



Desert Locust situation update 15 October 2009

Desert Locust outbreak develops in western Mauritania

A serious Desert Locust outbreak has developed in western Mauritania from breeding that occurred this summer. At present, there is no threat to other countries in the Region except for southern Morocco and Western Sahara where adults from currently infested areas in western Mauritania could appear. If the outbreak is not controlled and if unusually heavy and widespread rains were to fall in the next two months, then the situation will deteriorate further and there is an extremely high risk that it could lead to the early stages of an upsurge in the Region. Therefore, all efforts should be made to ensure that adequate survey and control operations are carried out during October and November. Fortunately, sufficient resources are in place to face the current threat.

A Desert Locust outbreak has developed in western Mauritania where locusts were expected to increase a result of summer breeding. During the past two weeks, additional teams were mobilized and deployed to the field where they found an increasing number of locust infestations. The increase in locust numbers is a result of the end of the seasonal rains in the summer breeding areas followed by several days of the hot dry Harmattan winds blowing from the east. This has caused vegetation to dry out rapidly in the southeast and centre and the summer generation adults have moved towards the western part of the country. This movement is expected to continue for another week or two.

Although there has been no rainfall so far this month, ecological conditions continue to be favorable for locust breeding and survival in western Mauritania between Moudjeria and the Atlantic coast, and from Boutilimit to Akjoujt. This area of about 400 km by 250 km in size is remote and consists of low sand dunes. Within this area, locust densities are increasing as hoppers and adults concentrate in green natural vegetation in between the dunes. Adult densities have more than doubled in the past two weeks, reaching 6,000 adults/ha or more. Hopper densities have increased to 30 hoppers per sq. metre. Consequently, some of the hoppers and adults are starting to gregarize (shifting from solitarious to transiens phase) and are forming small dense groups in a few places. A second generation of breeding has commenced in the area where an increasing number of adults are copulating and laying eggs.

More than a dozen ground teams are in the infested areas to conduct survey and control operations. Since mid-September, nearly 1,300 ha have been treated by national teams, most of it in the past few days.

Further north, solitarious hoppers and mature adults are present near Zouerate where good rains fell last month.

In the absence of further rainfall, ecological conditions are expected to remain favorable for second generation breeding in the western part of the country. Hatching will commence by the end of October and hoppers are expected to form an increasing number of groups and perhaps a few small bands. Fledging should start by the end of November and by early December there is an increased chance that groups and a few small swarms could form.

In the Zouerate area, there is a risk that more adults will appear from the south during October and breed in areas that remain favorable. From early December onwards, there is an increased possibility of adult groups and perhaps a few small swarms (produced from second generation breeding further south) reaching these areas and moving further north towards Bir Moghein during periods of warm southerly winds.

At present, there is no threat to other countries in the Region except for southern Morocco and Western Sahara where adults from currently infested areas in western Mauritania could appear.

