

AG NOTE



Phil Hawker
0427 367542

Head Office Contact (Derrinallum)

P (03) 5597 6622 F (03) 5597 6773
E admin@westernag.com.au

Issue 02/11
June 2011

Introduction

Hello from everyone at Western AG and welcome to our June edition of Ag Note which we hope you find informative.

H2 Wheat and Barley up to \$310/t, wool prices are the best since 1988 and the record prices for livestock seem to be holding.



Gerard O'Brien
0419 801485

The rain received over the 22nd and 23rd of May has allowed sowing to resume in the Wimmera and Mallee and has been most welcome. Some areas of the Western District have now become too wet and is resulting in difficulty in getting on paddocks, slowed crop emergence and even burst grain.

Climate indicators are best described as neutral and the long term forecasts are for an average season. An average season on top of good soil moisture levels should equate to above average production levels.

The outlook for commodities is arguably the best it has every been for this time of the year. Forward Canola prices of up to \$620/t,

There is a long way to go between now and the end of the season and with agriculture there is always lots of factors in play however it is hard not to have a level of cautious optimism.



Ashley Perkins
0458 822068

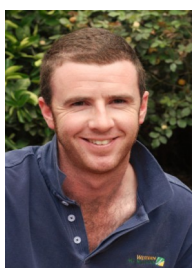
New members of the team

We have had two new staff members join the Western AG team in recent months, Robert Poole and Steve Booley.

career with the Birchip Cropping Group. James is very keen to make himself available to new clients in the area.

Robert is responsible for logistics and on farm deliveries for the Derrinallum office. He is a Derrinallum local and has an extensive background in the building industry.

We are also pleased to announce that our new Bannockburn office and storage facility located in the towns industrial estate is up and running.



Brad McLean
0438 976557

Steve a well known local has joined us in a sales and logistics role at the Bannockburn branch. Steve is a plumber by trade, and has farming interests in the Inverleigh area.

James Jess is now spending two days a week, usually Tuesdays and Thursdays working in the Bannockburn and surrounding area. For those who do not know James, he has worked as an Agronomist for five years starting his



66 Holder Rd, Bannockburn



James Jess
0419 801650



Michaela Alexander
0428 976555



Tim Hofmaier
Horsham
0488 298222



Aaron Starick
Horsham
0488 120033

Inside this issue:

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>New members of the team</i>	1
<i>Wimmera –Mallee update</i>	2
<i>Western District insect & mice activity</i>	2
<i>Early post em weed control in cereals</i>	3
<i>Trace element nutrition</i>	4

Wimmera-Mallee paddock notes

With conditions staying dry through the Wimmera/Mallee for April and early May, most farmers opted to hold off on sowing canola. However vetch, beans and some cereal crops were sown during this time.

It was observed that if stubble had been retained in the paddock there was defiantly more moisture in the first 100mm and this was often enough to get crops up and going.

Where paddocks had been worked up, or disced, the top soil was noticeably dryer and it was estimated that 8-13mm of rain would be required to join up the dry topsoil with the layer of good subsoil moisture.

The past 10 years of averages suggest that the earlier sown crops have generally been the best performers and the dry start

experienced this year is not unusual. This reinforces the importance of stubble and moisture retention.

Mice & Insect activity

Growers need to continue to monitor paddocks for mice activity after they have been sown. There is a considerable delay in the supply of Mouse Off, however it does not hurt to do some planning and to be able to provide advanced warning of requirements.

When crops are at the 2-3 leaf stage, it is important that they are very closely monitored for insects such as red legged earth mite, aphids and blue oat mite.

Canola especially should be closely inspected as RLEM can give young plants trouble, more so if the canola is coming off a pasture rotation as numbers will be increased.

Disease in Cereals

Given the amount of heavy barley stubbles around this season, Spot Form of Net Blotch pressure will be high due to spore loads. Early detection and spraying is important to protect crops from this disease. Last season, clients achieved good control with spraying fungicide at around the 5-6 leaf stage.

Yellow Leaf Spot in wheat will once again be a major concern early due to stubbles being carried over from last year. Trial data has shown that there is potential to lose up to 60% in yield if this disease is not treated. Spraying early achieved the best results last year and it was often possible to combine both a fungicide with an early post emergent herbicide treatment. Note, Yipti is very susceptible to this disease.

Western District insect activity

Stubble burning has been prevalent across Victoria this Autumn with many farmers choosing to reduce stubble loads in preparation for sowing. This has assisted in reducing favourable environments for a wide range of crop.

