**BASF Agronomy blog featuring Tynegrain’s lead agronomist, Nick Sanderson**

* **Nick's Top Tips for Grassweed Control:**
	+ Establish a stale seedbed
	+ Invest in robust chemistry at pre-emergence
	+ Consider rotational ploughing for bromes
	+ Spring cropping remains a valuable tool
* **Positive Outlook for 2025/26:** Despite challenges, growers in Northumberland are welcoming the current mix of sunshine and showers providing every reason to be optimistic this autumn

*In the first of our blog series, Nick Sanderson lead independent agronomist at Tynegrain, joins local BASF Agronomy Manager, Matthias Baltrusch to discuss what’s happening in the fields of Northumberland and County Durham and the role of IPM in grassweed management.*

*As well as being responsible for over 9,000ac of arable land, Nick also manages, OrbitCo, Tynegrain’s daughter company that provides precision farming technology to its members.*

Nick: “Most of the land I manage is arable, growing wheat, barley, oilseed rape, oats, beans and maize. It’s predominantly heavy land, though there are some lighter soils towards the Tyne Valley and the coast.

“Across Northumberland and County Durham drilling is well underway, and attention is rapidly turning to pre-emergence grassweed control.

“Black-grass can be a challenge, but populations tend to be relatively small and isolated. Ryegrass is more abundant and becoming increasingly problematic. In part, because many populations are resistant to ALS and ACCase chemistry. Sterile brome remains enemy number one for us currently.”

**Compensating for missing cultural control**

Nick: “This far north the risk of delaying drilling is significant, and many will be aiming to be complete before the end of September. This makes controlling ryegrass challenging and means all other aspects of the grassweed strategy have to be spot on.

“Rotation is a really important tool for us. Winter beans, oilseed rape and grass leys are all useful break crops widely used in this area.

“Spring cropping enables us to establish a stale seedbed in the autumn before a competitive cover crop goes in. Then there’s a second stale seedbed in spring before the spring crop is drilled.

“Fortunately, this year we have had conditions which encouraged a proportion of grassweeds to chit. The early drillers got one stale seedbed before the crops have gone into the ground.

“We now look to fully optimise the other tools at our disposal. I advise making pre-em applications soon after drilling. Although practically this is can be frustrating, the timing of herbicide applications has a bearing on their efficacy. If you come back a week later, once all the drilling is done, it is already too late for the pre-em herbicides.

“Spring control is a battle with the weather, it often stops any herbicide applications until late March or early April, by which time grassweeds can be well established. As a result, the emphasis has to be on the pre-emergence chemistry and cultural control.”

Matthias: “Of course many may struggle to hold off for too long this year, but delaying drilling by just 1 week can reduce pressure by approximately 15%. So, leaving the worst pressure fields until last is a great way to ensure we are maximising our chances of control. After this, those that follow the tactics that Nick has just discussed won’t go too far wrong this autumn.”

**Making the most of pre-ems**

Nick: “The heavy land here often needs to be rolled to create a firm and even seedbed, and pre-emergence herbicides need to be applied when there is moisture. To ensure even applications are made, I recommend Defy 3D 90 Nozzles. The angled drift reduction nozzles work well, especially where we have some cloddy soils to contend with.

“Cost will always be a factor when choosing crop protection products but I have to be frank, trying to save money on herbicides just isn’t worthwhile. The small problem just becomes a bigger problem. At pre-emergence, it’s about remembering what happened in the past and how coming back in spring with post-emergence chemistry didn’t deliver the control we needed.

Matthias: “Grassweed control is truly a numbers game, and the fact is that the more control you can get at that pre-emergence timing, the less work there is for your post-emergence application to do.”

Nick: “It is also worth remembering that as well as the yield loss, grassweeds can harbour disease which can be transferred to the crop. Compromises at pre-emergence can also lead to T0 becoming necessary.”

**Nick’s Top tips for grassweed control**

Nick: “Getting a stale seedbed is a great start. It is important to use quality glyphosate products at the right rates. Then it’s about using effective chemistry on problematic fields.

“If you’re losing the battle against brome, consider rotational ploughing. It’s like hitting a ‘reset button’. But don’t just plough and consider the job done, think about the field’s history and what grassweed seeds are lying in wait in the soil profile.

“Last but definitely not least is spring cropping. It is a really useful tool, investigate all the inputs and outputs associated and find out what is best for your business.”

**Reflections and looking ahead**

Nick: “On the whole, farmers in the North of England (above York, let the debate begin) are going into the 2025/26 season with a reasonable year (yield wise) behind them, and with the current mixture of sunshine and showers, there is every reason to be optimistic about getting good establishment.”

Matthias: “This is the beauty of our industry, after each harvest comes a fresh start, of sorts. We’ll be hoping the autumn conditions support a good drilling window up here, and with the likes of Nick out there building effective grass weed strategies, we still have plenty of reasons for optimism.”

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Everything we do, we do for the love of farming. Farming is fundamental to provide enough healthy and affordable food for a rapidly growing population, while reducing environmental impacts. That’s why we are working with partners and experts to integrate sustainability criteria into all business decisions. With €919 million in 2024, we invest in a strong R&D pipeline, combining innovative thinking with practical action in the field. Our solutions are purpose-designed for different crop systems. Connecting seeds and traits, crop protection products, digital tools and sustainability approaches, to help deliver the best possible outcomes for farmers, growers and our other stakeholders along the value chain. With teams in the lab, field, office and in production, we do everything in our power to build a sustainable future for agriculture. In 2024, our division generated sales of €9.8 billion. For more information, please visit [www.agriculture.basf.com](https://agriculture.basf.com/global/en.html) or our social media channels.

**Über BASF Agricultural Solutions**

Alles, was wir tun, tun wir aus Liebe zur Landwirtschaft. Weltweit gesunde und bezahlbare Nahrungsmittel für eine schnell wachsende Bevölkerung bereitzustellen ist die grundlegende Rolle der Landwirtschaft. Zugleich sind Landwirte gefordert, die Auswirkungen auf die Umwelt weiter zu verringern. Wir unterstützen sie gemeinsam mit Partnern und Experten auf diesem Weg. Dabei beziehen wir Nachhaltigkeitskriterien in all unsere Geschäftsentscheidungen ein. Mit 919 Millionen € in 2024 investieren wir in eine starke Forschungs- und Entwicklungspipeline, die innovatives Denken mit praktischem Handeln auf dem Feld verbindet. Unsere Lösungen sind speziell für verschiedene Anbausysteme entwickelt. Sie verbinden Saatgut und speziell gezüchtete Pflanzeneigenschaften, Pflanzenschutzprodukte, digitale Tools und Nachhaltigkeitsansätze, um Landwirten, Züchtern und anderen Interessengruppen entlang der Wertschöpfungskette bestmögliche Ergebnisse zu bieten. Mit Teams im Labor, auf dem Feld, im Büro und in der Produktion tun wir alles, was in unserer Macht steht, um eine nachhaltige Zukunft für die Landwirtschaft zu schaffen. Im Jahr 2024 hat unser Unternehmensbereich einen Umsatz von 9,8 Milliarden € erzielt. Weitere Informationen finden Sie unter [www.agriculture.basf.com](https://agriculture.basf.com/global/en.html) oder auf unseren Social-Media-Kanälen.