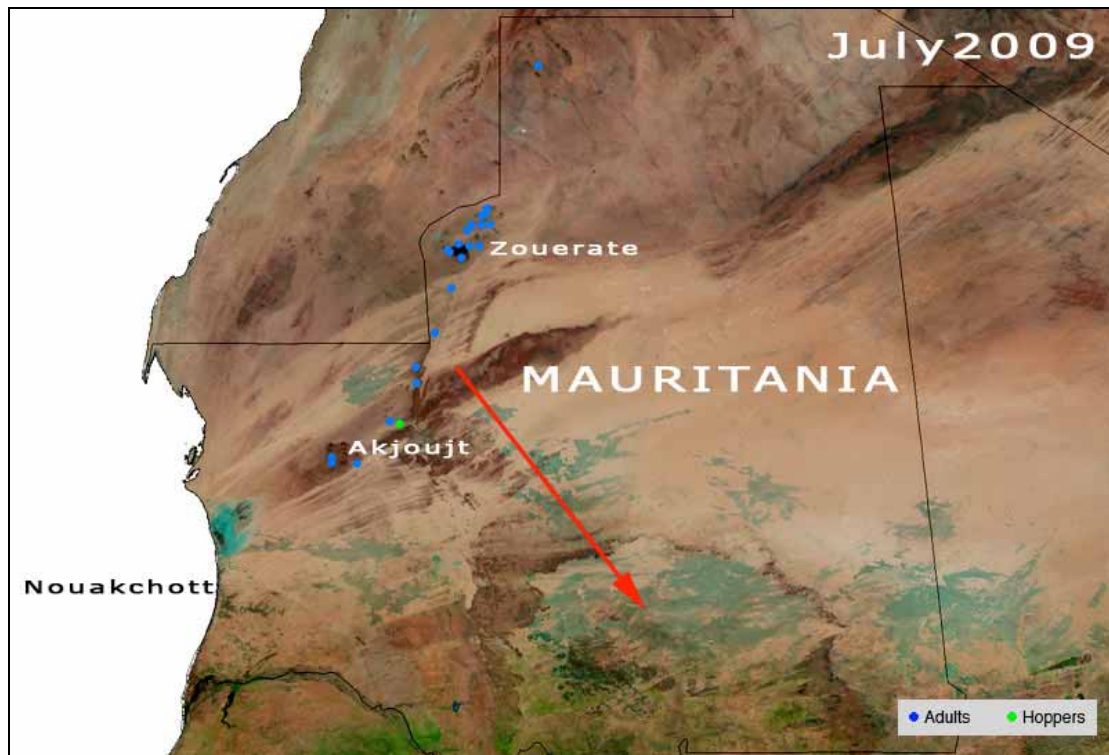
From early December onwards, there is an increased risk that adult groups and a few small swarms might arrive in these areas.

If unusually heavy and widespread rains fall at any time between now and December in northern Mauritania or adjacent areas of southern Morocco and Western Sahara, there is an extremely high probability that the current Desert Locust situation will deteriorate further and the outbreak, if uncontrolled, could lead to the early stages of an upsurge in the Region. Therefore, the current outbreak in Mauritania warrants extremely close monitoring. All efforts should be made to ensure that adequate survey and control operations are carried out.

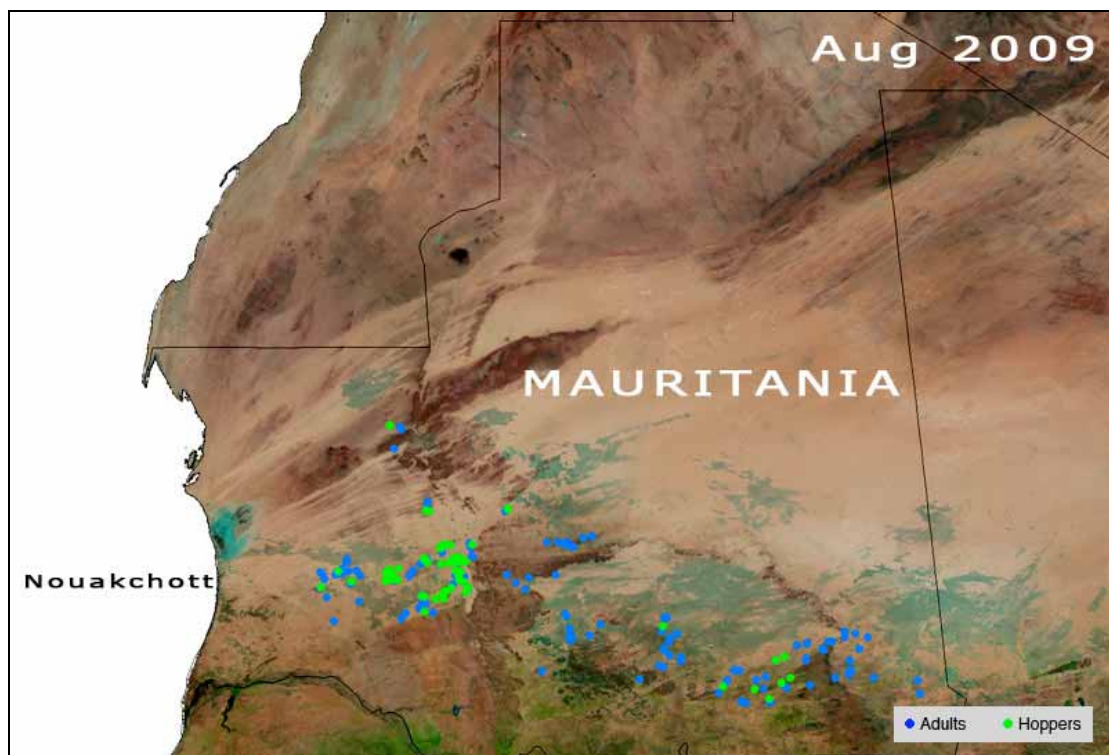
Elsewhere in West Africa, scattered locusts are present in the Tamesna of northern Niger and probably in adjacent areas of northeast Mali. There is a risk that locusts will concentrate in vegetation that remains green, increase in density and form small groups. Surveys are highly recommended in those areas that are secure to monitor the situation closely.