Slugs

There are two main species of slugs commonly found, being the Black Keeled slug and Grey Field slug. Slugs are often found on heavier soil types around tree lines, under trash and clods of soil, especially in areas of the paddock that are known to be wetter.

Canola growers felt the full impact of slugs in the 2010 season with many crops throughout the Western District damaged by this pest feeding on the emerging seedlings. Higher than the average rainfall over the summer months has allowed slugs to survive this usually dry period and continue to reproduce making this season probably the worse for slugs on record.

In recent days more and more damage is being detected in Canola, cereals and pastures often in paddocks that have not had a history of a problem.

It has been found in some situations that the pressure is so high that single baiting is not adequate and the crop may require further treatment or, at worse case, need re-sowing.



Grey Field slug
Deroceras reticulatum

Earwigs

Both Native and European types of earwigs are being found in cropping paddocks, with the European type causing major damage to Canola crops in 2010.

Native earwigs, with their distinctive triangle mark present on their back, are not considered to be a crop pest. The black European type however will feed on young seedlings, and in high numbers cause significant yield loss.

These pests have already been identified across various paddocks, and monitoring should continue until canola plants have at least 2 true leaves. The earwigs are found in the soil, under clods and often feed in family groups. They are quick to disappear further into the soil when disturbed.



European earwig
Forficula auricularia

Red Legged Earth Mite (RLEM)

RLEM have been observed to increase in activity in recent weeks. Silvering marks and 'cupping' of leaves are distinctive signs of this pest. Young legume pastures and Canola cotyledons are at most risk.

Facts on Mice

With extensive damage occurring in crop situations in most areas, and with large population outbreaks particularly throughout the Wimmera, we thought it relevant to provide some facts regarding that potentially devastating rodent - the mouse.

Mice start breeding at 6 to 10 weeks of age; have a 20 day gestation period and, on average, 5 or 6 young per litter. This season's population numbers have been a direct result of both favourable feeding and suitable breeding conditions. Mice populations have the ability to reach plague proportions very quickly as 2 mice can produce as many as 500 young in as little as 5 months.

Unfortunately this year, counts of 5000 plus mice per hectare have been seen. With 200 mice equivalent of 1 DSE, and as mice numbers increase, a strategic baiting program and possibly revised sowing program will be necessary.

Mouseoff is very effective bait for controlling large mice populations. It is Zinc Phosphide based and therefore very dangerous if inhaled. Always handle the bait with caution. At an application rate of only 1 kg /ha, roughly 30,000 baits are laid per hectare, but regular baiting may be necessary in heavily infested areas.

Currently, all bait availability is very constrained and it is very important to

only use treatments approved by the APVMA. Consult your agronomist to clarify each situation and keep in touch regarding your requirements.



Mice holes

Early post-em weed control in cereals

The wet conditions last year resulted in increased weed seed set in many crops which will lead to higher levels in paddocks this year.

Ryegrass

Ryegrass has the greatest financial impact on cropping and selective control needs to be undertaken early, i.e. when ryegrass is around the 3-4 leaf stage.

The performance of cereal grass herbicides such as Hoegrass (Group A fop), Achieve (Group A dim) & Axial (Group A den) can be highly variable depending on the level of resistance in the plant population and the conditions at application.

The fact that the paddock has had a short history of herbicides is no guarantee that they will work due to resistance ryegrass seed being transported from paddock to paddock. It is good idea to spray a test strip of the herbicide intended for use on the ryegrass to assess its performance before spraying the whole area.

Plant Science Consulting offer a 'quick test' service, however the turnaround time is at least 3 weeks which may mean the ryegrass has passed the optimal treatment time.

There has been an increase in interest in using Boxer Gold very early post-em for Ryegrass control in mainly wheat. Trial work has shown that its performance is highly variable (from virtually 0 to 90% control) due to needing rainfall for soil incorporation.

This use is not registered, no minimum residue levels have been established and therefore cannot be supported.

Wild Oats

Wild oats also pose problems early in cereals. Applications of Wildcat (Group A fop) and Topik (Group A fop) provide good results for **wheat crops only**.

Barley is not tolerant to both of these chemicals and therefore Axial (Group A den) and Achieve (Group A dim) are the best options. Even though Wild Oat herbicide resistance is uncommon, do keep an eye out for survivors post spraying. Targeting weeds when they are 3-4 leaf will ensure best results.

Broadleaf Options

There is a large range of broadleaf weed combinations that occur in cereals and equally many product options available.

The basic option where no residual weed control is required is often products such as LVE MCPA /Agritone (Group I) plus a 'spike' such as Ally/ Associate (Group B) and/or Lontrel/ Archer (Group I).

