

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2020



Assured Agronomy

Aphid pressure

This spring some crops have been hitting aphid thresholds within days of emergence. It was thought that the more persistent insecticides would give 2-3 weeks protection, having the ability to translocate into new growth. However spraying plants when they are very small reduces the ability to do this. With the loss of neonicotinoid seed treatments and now with the further loss of Biscaya aphid pressure is likely to build and become an increased threat. Varietal resistance and tolerances could be key going forward as more varieties become available. Current varieties that are available include Rafela winter barley (tolerant to BYDV) and Wolverine winter wheat (resistant to BYDV).

30 Jun End of EFA Fallow period.

31 Jul: Closing date for countryside stewardship applications, including all supporting evidence

1 Aug: RPA derogations begin for cutting or trimming hedges throughout August, to sow oilseed rape or temporary grassland

1 Aug: Closed period, organic manure with high available N to tillage land on shallow or sandy soils except where crops will be sown on or before 15 September



The future of OSR....

It is likely we will see a further decline in the area grown in 2021. Unless weather conditions in early September are ideal and flea beetle pressure is low, the days of subsoiling/auto casting in September and expecting to have a good crop going into winter are greatly reduced.

Last year anything drilled after 25th August in a conventional manner has been a challenge. When planning rotations look 15-18 months ahead, if following wheat an early maturing variety gives the most hope for a timely harvest.

If you are looking to update your establishment technique the first thing would be having the ability to further reduce surface soil movement to conserve moisture. Secondly place fertiliser next to the seed. If this is not an option broadcast prior to planting and use a readily available form of nitrogen. The use of phosphate where necessary has also appeared to give good results and anecdotally seems to reduce flea beetle pressure.

Varieties resistant to Turnip Yellow Virus (TUYV) performed consistently better than non-resistant varieties, these include the conventional variety Aspire and hybrids Ambassador, Aurelia, and Artemis. Given the very high aphid pressure we have seen this spring TUYV pressure could be much higher this coming year.

Glyphosate pre-harvest

At the time of writing in early June most areas have received up to an inch of rain. Where crops are thinner the rain will trigger weeds seed to germinate and secondary tillering may occur. Most crops are beyond the cut off for herbicides, therefore the only option is pre-harvest glyphosate. Points to remember are if you intend to keep seed for next year this should not be sprayed as it could affect germination and if you are aiming to get a malting/milling premium, check contracts as to whether pre-harvest round up can be used. Finally observe the 7-day harvest interval.



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Overwintered seed

If you have overwintered seed which you intend to drill this autumn, it would be wise to test it for germination. A separate test for each variety and dressing should be done and if there are large quantities it may pay to do several tests per batch.

This seed wants to be drilled first when conditions are more favourable, also try to avoid mixing it with new seed. It is better knowing the germination and to increase the drilling rate accordingly, as opposed to trying to compensate with new seed.

Samples can be sent away for germination or tests can easily be carried out on farm. Speak with your agronomist for further advice.

Cover crops

To try and improve soil structure and build fertility thoughts lead to cover cropping. The key points to consider before establishing a cover crop are:

- Will it compromise opportunities to get on top of problem weeds?
- Will it cause issues with establishment of the following cash crop?
- Is the cover being used as EFA cover, if so what species must it include?
- What do you want to achieve? – ground cover, removing compaction, fixing nitrogen etc

Thoughts then turn to what species to grow. The basic mixes tend to include a cereal, predominantly rye or oats and mustard. These mixes are EFA compliant, provide a useful cover, have some rooting benefits, and cost £30-£40/ha.

Adding legumes (predominantly vetches and clovers) to the mix gives the ability to fix nitrogen. Legumes can also partially replace the reliance on brassicas which is useful where other brassicas are in the rotation. Costs of these mixes range from £60-£100. It is worth enquiring about how much nitrogen these sorts of mixes can fix as this may allow for reduced nitrogen applications to the following crop.

Deeper rooting brassicas species (mainly radishes) are better at restructuring soil and breaking through compacted layers. These species can scavenge for nitrogen and create a more friable crumb on the soil surface. Rooting biomass is potentially more important than biomass produced above ground, as roots will structure the soil and increase carbon sequestration without the need to work in above ground biomass.

Companion crops

From experience these work best on sandy soils where the companion crop can establish rapidly. On heavier soil unless the companion can be established prior to the cash crop benefits are less clear. Examples include berseem clover and buckwheat. Cost £30-£50/ha

Two NRoSO points in total (not per bulletin) have been allocated between 01/01/2020 and 31/12/2021 reference NO467809F.

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