The situation remains calm in the other regions.

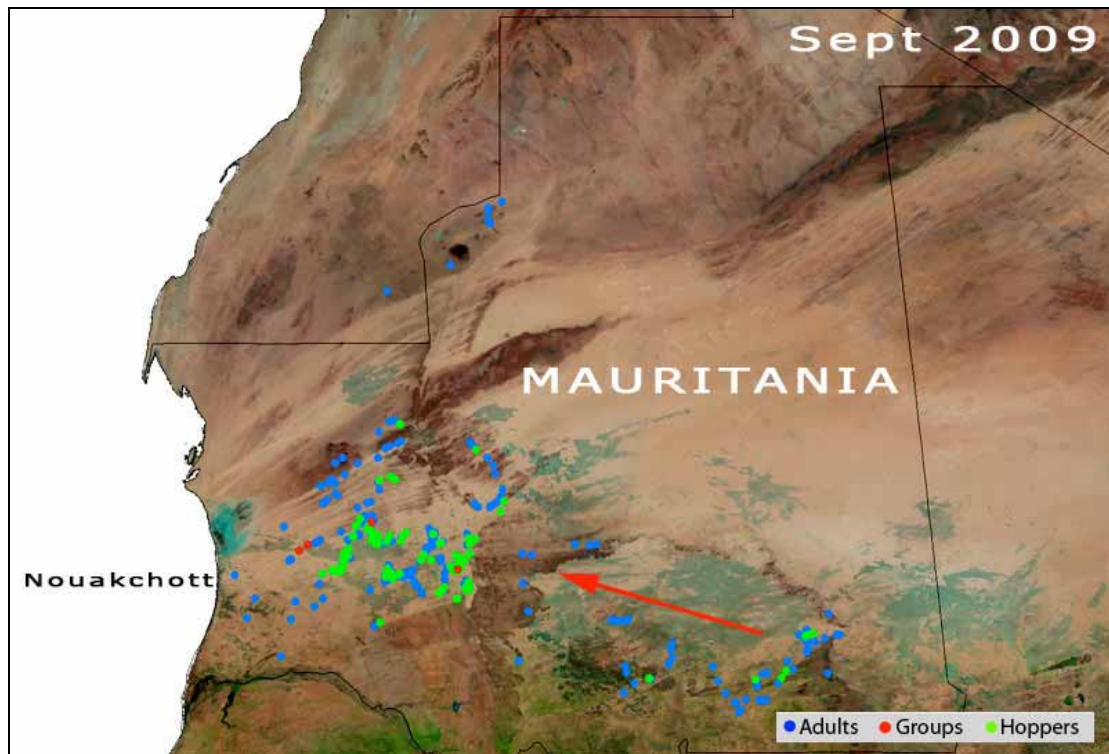
Evolution of the Desert Locust situation in Mauritania, July – October 2009



