

EPARF Member Technical Newsletter

September 2018 – No 5



Soil moisture levels have picked up significantly as a result of August rains. While some areas are still bare, the generally excellent August rainfall has provided a boost to crop and pasture potential.

Remember, one decent month of rainfall does not make a season. Crop use and evaporation can account for 2-4mm/day at the moment. EPARF soil moisture probes indicate that soil moisture levels at 10 cm, 20 cm and even 30 cm are rapidly dropping towards levels seen in July. Luckily some soil types still have moisture below 30 cm that the crop can access.

Frost and Hay

Frost has damaged significant areas of crop and wheat is currently being cut for hay. Carefully check your crops and assess the amount of damage. Tag heads and return a few days later to check on progress. Take some cuts to work out how much hay might be available for bailing. Compare the cost of hay making and likely return with that from harvesting a low yield frost affected crop. If the sums still support hay, organise contractors to cut, condition, rake, and bale it and know where/how you will store it. Hay can be a high risk enterprise when relying on contractors and an ever changing market, but current demand and prices are reasonably high locally and interstate.

Dry matter cuts can provide an indication of likely hay yield. A really rough method is to cut 1m² of crop at hay cut height, weigh it, and assume 30% of this weight gets into a bale. Repeat 10 times for an average, and convert to kg/ha by multiplying by 10.

Example: average weight of crop in 1m² x 10 then x 0.3 = t/ha hay.

So far wheat, peas, oaten, vetch and medic hay has been cut and bailed on EP. Most has been purchased straight out of the paddock so there was no need to stack and store it.

Feed tests are usually required to market your hay. Contact a lab like this one to get to get a feed test kit sent to you and sample as soon as it is bailed. Sampling instructions are on the website (www.feedtest.com.au). Feed test costs are approx \$65/test.

Email: feed.test@agrifood.com.au Ph 1300 655 474

Be aware that there is a large area of crop currently being cut for hay so secure a market as soon as it is in a bale and tested.

Grasses in pasture

Grass control in pastures has been a bit disappointing for some. This is not surprising for a number of reasons

- Early grass selective herbicide applications were applied when grasses were under moisture stress
- Early applications were made to well grazed grasses with limited leaf area
- Anything other than adjuvant and water conditioners added to grass herbicides may reduce their efficacy

- No grass spray is registered for application to grass in reproductive stages i.e. from stem elongation onwards. They are only registered for use on 3 leaf to tillering grasses. Spraying May germinating grass during August is unreliable.

“Escapee” grasses in all pastures should be controlled prior to seed set with glyphosate or paraquat. Failure to do this will compromise your cropping system for many years. Grasses are rapidly maturing on EP so control in the next few days may be required. Depending on species and product and rate used, aim to control before grass weed seed development is at the “milky dough stage”.

Pulse Insects

There have been plenty of native budworm (*helioverpa*) in most pulse crops on EP during late August early September. All podding pulses should have been treated. There have been significant and repeated flights of moths, so it is important that you recommence monitoring for caterpillars within 2-3 weeks of your initial spray. It is likely that a second spray will be required on some crops.

Pasture Insects

Medic (and vetch) pastures have the usual aphids – cow pea and blue green. They are mobile when it is warm. You can treat these problems – best results occur if you spray before they build up in numbers. However, follow up insecticides might be required 2-3 weeks after your initial application.

Canola Insects

Canola crops have some aphids, diamond back moth, and *helioverpa* (native budworm) grubs in them. They are not always at levels that require control so check regularly with your sweep net.

Cereal Insects

Russian wheat aphid is active in some crops, with treatment required in the less developed crops. Experience in previous years has suggested economic damage might be less likely if the aphids invade a district or crop after head emergence. You will need to check your crops regularly if they do not have a preventative seed treatment, and they are not flowering or filling grain. Look in weaker areas of the paddock first for the characteristic leaf symptoms – white/purple streaks along the length of the leaf.

Cereal Diseases

While there have been some issues with Septoria on lower EP, the lack of early rainfall events and recent canopy drying conditions have resulted in fewer than normal leaf diseases.

At this time of the year, we usually monitor for late net blotch development in barley, leaf rust in barley, and rust in wheat. Seed dressing and proactive foliar fungicides have ensured net blotch levels in barley are pretty low. Keep an eye on your crops if you have not been so diligent with your fungicide program.

Nutrient Disorders

Recent plant nutrition seminars on EP have sparked renewed interest in nutrient disorders. When the topsoil is dry like it was for much of this season, plants cannot take up nutrients in the soil water, so several nutrients can be deficient at once. There is a risk in using physical symptoms only to diagnose nutrient disorders. The preference is that you also use a tissue test, taken at the right time, to assist in diagnosing nutrient disorders.

Remember, many disorders can be addressed by using the appropriate granular fertiliser. Get your phosphorous right first, then look at ensuring the root zone contains sufficient of zinc, copper, nitrogen and sulphur for the plant to satisfy yield demand. Manganese is usually best addressed via foliar application if it is required. For most of EP, the nutrients mentioned are usually the main ones that cause deficiency in crops, and other than manganese, they can all usually be addressed via granular fertiliser application.

Tips for the next month

- Monitor for insects in all crops and pastures – they become more active as it warms up and as the seed dressing insecticides wear off.
- Diseases generally like warm, humid weather. Check pulses every few days, and cereals every week for foliar diseases.
- Check for weed control failures and grass levels in crops – they will influence your rotation choice and management for 2019.
- Prioritise paddocks for herbicide resistance testing.
- There are only 5-6 weeks until the start of harvest – get your gear cleaned, decontaminated and ready for harvest.
- Go to a sticky beak day or field day.

Minnipa Field Day

The farm field day is on this Thursday 20 September. It starts at 9am. There are busses leaving from Streaky Bay, Wudinna and Port Kenny.

Sticky Beak Days

- September 21 – Franklin Harbour
- September 24 – Far West
- September 25 – Charra/Goode
- September 26 – Mt Cooper
- September 27 – Streaky Bay
- September 28 – Wharminda Hall
- September 28 – Wirrulla
- October 2 – Central Eyre
- October 3 – Elliston
- October 4 – Tuckey
- October 8 - Minnipa

*** Check EPARF website for more information on starting times and meeting locations

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