Agtryne (Group C & I) is the best option for weed combinations that include Toad rush and Crassula.

Key products for early Radish control are Tigrex (Group F & I), Conclude (Group I & B), Precept 300EC (Group H & I) and Velocity (Group H & C). Tigrex and Conclude have the benefit of providing some residual activity.

Precept and Velocity have the benefit of being very safe to the crop. Velocity also has the additional benefit of including a Group C, reducing resistance pressure.



Disclaimer

The information contained in this AG Note is to be used as a guide only and specific information needs to be sought from the authors regarding individual situations. Western AG Supplies takes all care in compiling this information. However Western AG Supplies accepts no liability for any loss or damage suffered by any person who relies on this information.

New Product—Flight EC

Flight EC

A new combination of existing active ingredients will be available this year from Nufarm called Flight. This product is a mix of Paragon (Group F & I) and Bromoxynil (Group C) and has been developed in response to the increased tolerance developing in Radish populations in Western Australia to groups B, C, D, F & I.

The multi mode of action of Flight also has the benefit of delaying the development of 24D/MCPA resistance in Radish which is the only practical product for late mop ups of big weeds.



Conditions at application

Keep in mind the conditions around this time of year are less than favourable and weeds may be stressed due to water logging and frost conditions.

Also be aware that these herbicides can be extremely damaging to Canola, pulse crops and pasture in drift situations.

Trace element nutrition

Trace elements also known as micro nutrients include Boron (B), Copper (Cu), Zinc (Zn), Manganese (Mn), Molybdenum (Mo), Iron (Fe), Cobalt (Co), and Chlorine (Cl) and are required in very small (trace) amounts. Although Trace elements are only required in small amounts they are just as important as macro nutrients.

Trace elements have become more deficient in our soils as crops yields have increased. These elements have been mined from the soil and in most cases have not been replaced.

Fertiliser products and practices have also changed with most fertilisers not containing trace elements and larger amounts of Nitrogen based fertilisers are being applied causing further deficiencies.

Trace elements that are coming up in soil and tissue tests as deficient include Zinc, Copper, Boron, Magnesium and Molybdenum. Iron, Cobalt, Chlorine and Manganese are of less concern for our soil types.

Zinc (Zn)

Zinc deficiency is common in cereal crops particularly on soils of high pH, it has many roles within a plant and is most needed at early growth stages to promote root growth. Zinc is an immobile nutrient within the plant and deficiencies are noticed in new growth.

Zinc can be applied either through compound fertilisers, on the seed as a seed dressing or by a foliar spray once crop has reached the 3-5 leaf stage.

Copper (Cu)

Soils that are low in pH and high in Iron and Aluminium often have reduced availability of Copper. Symptoms of Copper deficiency are noticed in the new growth of the plant and include leaf twisting, leaf tip shrivelling and tissue may appear burnt in appearance. Other symptoms include empty grain heads as Copper is needed for pollen formation.

Copper can be applied to the soil as a copper sulphate but is probably best applied as a foliar spray at stem elongation and again at booting stage in severe deficiency situations.

Boron (Bo)

Boron is required most by brassica and pulse crops as it helps with the uptake and efficient use of Calcium (Ca) a very important nutrient for Canola. Boron also aids in pollen viability, flower and seed formation. Deficiencies are quite common in soils low in organic matter and visual symptoms may appear such as internal yellowing of leaves, but this can sometimes be too late to rectify.

Boron can be mixed and applied with fertiliser or broadcasted where the deficiencies are severe, although care should be taken as the gap between deficiency and toxicity is narrow. Foliar applications of Boron are effective.

Molybdenum (Mo)

Molybdenum deficiency is likely to occur in soils that are acidic and are high in Iron and Aluminium. Canola and Pulse crops can be very responsive to a Molybdenum application while Cereals require less, yet deficiencies do still

occur. Visual symptoms are similar to Nitrogen as Molybdenum assimilates nitrogen within the plant by converting nitrates into ammonium.

Molybdenum can be either blended with fertilisers or, alternatively, applied as a foliar application.

The importance of plant testing

Correct trace element plant nutrition is just as important as having the levels of macro nutrients right and other soil fertility indicators such nutrient rations and Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC) in balance.

The most accurate way to determine both macro and trace element nutrition is to plant test and it is a good idea to test at least 1 or 2 representative crops each year to monitor nutrient levels.

It is important to plant test early so time is available to correct deficiencies. Cereals need to be tested at the early tillering stage and Canola preferably at the 4-6 leaf stage.

Western AG have access to both sap and whole tops testing services with short turnaround times, usually 5 working days.

Please contact your agronomist to organise sample collection.