

Cereals

Aphids and BYDV: Though we have had more prolonged cold winter weather than last year, January is proving much more changeable with temperatures above 10C being recorded in the South and West. Warmer temperatures will encourage aphid reproduction as well as increasing movement between plants. This means that the risk of BYDV passage into the crop will increase. Insecticide treatments should be considered in crops where aphid numbers are increasing particularly those which did not receive an aphicide treatment prior to Christmas.

Wheat bulb fly: According to AHDB data, this is one of the lowest risk years for wheat bulb fly since records began. Nevertheless, those who have had issue with the pest in the past should still monitor crops for the pest, as they often cause repeat issues regardless of the overall risk. There are no longer any foliar treatments available so cultural options must be followed to protect crops from the pest. Consider early nitrogen fertiliser application, PGRs, spring rolling to encourage tillering and avoid drilling spring crops during the peak egg hatch period.

Powdery Mildew was easily found in winter wheat crops prior to the end of December but freezing temperatures seem to have reduced its pressure in all but the least resistant varieties. Brown rust and powdery mildew continue to be a problem in winter barley crops however. Winter barley yields are affected more significantly by early disease suppression than in winter wheat therefore correct T-zero fungicide choice, dose and timing will be essential.

Oilseed Rape

Propyzamide: The final date for applications of propyzamide is the 31st of January. Any outstanding applications of propyzamide should be completed before this as long as soils are suitable to apply and drains are not running. This may be difficult following recent heavy rainfall, it is essential however that growers follow best use guidelines to prevent the passage of this very important active ingredient into water courses.

Phoma leaf spot is now becoming active again particularly in the North. In large and forward crops this will not be as important as the disease is less likely to progress to stem canker. Smaller and more backward crops may still benefit from a second Phoma fungicide application up to the end of February.

Light Leaf Spot is the focus of much of the fungicide treatments early in the Spring and the first reports of active lesions were reported last week in the more susceptible varieties. Monitor crops closely for the first symptoms of the disease.

News

James Dyson has defended the farm subsidies he receives, rebutting suggestions he does not deserve them because he is already wealthy. In a letter to the Spectator he said that 'Subsidies we receive go directly into the activities that they are designed to support, but are dwarfed by our own investments,' "If Britain wants an internationally competitive agricultural sector, rather than a domestic theme park, we must encourage investment and stewardship."

Defra has published further details of its simplified Countryside Stewardship (CS) scheme which opened for applications on 15 January 2018. There are 4 themes, Arable, Lowland Grazing, Mixed Farming and Upland with specific options for each offer. www.gov.uk/government/collections/wildlife-offers-countryside-stewardship

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is reminding farmers to take simple steps to avoid, or manage, risk when carrying out building maintenance as it launches its latest inspection initiative. Falls are the second highest cause of death on British farms – every year at least eight people die falling from a height. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/building.htm>