Regional insight into a relentless season

As the rain keeps falling and jobs continue to stack up, we see how crops and fieldwork across the UK are faring this challenging season, including key considerations for PGR and fungicide decision making.

At opposite ends of the UK, Peter Chapman in Aberdeenshire and Steve Crayston in Essex both got their winter wheats established well.

Steve said, “Most of our wheat looks reasonable, we were fortunate that we got all of it drilled just prior to the rain in October. It's not really dried out all winter, however, so the root growth will be compromised.”

It is a similar story in Aberdeenshire where Peter said, “We got our winter wheat and winter barley crops established at the right time and generally things are looking good on the farm, but the ground is as wet as I’ve ever seen it. The winter crops are needing some fertiliser and heat. The fields that we can travel on have received their first split of nitrogen, but patience is required as we will need it to dry up a bit before we will be able to get the rest done.”

On opposite sides of the country, David Hurn in Norfolk and Martin Williams in Herefordshire both had issues with their wheat establishment with some of the seed rotting in the ground in the wet conditions.

David said, “We had a few fields that failed due to slugs and the amount of water, but we did manage to re-drill in late November. Half of these have come well, the other half are better than before re-drilling but not pretty. It’s a bit of a mixed bag really. On the whole, I think the wheats look okay, there is yield potential, but they are struggling at the moment.”

In Herefordshire Martin said, “In our wheat 70% of it is average to good, then 20% is below average and 10% is needing re-drilling, but we have not been able to get onto the ground to do this.”

Julian Thirsk, farmer, and independent arable consultant, based in North Yorkshire said, “This weather has just been relentless. It started in August, with the last few weeks of harvest a very snatch and grab affair which delayed the normal drilling times. In my area the early drilled wheats are looking pretty good and later drilled wheats are not. In areas where growers were waiting for black-grass to emerge before drilling in the autumn some have not been able to get winter wheat in at all.”

When it comes to fertiliser application the wet ground is still causing issues.

“On some ground, growers were able to get fertiliser on 6 weeks ago, mid-February but there are others who still have no fertiliser on. It’s really mixed.”

In terms of disease, there have been a few reports of yellow rust and there is plenty of Septoria in those early drilled crops, mainly because we still grow quite a bit of Grafton in this area. There is plenty of inoculum lingering there on the older leaves. As yet, no T0s have been applied but we are just coming up to that timing,” said Julian.

In Essex, Steve has begun applying T0s to his wheats, “Disease wise, yellow rust is visible in the crop now, carried over from autumn due to the mild winter. Some recent dry weather has dried the ground up nicely and we began applying a T0 of tebuconazole on the 22nd of March, but not all the wheat is at that stage quite yet.”

Weed control has been good where pre-ems have gone on.

Julian said, “I don’t think grass weeds generally have germinated, it was probably too wet, so the seeds got their dormancy back. There is likely to be a flush of grasses coming shortly, I am definitely seeing it with the Italian Ryegrass.”

Jared Bonner, Business Development Manager, BASF said,“ As we’ve heard from these growers across the UK, winter wheat crops have been in wet conditions for months resulting in variable overall development and poor root development.

A PGR application at T0/ T1 can improve root growth and Canopy (prohexadione calcium and mepiquat chloride) has been proven to increase root dry matter by up to 27%. In a year like this, that will be especially helpful, increasing the root plate spread to give better anchorage, decreasing the likelihood of root lodging, as well as increasing water and nutrient uptake.

An early application of Canopy also helps to balance and strengthen the tillers, creating uniformity. This should assist in making accurate fungicide applications and can only be a positive in a season like this where the variability seen in fields and stands is going to prove challenging for growers as the season progresses. This variability will be compounded by recent NIAB research findings which have shown there is a large variation in how uniformly leaves of the same variety emerge across a field.”

In winter wheat, securing the optimum spray timings often needs compromise, with applications best aimed at the point when two thirds of the target leaves are fully emerged.

“NIAB’s research found leaf layers can take more than 14 days to fully emerge within a variety. The speed of leaf emergence dictates the amount of time unprotected leaves are exposed to disease infections. Product selection is going to be key, and programmes will need to be built around strong products with high Septoria efficacy in both protectant and curative situations, as this disease will be the main focus for most growers, however, products will also need good yellow rust and eyespot activity.

Revystar XE (Xemium + Revysol) is highly effective against Septoria with curative ability and longevity. Both Xemium and Revysol have strong activity on rusts and the combination within RevystarXE gives a high level of rust control. Xemiumprovides the same level of eyespot suppression as prothioconazole, ensuring that growers will not have to compromise their Septoria control when dealing with eyespot, ” said Jared.

~Ends~

993 words

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