



Crop Production Specialists

News

The House of Lords' EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee published a major new report that has warned that Brexit could leave the UK open to meat imports that undermine current domestic production standards, putting British producers at a competitive disadvantage.

A farming on-line survey suggests winter barley yields are up 5% and oilseed rape yields up 18% on the previous year, however these should be treated with caution as crops in the North are still to be harvested.

Farmers will be incentivised for planting more trees with a new £13 million government fund. The fund falls under the Countryside Stewardship scheme with growers offered up to £6,800 per hectare. Application forms will be available in September in advance of the fund opening in January 2018.

The government has announced a £25m fund to support R&D of autonomous vehicles destined for construction, mining and farming. The news comes as the world's first Hands Free Hectare of cereal approaches harvest with work by Hutchinsons agronomist Kieran Walsh and Harper Adams University – [HandsFreeHectare](#)

Cereals

Winter wheat harvest is now under way in the South and East with the rest of the country about to follow once weather improves. Early reports seem positive considering the very dry season.

Growers will consider mapping weeds visible in the stubbles of prospective winter cereal fields to ensure they can be managed appropriately. Particularly important where blackgrass has been a problem this year. Appropriate stubble management will take place to help reduce weed burden. Allowing Blackgrass seed to moisten up on the surface before light disturbance to encourage seed to soil contact and emergence weeds for spraying off.

Oilseed Rape

Attention to detail when establishing winter oilseed rape will be essential to ensure a rapidly emerging and growing crop which is more capable of dealing with pest and weed pressure. The optimum time for drilling will be mid-August to mid-September. Early drilling can lead to increased disease pressure from light leaf spot, Phoma and Verticillium wilt as well as risk of Turnip Yellow Virus (TuYV). Moisture is a pre-requisite to good winter oilseed rape establishment along with good seed to soil contact. The best tilth is always in the top 50-70mm of soil having been weathered and biologically processed for the past 12 months.

While moisture is currently present, growers will try to avoid a situation where seeds are drilled into moisture which is then rapidly lost. Adequate moisture must be available for a full week post drilling. Once the radical has ruptured the seed coat, the seedling cannot be allowed to suffer drying soil or seedling losses can be high.

Cabbage stem flea beetle is one of the key pests that can cause damage during the establishment phase. Control of this pest can be extremely difficult for various reasons, commonly either because resistance to pyrethroid foliar insecticides is increasing or because high numbers present are too many for the treatment to control. The following steps can help manage cabbage stem flea beetle pressure and will also help limit damage from slugs:

1. Sowing from 20th August or when soil temperature is less than 15 degrees C (to avoid Verticillium wilt infection) when the pest is less active.
2. Moving the minimum amount of soil in cultivations.
3. Rolling post drilling: Consolidation has been seen to reduce pest numbers and activity by removing places in the soil profile in which the pest can survive.
4. Attention to early nutrition of the crop and choice of vigorous varieties can also help ensure more rapid establishment and growth, this will enable the crop to be beyond its most at-risk cotyledon phase as quickly as possible.

Sugar Beet

First fungicide applications have taken place or are due to take place shortly. As crops become stressed in hot and dry conditions disease can build rapidly.

Forage Crops and Game Cover

Turnip sawfly have been moving into forage crops and game cover in the last week. This pest is a particularly voracious eater and can cause significant damage very rapidly. Pyrethroids remain an effective method of control.