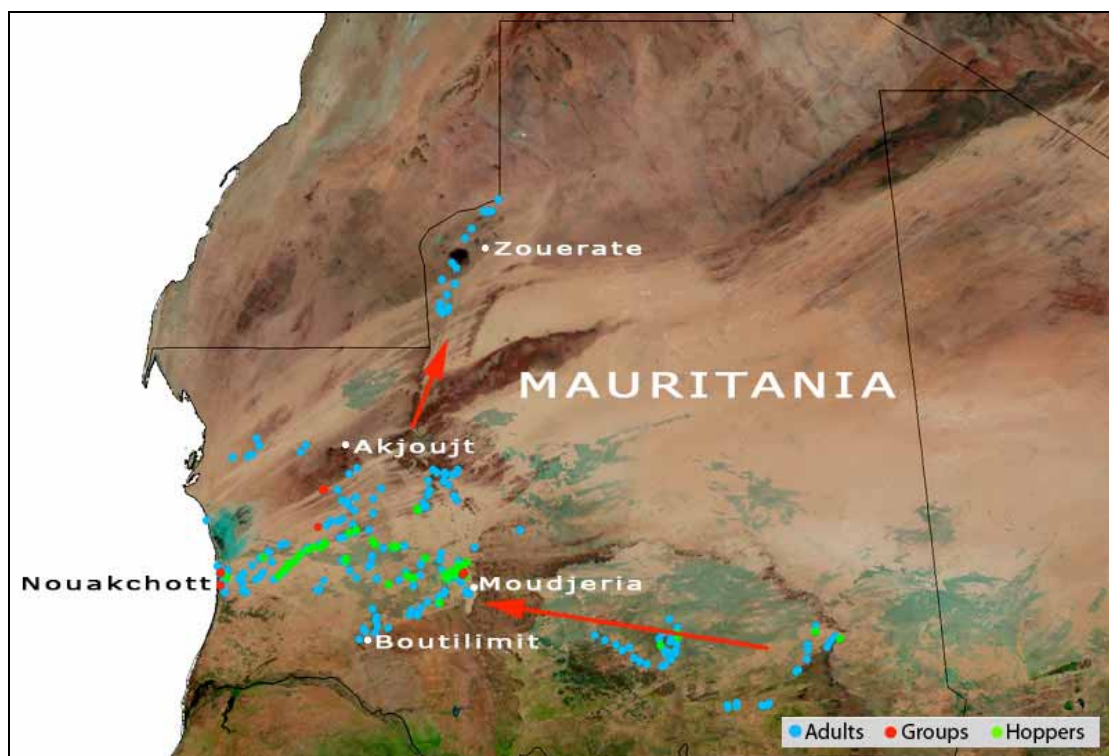
July 2009. Desert Locust infestations were concentrated in the north and northwest between Akjoujt and Zouerate. Unusually heavy rains in mid-June allowed one generation of breeding to occur.



August 2009. Average and slightly above average rains fell throughout the south during August and allowed one generation of breeding to occur which caused locust numbers to increase.



September 2009. Breeding extended to the western portion of the country as summer rains continued. By the end of the month, some of the summer generation adults started to leave the southeast and moved towards the west where good rains had fallen.



October 2009. Once the summer rains stopped in late September, the hot dry Harmattan winds began to blow from the east, drying out the vegetation and causing locusts to move to western Mauritania where ecological conditions remained favourable and a second generation of breeding had commenced. Locust hoppers and adults concentrated in green vegetation, increased in density and began to gregarize and form small groups that were treated by ground teams.



October 2009. Mature adults, in the process of shifting from solitarious to *transiens* phase, copulating and laying eggs in western Mauritania. [courtesy of Centre National del Lutte Antiacridienne, Mauritania]