

28 March 2024

## General Comments

---

Rhynchosporium is becoming more established in the winter barley crops, and septoria in the winter wheat crops, which is another factor of the wet weather. We have very few reports of aphids and yellow rust levels are still very low. Bits of mildew in the winter barley crops also but nothing very worrying. Oilseed rape is now at green bud and starting to turn yellow at very advanced coastal sites, so thoughts turn to sclerotinia sprays.

## Regional Comments

---

### CAITHNESS

A couple of pleasant weather windows in the period has seen seed drills finally get started in the area. That said they were short windows followed by downpours. With some high winds ground conditions dried out although temperatures are still fairly low. There are still some getting ploughing completed on heavier soils. Winter crops in the ground continue to look good while fodder stocks seem to be holding up well with spring grass still in short supply.

### MORAY

As this period of wet weather continues several producers have managed to get some spring crop in the ground over the weekend before being hit with heavy rain once more. The earliest sown spring barley is just emerging through the ground but there are now serious concerns about the amount of spring crop still to go in and the amount of un-prepared land too. Instead, many producers seem to be focusing on the paperwork side of things and making IACS appointments while it rains. Winter cereals at GS 30 or 31 are entering stem elongation stage with new growth that is mostly clean. That said rhynchosporium, mildew and septoria can easily be found on older leaves with many producers unable to travel and get T1 sprays on. Oilseed rape crops are mostly at "greenbud" stage although some flowers can be seen in some crops and looking well but some crops are patchy.

## **INVERNESS**

The Inverness area has seen another fortnight of cold and wet weather which is delaying spring drilling even further. The past weekend has seen weather start to dry up and some are starting to drill spring barley. However large areas are still too wet and with mixed forecast ahead the season is getting later and later. Winter crops are beginning to benefit from the slight increase in temperatures and top dressing, losing the yellow tinge the wheat and barley had coming out of the winter. Grass growth is beginning to increase in the area with the earliest farms looking at turn out soon.

## **ABERDEENSHIRE**

The trend, at the moment, seems to be good day, bad day, good day, bad day, which is causing a lot of frustration amongst farmers who are keen to get on with ploughing, cultivations and sowing. There are some reports of some lighter land getting sown earlier in week, but the majority are far from starting sowing yet, waiting for ground conditions to improve. Winter crops are growing however in these wet conditions and 2<sup>nd</sup> applications of fertiliser have been applied recently, with winter barley at stem erect stage in most crops and receiving T1 sprays. These will need to be robust sprays to help knock rhynchosporium levels. Winter Oilseed Rape is extending flower buds above the canopy now and it won't be long before we see some flowers. Septoria can be found in winter wheat crops at low levels at present and are mainly at tillering/early stem erect stage, providing a chance for any spring herbicide applications to be applied when weather and conditions allow. Discussions about increasing seed rates in spring barley and reducing Nitrogen fertiliser levels to malting crops are also being had, as growers contemplate adjusting their management to the season's conditions.

## **BANFF & BUCHAN**

The weather continues to dictate progress with last week seeing very little land work done. The desire to keep up with workloads has seen tramlines turn into trenches in some instances as sprayers and fertiliser spreaders have tried to get across the fields regardless. Many fields of oilseed rape however have yet to get their welly boot spray despite now nearly being at point of flower with the crop really stretching over the past few weeks despite the poor weather. Oilseed rape crops overall have come through the winter well and have survived the annual battle with pigeons. Winter cereals are also looking well, being relatively free of disease and pre-emergent sprays seem to have worked very well although there is a high weed burden where no pre-emergents were applied. Winter oilseed rape crops and winter barley will have either received all or most of their spring nitrogen's. While most ploughing has been done, some mixed or more livestock focused farms have still some to tidy up. With futures prices rising of late to provide a bit more optimism again for grain markets at harvest, all growers need now is for the weather to settle down and let spring sowing begin in earnest.

## **KINCARDINESHIRE**

The last 2 weeks have been unsettled to say the least with periods of drying weather and days of heavy rain. This has led to field work being very stop start. There has been some spring barley sown on the lighter land but still a small percentage for the time of year. There is still a lot of ploughing to do. Winter oilseed rape is well through stem extension with crops at green bud and an odd flower out. Some crops are patchy after last winter. Light leaf spot can be found in crops and the last application of fertiliser will be applied within the next week. Winter barley is nearing T1 timing with Rhynchosporium present in most crops. Crops in some areas are beginning to struggle due to waterlogged soils. Winter wheat has not grown much in the last couple of weeks. Septoria can be found on older leaves. Grass growth is slow, but fields are beginning to green up. No potatoes have been planted yet in the area.

