Spring is in the air, and by now, many peanuts will have made it in the ground. This season got off to a little wet start, in part thanks to that “little boy” El Niño, and hopefully the rains have continued to mellow out by the time this gets printed.

In many ways, growing peanuts is a race. We race with the weather and field conditions for planting, we race against diseases and pests (and the weather again) for timely management during the season, and we race against over-maturity, field conditions and, you guessed it, weather yet again for timely harvest at the season’s end. Most of the time, races are won by being faster than the competition. A good example here is how the early bird gets the worm. However, we also know not all races are the same, for while the early bird that gets there first may get the worm, it’s the second rat that gets the cheese… Either way, timing is huge, and certain situations demand different speeds. Now, while we certainly want to be faster than the competition (diseases, over-maturity, weather events keeping us from the field) in much of peanut production, there are times when a little “Whoa, Nelly!” to slow the horses down can actually help us get ahead. In this case, the “horses” are how fast the peanut are growing. Strong plant growth is critical for a number of things. Solid stands and quick canopy closure are vital in helping reduce weed pressure and thrips/TSWV risk. Quicker root growth in warmer soils and planting dates is also important to decrease CBR susceptibility. Furthermore, good growth is naturally linked to good yields down the road. However, as with “the bird vs. the rat” and most other things, there is a happy medium beyond which more (or faster) is not always better. If we have varieties with potential for highly prolific canopy growth (Bailey, for example), this makes it difficult for growers without GPS guidance to stay on the rows during digging. Regardless of GPS being used or not, too much plant material on the surface after digging slows drying time and delays when we can combine and finish the fields, which is one of the most important races we face during the season.

Growth Regulator Response

Aside from drought or TSWV infection, a less damaging way to limit peanut growth is to use the plant growth regulator prohexadione calcium (Apogee). This past year, one of our trials looked at varying rates of Apogee on four runner and four Virginia type varieties for effects on yield production and row closure. Yield from most of the varieties improved with growth regulator use, while Georgia 06G was the only variety that showed no benefit. With the exception of FloRun 107, all other varieties had the greatest yield with either two or three half-rate applications. This is valuable to know, since at about $50/A, Apogee can be an expensive product to apply, and where warranted, use at lower rates would help reduce the cost of using it. From the row closure results, we can see that growth regulator use with the slower growing Georgia 06G delayed row closure greater than the varieties with more prolific growth (Bailey, Sugg, and TUFRunner 511, for example). As mentioned earlier, if row closure is delayed too much, increased weeds and thrips/TSWV pressure can tip the scales out of our favor. The choice

of two vs. three half-rate applications should be determined based on cultivar, presence of irrigation, weather conditions being conducive to prolific growth, and, while not examined here, use of twin-row planting. In this test, Sugg and Wynne showed the greatest improvement with growth regulator use: ~560 and 440 lb/A increases, respectively, from three half-rate applications. It is good to keep in mind these results are from one year of data, and we'll be revisiting this again this year to see how consistent everything is, as well as comparing growth regulator use to bush hogging to see which varieties get the most economic benefit from which management approach. As always, when applying growth regulators and other products, the label is the law. See the Peanut Production Guide for additional comments on growth regulator use. I wish everyone a great season and a successful peanut race!

