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| **Will Jones wins Oilseed Rape YEN Establishment Beauty Contest** | 00/00/00 |

Will Jones, Farm Manager of Albanwise Farming Ltd North Yorkshire Estate has won the YEN OSR Beauty Contest, sponsored by BASF, with a crop of Aurelia.

Launched in 2020, the competition puts a spotlight on a crucial yet challenging phase of the crops development, and aims to accelerate the industry’s knowledge of factors that lead to effective establishment across a variety of situations.

“I’m delighted to have won,” says Will Jones. “I entered a good-looking crop that sits just outside the office window.”

Will grew up on a family farm in Norfolk and studied Agriculture and Farm Business Management at Newcastle University. He travelled to Canada, Australia and New Zealand to work on farms before taking on a role with Albanwise Farming Ltd three years ago.

“Low Morthorpe is a predominantly arable farm with a potato seed enterprise,” he explains. “Sitting on the Wolds, we’ve 2,500ha of free draining chalky soils. As well as the potatoes, we grow milling and feed wheat, malting and feed barley, OSR and vining peas.”

“Will’s entry scored well across all criteria,” notes Dr Pete Berry, Head of Crop Physiology at ADAS. “It didn’t have an overly high plant population, which can be detrimental for yield and lodging risk, and plants weren’t too far apart, they were evenly spaced and were strong and healthy. All these factors indicate that Will’s got a potentially high performing crop.”

“It’s not just one patch that looks great, it’s the whole field,” he adds. “He’s clearly paid close attention to the details.”

Will’s crop of Aurelia was direct drilled in winter barley stubble on 2nd August 2022.

“It had liquid digestate applied and was drilled with a Grange toolbar and Vaderstad Rapide at 50cm spacings. We put down 7-20-0 starter fertiliser and then rolled and pressed,” explains Will. “Soil to seed contact is very important in establishing the crop, especially when it is dry.”

As well as drilling early to ensure plants are strong and well established before cabbage flea beetle’s peak migration, Will disguises the oilseed rape using seed pre-mixed with a companion crop of burseem clover.

“Because of the dry weather, it was a bit late in coming through last year meaning the clover didn’t do its primary job. Still, it’ll support the oilseed rape with nitrogen over the coming months.”

Looking to the season ahead there are some key agronomic decisions yet to be made. “The fungicide programme is still to be decided. We monitor crops closely and use ADAS / AHDB’s models for light leaf spot and phoma,” explains Will.

With winter temperatures as low as –9C checking the crop and a lack of cabbage stem flea beetle larvae, Will’s not too concerned about lodging risk this spring.

“Where there has been cabbage stem flea beetle activity, it’s worthwhile checking for larvae,” notes BASF Business Development Manager, Clare Tucker. “ADAS research shows that while earlier drilled crops don’t suffer the same levels of damage from adult cabbage stem flea beetles (CSFB), there are often reports of higher larvae damage as a result of being exposed to egg laying for longer,” explains.

While reducing or delaying nitrogen can offset the increased risk of lodging caused by the pest, independent trials have demonstrated that results can be inconsistent and yield can also be affected.

“Using a PGR like Caryx is the only effective way to mitigate the increased lodging risk caused by CSFB larvae,” says Clare. “Crops with a GAI of more than 0.8 at the end of February, just before stem extension, should be monitored and the final decision to apply made at stem extension.

“Some of these forward crops will change significantly in the coming weeks. With strong, deep and healthy roots they’ll be able to access mineralised nitrogen and grow away quite quickly.”

For Clare, it’s this level of detail and knowledge transfer which is the competition’s strength. “The YEN OSR Establishment Beauty Contest is a novel approach which focuses the mind on one of the most important times of the year,” she said.

The Oilseeds YEN is still open for applications, to find out more visit www.YEN.adas.co.uk.

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