



when you need a hand

Agronomy News

AUGUST 2010

Winter Crop Diseases Appearing

With growing conditions to date being better than the last few years, crops are looking good for above average yields. Lots of green leaf and cover seems to be the norm for crops this year.

Greater crop biomass in conjunction with wet / warm weather, comes the likelihood of the increased incidence of leaf disease in winter cereals.

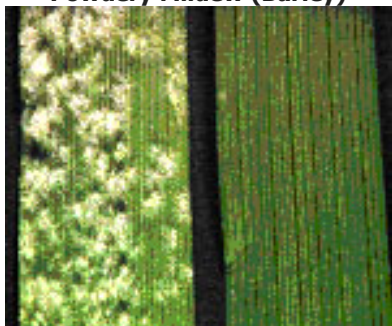
Disease or Deficiency?

Last season I reckon that there was an awful lot of fungicide & foliar fertiliser put onto crops that didn't need it.

This was for a number of reasons, the major one being misdiagnosis.

It is understandable due to concern about leaf diseases; however, it is important that you are getting the correct advice.

Powdery Mildew (Barley)



Ascochyta (Chickpeas)



Diseases may severely affect yield and quality.

In some cases these diseases are controlled through the use of cultural practices such as crop rotation using legumes. In seasons that favour infection, fungicides may be necessary.

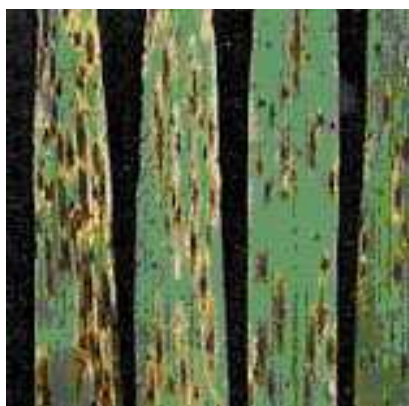


This photos illustrates the point that leaf conditions can often mimic a number of decisions.

To the untrained eye, this could be diagnosed as Zinc, Potassium, Nitrogen deficiency or leaf rust. It was, in-fact, a crop infected with Barley Yellow Dwarf Virus.

Factors such as, temperature, rainfall, crop conditions, insect pests and numerous other factors need to be taken into account when decisions are made.

Don't risk it, call a Tamworth Rural Agronomist!



Spot Form of Net Blotch (Barley)



Yellow Spot (Wheat)

Points to consider:

- Foliar fungicides can be very effective for managing potentially devastating diseases such as stripe rust, net blotch and ascochyta.
- Fungicide application strategies need to aim at protecting the flag leaf of wheat, and leaf sheath and Flag -1 leaf of barley.
- One application of a foliar fungicide to control stripe rust will cost around \$7/ha for the product plus application costs. Two applications may be needed if the season is conducive for high yields and severe stripe rust infection.

STUDY WINTER GRAZING TO DETERMINE IF FEED IS ADEQUATE

Winter is a time of increased demands on feed sources, especially during cold wet periods. Ensuring the herd is well fed can have an impact on the success of the 2010 calving season. A pregnant females energy requirement increases by up to 20% following the onset of cold and wet weather. Look after your girls!

Are they Getting Enough?

Pay attention to grazing behaviour - whether they are slow to start in the mornings, whether they are working on the dry grass and bracken in an attempt to generate more heat energy from their diet. Grazing behaviour will tell you whether or not feed is adequate for their condition (even before they start to visibly lose weight), or if they need a little help. If you pay close attention to grazing behaviour, the animals will give you clues that will help you get them through the winter without any serious weight losses, or serious feed bills.

Here are 5 hints for capitalizing on the beef animal's winter grazing behaviour:

1. Assess the pasture's nutritional health

Plant varieties vary in nutritional quality, and this can also vary from season to season.

2. Check grazing patterns when assessing forage volumes

Any adverse weather will likely alter this naturally balanced grazing pattern. In other words, you can't assess the carrying capacity of a winter pasture based solely on how much forage is there.

3. Monitor feed intake

We know intake will vary with texture of the feed, weather, and amount of daylight. Even though cattle need more food energy in cold weather to keep warm, they often eat less on range pasture when temperatures dip.



4. Look to supplement winter pastures

Cows will eagerly eat hay or straw, even at night in cold weather, but they usually won't graze under those conditions.

Some types of supplements can be used to advantage on these cold range pastures, but others are actually detrimental.

Studies have found energy-rich grain supplements counter-productive because they reduced a cow's intake of dry roughage, whereas protein-rich supplements had the opposite effect.

Cold tends to decrease digestibility by increasing the rate at which food passes through the gut and by changing the rumen bacteria.

In very cold weather, cattle need more roughage in order to generate enough body heat, and if cows are confined without access to pasture roughage or browse, you should give them straw in addition to the regular hay ration, or increase the amount of grass hay being fed.

This is when the added protein is needed to balance the diet and stimulate appetites.

5. Remember the rumen

In cold weather, cattle eating feeds barely meeting minimum requirements of the rumen bacteria have a hard time digesting forages because the cold slows down microbial activity in the gut.

This is another reason why a little protein at these times can make a big difference to a cow's intake.

Get the most from our Research

Along with our herbicide and fertiliser trials this winter, we will be looking into late sown options to fill the gap that can often occur between the growth of winter and summer annuals.

We will be looking at a number of options for summer fodder production and introducing a number of new species that have huge potential for assessment.

Winter Trials

This winter we have our usual trial programme underway.



The wet weather has slowed or progress however we are ploughing (or bogging) on!

Our winter cereal herbicide trial will receive the 2nd treatment soon and our fertiliser/compost trial is providing some interesting initial results.

Why do trials?

At face value, investing in local R&D is a no-brainer, or should be. We are bombarded constantly with new products and methods that offer all types of cost savings and benefits.

At Tamworth Rural, we believe a strong Research & Development programme is essential to keep you up to date with the latest developments.

Russell Ison

More Information Go To Our Website:
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