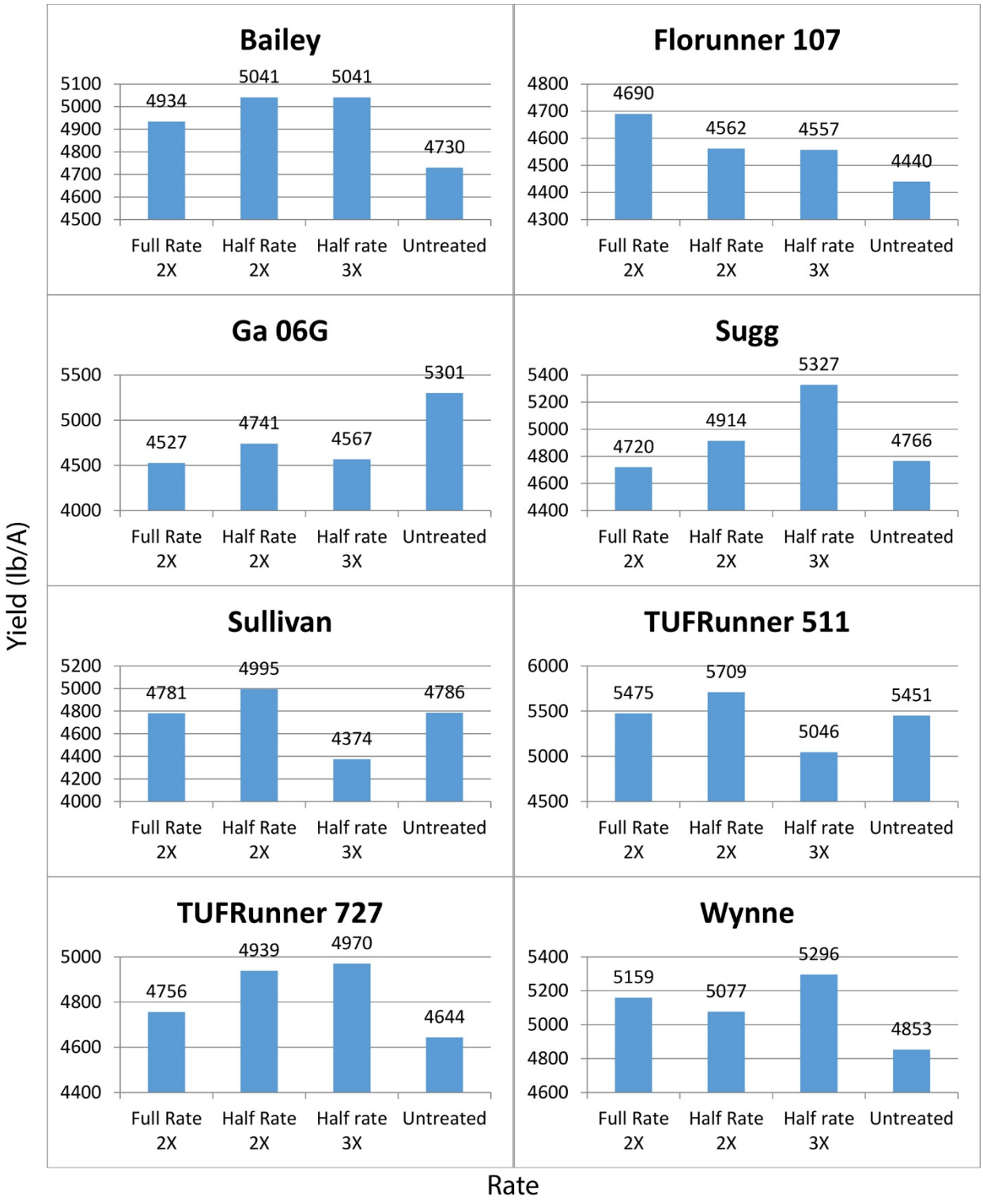

Figure 1. Yields after treatment with varying rates of Apogee.

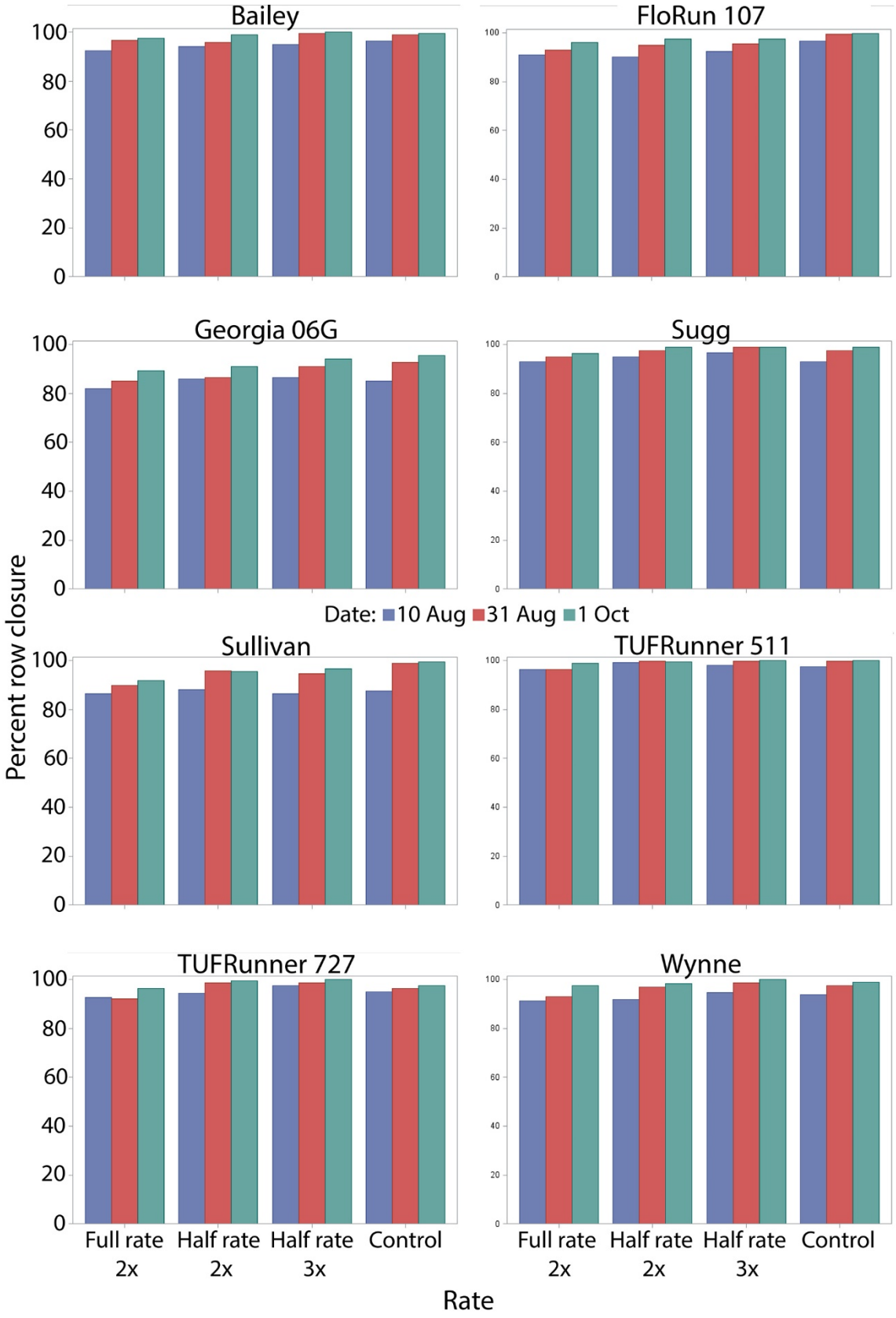

Figure 2. Effects of Apogee rates on row closure for runner and Virginia type peanuts.