## **ANGUS**

Very little progress has been made on the spring drilling campaign with only a few lighter fields having been snatched between showers. Winter crops are beginning to move, and most have been able to apply enough fertiliser to keep the crops growing. Winter oilseed rape is now at green bud with the most advanced fields beginning to flower. Winter barley isn't liking the wet weather and is not growing as rapidly as might be expected for the time of year and levels of Rhynchosporium are increasing. Wheat is faring better and is mostly coming to GS 30 but again septoria levels are building. Rye crops are advancing rapidly now, and most crops are into stem extension.

## **PERTSHIRE**

Continued rain with a brief drop of snow have prevented any progress with seed drills and ground conditions are wet yet again. Winter crops are growing with most being able to find a break in the weather to allow fertiliser to be applied. Disease levels in all crops are on the increase and pollen beetles have made an appearance in some oilseed rape crops. Winter beans are now beginning to get going and are generally rowed up and looking well.

## **FIFE**

After another week of heavy rain followed by high winds, very little spring work has taken place. Spring bean sowing has been abandoned in favour of some more spring barley acres. Fertiliser applications are leaving deep tramlines, but crops seem to be responding to the nutrients quickly. Winter barley TO's were missed due to weather and T1 recommendations will be applied within 7 to 10 days. Disease levels are not horrendous but mildew and rhynchosporium are easily found (weed control has been surprisingly good). Winter wheat crops are everywhere from early tillering to a week away from T1 fungicide, but again disease levels are not high. Pre-emergent weed control in wheats has mostly been missed so spring herbicide options are being discussed and strategies to avoid hot tank mixes required. Another belt of rain is due 09/04/24 but after that pressure looks higher from midweek onwards, hopefully meaning drying winds and warmer temperatures.

## **STIRLINGSHIRE**

Despite the continual wet weather, the wettest anybody has seen, most crops particularly on the dry field but even on the Carse are looking well, most having had their top dressing. All winter cereals where they established well are putting on growth as although it has been wet it has been warm. Winter wheats and barley are almost at stem extension. Disease is appearing with Septoria in wheat and some rhynchosporium in barley which is to be expected given the weather. Oilseed rape is at yellow bud with some of the first flowers opening. Spring work has ground to a halt, some of the drier fields have been worked but nothing yet has been sown. There is still some ploughing to be done but what has been ploughed is very wet. A few poorly established winter crops have already been ploughed out hoping to be replaced with a spring crop once the weather improves.

## **LOTHIANS**

Weather windows have been few and far between and entirely absent for many. Frustration continues at the lack of opportunity for ground preparation and spring sowing although some will have managed to get in for topdressing winter sown crops and clearing veg crops on those lighter soils. Drying winds are helping but with land already at field capacity, the heavy showers and often very persistent rain, quickly lead to lying water again. Day time temperatures have varied considerably from one day to the next with movements of 8-10 degrees frequently being recorded. The predominance of sub-10-degree daytime temperatures thus far, hasn't helped backward crops grow away and hence we are still seeing a wide range of growth stages across cereal crops, particularly in wheats. As with reports from elsewhere, spring beans are now likely to be substituted out for an alternative crop like spring barley.

## **BORDERS**

With 91mm of rain so far in April, it has made it very difficult for progress to be made. After a drying day a sprayer or fertiliser spreader can be seen out in the field but there remains ploughing to be done and the wait continues for drilling spring crops. With the inevitable delayed spring sowing growers looking to increase seed rates by 10% to compensate for expected reduced tillering and to cut nitrogen rate for malting barley. In general winter crops are growing well, although some fields are backward and in need of fertiliser. Winter barley is approaching GS 31 with varying levels of rhynchosporium. Winter wheat is ranging from tillering to GS31 depending on when the crop was established. Septoria spores are at high levels on dead leaves with disease currently at low levels on new growth. Oilseed rape has started to flower with yellow fields appearing, light leaf spot and sclerotinia can be found. How crops continue to progress will depend on if people are able to apply T1 sprays at the right time.

## **AYRSHIRE**

As with the rest of the country, I am sure, Ayrshire farmers are really struggling with the wet weather this spring. A lot of spring crops aren't in the ground yet and many are looking at changing their spring cropping plans. Forecasts for the next 2 weeks don't show many opportunities for sowing at the moment. Those that have managed to get spring crops into the ground over the narrow window of weather opportunities are now looking at fields with large areas of standing water as the rain struggles to get away. Winter crops are variable with some fairing a lot better than expected and others looking poor. For those with livestock, some silage pits are starting to get empty and slurry stores are filling up, but ground conditions are nowhere near ready for cattle to go out and the opportunities to get slurry out are few and far between.

## **DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY**

The continued wet weather is preventing spring work getting started. Winter barley crops have been looking well but many are starting to yellow as they await their overdue second N dressing. There is some disease present due to the wetter conditions with rhynchosporium being the main disease present in most WB crops. Grass growth has been steady but again many 1<sup>st</sup> cut silages need their N applications but fields are too saturated travel.