

Cereals

Blackgrass: Testing blackgrass seeds for dormancy this year has shown that only 27% of sampled seed are germinating. Dormancy is high and germination of freshly shed seeds is likely to be low. However, the creation of stale seedbeds will still be beneficial because since dormancy only applies to freshly shed seed and where blackgrass has been a long-term problem in fields, there will be a large seed bank for the weed to emerge from. Moisture will be the key factor for efficient stale seedbeds meaning current weather conditions are ideal for rapid emergence of grass weeds and volunteers.

Oilseed Rape

Cabbage Stem Flea Beetle: Warm settled weather over the recent Bank Holiday weekend has led to a significant increase in cabbage stem flea beetle in many areas. Emerging crops with small cotyledons will be at risk of significant damage in some areas. As documented in last month's e-bulletin, encouraging rapid growth is essential. Fine firm seedbeds, with nutritional deficiencies addressed will be at most advantage. Protecting the crop in the early establishment phase with regular monitoring and appropriate treatment with pyrethroids will be essential.

An AHDB funded project is currently investigating levels of pyrethroid resistance in cabbage stem flea beetle in the UK. Resistance has been found to be widespread in the east with further resistant populations detected in Yorkshire, the South East and the South. It is vital that pyrethroids are used in accordance to label and threshold recommendations in order to minimise the development and/or further spread of resistance. Treatment thresholds currently advise that a spray is only necessary if: 25% of leaf area is lost at the 1-2 leaf stage increasing to 50% of leaf area lost at the 3-4 leaf stage.

Slugs have been active right through the last year and were easily found on crops in the summer. Regular rainfall throughout the summer will have allowed populations to continue to flourish leaving recently sown winter oilseed rape vulnerable to early attack. Following good establishment practice will be beneficial in managing this pest along with appropriate use of metaldehyde and ferric phosphate slug treatments.

Those using Metaldehyde slug pellets should now follow the additional stewardship guidance from the Metaldehyde Stewardship Group. These are as follows:

- No pellets to be allowed to fall within a minimum of 10 metres of any field boundary or watercourse (**NEW FOR 2017 SEASON**)
- Use minimum active per ha to avoid drainage and run-off losses
- Maximum application rate 210g metaldehyde a.s/ha* For additional protection of water, suppliers/BASIS advisors may recommend rates reduced to 160g a.s/ha or less*
- Maximum total dose from 1st August to 31st December: 210g metaldehyde a.s/ha* For additional protection of water, suppliers/BASIS advisors may recommend rates reduced to 160g a.s/ha or less*
- Do not apply when heavy rain is forecast
- If drains are flowing do not apply metaldehyde based slug pellets

Phoma spores require approximately 20 days of rainfall to become active. With August 2017 being wetter than average, many areas received 50% of their monthly rainfall in the first 10 days, the risk of an early Phoma outbreak is greatly increased. Monitor crops for increasing Phoma levels and treat when thresholds are reached, this is 10-20% plants infected.

News

It is planned to harvest the world's 'Hands Free Hectare' of spring barley within the next few days. Automated machines growing the first arable crop remotely, without operators in the driving seats or agronomists on the ground. Harper Adams in partnership with Precision Decisions, agronomic advice by Kieran Walsh from Hutchinsons. More information www.handsfreehectare.com