



# Georgia Department of Agriculture

Capitol Square • Atlanta, Georgia 30334-4201

**Tommy Irvin**  
Commissioner

May 7, 2004

Dr. Phillip Roberts  
Extension Entomology  
P. O. Box 1209  
Rural Development Center  
Tifton, GA 31793

Dr. Roberts,

I want to thank you for contacting me regarding non-commercial (or ornamental) cotton. Although many homeowners would like to grow cotton because of its historical value to Georgia, non-commercial cotton may not be planted in Georgia without permission from my office (Boll Weevil Eradication, Chapter 40-24-6).

As you know, the boll weevil nearly eliminated cotton production in Georgia from the mid 1900s until only a few years ago. Georgia, along with other Southern states initiated a boll weevil eradication program in the mid 1980s. Since the program's inception, Georgia has spent over \$100 million to combat this pest. The total cost of eradication is approaching \$1.5 billion nationwide. Almost all of the eradication costs have been borne by the cotton growers.

Our cotton farmers pay 100% of the cost of this program, including the cost of monitoring cotton with weevil traps and any necessary insecticide applications for control of boll weevils. The Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation of Georgia and I have been in full agreement over the years that permits for non-commercial should be issued to historical sites where visitors gain education benefit and agriculture in Georgia is promoted.

However, I have not issued a permit to any homeowners to grow non-commercial cotton in several years. The cost to the Georgia farmers would be excessive and the threat that ornamental cotton could pose to our industry would be enormous. Any person planting non-commercial or ornamental cotton can face monetary penalties.

If you have further questions concerning non-commercial cotton or the Boll Weevil Eradication Program, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

  
Tommy Irvin