late leaf spot. We consider that both in that. So, in those later planting dates, you may have lower risk for tomato-spotted wilt and white mold, but then your risk for leaf spot increases dramatically. And that's mainly because if you think about when are the plants going to be maturing, at what stage are they going to be, potentially when those diseases come in.

Amanda Scherer
So, with leaf spot, if you plant late, they're going to be younger. You know, when you start to see leaf spot maybe in July or August. And so, you get more risk for premature defoliation and yield loss.

Simer Virk
That's pretty interesting. You are talking about leaf spot, when we do a lot of fungicide nozzle and volume stuff. We had a check plot in there. [Laughs] That was one thing so visual, especially late in the season, around 9000 days when it just starts defoliating.

Scott Graham
Yeah.

Simer Virk
You, you know, it's something pretty real. You know, you visually see it.

Scott Graham
Well, Amanda, is there anything else we need to cover here before we wrap it up?

Amanda Scherer
I think we have got the main things. I mean, I would just say assess your planting dates, keep an eye on those five-day forecasts. If there's a lot of rain, just don't plant your cotton in that five-day forecast. You know, try and wait it out a little bit. So just try to be as smart as you can and do the best that you can.

Amanda Scherer
But we're always here if anyone needs any help to assess any of that. As we go through the season.

Scott Graham
And we've just started, maybe this is a good place to plug our new Facebook page. Due to people retiring and leaving, etc. we lost access to our old Facebook page, and we've started a new one, Alabama Row Crops. So, if you're on Facebook and you're looking for some timely information that's in addition to the, you know, extension website, we'll also be putting stuff there that you'll see when you're scrolling.

Scott Graham
So, give that a like or a follow or whatever the proper terminology is for Facebook. I just got on it. But anyway, we'll be putting out information there throughout the year. So, with that, I guess we'll log off. Enjoyed it. This morning, guys. And, as always, we appreciate our listeners. And if there's anything we need to talk about or you'd like to come on the podcast, just let us know.

Scott Graham
But be looking for another episode soon.

Simer Virk
And happy planting.

Scott Graham
And happy planting.

Announcer

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