

EPARF Member Technical Newsletter

September 2019



Unfortunately, crops in many parts of EP have suffered severely from poor winter rainfall or frost or both. There are still some areas with excellent potential on the western side of EP and on lower EP, but most areas are looking at below average crop potential with some regions facing their lowest rainfall on record. The crop conditions really highlight how valuable some stored soil moisture is in buffering Decile 1-2 growing season rainfall conditions.

Despite drying conditions in many areas, good crop agronomic practices will still pay dividends in future years. Don't skimp on weed control – spraytop pastures, capture seeds at harvest for destruction, and be prepared for early summer weed control in fallowed paddocks, hay paddocks and pulse paddocks.

If you have stock, have a plan for supplementary/production feeding, or a plan for selling. If you plan on purchasing stock to put on stubbles, make sure you understand the market and the likelihood of making a profit on your trades given current purchase prices and future slaughter prices on offer.

Grass control in pasture

Despite the conditions, you cannot let any grasses that escaped early grass selective herbicide application set seed. There have been lots of reports of poor grass control in pastures. Don't assume resistance as this is not always the case. Take seed samples and send away for resistance testing. Look up <http://www.plantscienceconsulting.com.au/> for more information on how to collect a sample. If you do not regularly resistance test your grass populations, you are only guessing what works. Don't be like the other 90% of farmers who have never had a herbicide resistance test, be like the informed ones who regularly test!

Insect update

Most pulse crops that have not been frosted have been treated with an insecticide for heliothis. Some etiella has been observed in lentils but cow pea aphid numbers are generally low at the moment in vetch and other legumes.

Some aphid activity has been noted in medic varieties with poor aphid resistance, and some armyworm have been found in cereals lopping heads and causing damage. The armyworm damage is patchy so careful crop inspection is required to ensure yield losses are minimised.

So far, Russian wheat aphid activity is limited on EP.

Frost

There have been some serious frosty conditions in the past 3 weeks. Checking crops 5-7 days after a frost event is advised. Check stems for signs of stem frost, check heads if they were in the boot, look at flowers (green and yellow anthers are good, grey or white and distorted or brown is not so good), and check to see if partially filled grains continue to fill. It is a time consuming process that has to be repeated by the same person every 2 days if you really want to establish the extent of frost damage in a paddock. This is the best guide you will get

https://grdc.com.au/CerealFrostIDGuide?utm_source=website&utm_medium=short_url&utm_term=West&utm_content=Frost%20identification%20guide%20for%20cereals

Remember that the hay market can be fickle. If you decide to cut frosted cereals for hay, manually cut samples to get an estimate of potential hay yield, add up all your costs, and you can work out a price that will allow you to break even. Remember, last year's hay prices were record highs for EP. They may not be repeated. Ensure you have shed storage or hay caps if you plan on storing square bales on farm. Also remember not to take risks when selling to unknown businesses – money before delivery is the best policy when selling hay.

Hay quality

When selling hay or retaining for personal use, a feed test is advised. They are cheap, you really need the right corer to take a representative sample. Feed test costs are around \$70. Bale Corers can be purchased for \$350-450. Some examples of good corers are

<http://www.gibsonengineering.com.au/hay-silage-and-forage-sampling/>

<https://feedcentral.myshopify.com/products/hay-corer>

Grazing crops

There are already sheep on cereal crops that have insufficient moisture to fill grain. Using electric fencing can make a world of difference when grazing failed crops as you can ensure stock effectively use all the feed on offer without exposing parts of the paddock to erosion. EPNRM have Rappa electric fencing systems available for 6 week loans, contact Sarah Voumard on 0428 128 684.

Grazing standing dry crops is an effective way of providing good quality feed to sheep and an easy to eat food source in a clean grazing environment with few grass seeds. It also avoids the cost and losses of feed/fodder conservation (grain and hay) and maximises the amount of feed available to sheep and cattle. Because standing crops are more exposed to environmental conditions than hay or silage, there is a greater change in both quantity and quality over time, therefore they should be grazed before feeding conserved fodder. Unlike hay or silage, animals will selectively graze standing crops and consume a diet higher than the average feed quality value of the crop initially (leaf and head/pod material is significantly higher in feed value than the stem), therefore be wary of the acidosis (grain poisoning) risk when grazing standing crops and introduce livestock slowly.

Tips and tricks to get the most out of grazing:

- Ensure animals do not graze the crop hungry and ensure gradual adaption to the change in diet (supplementary feed with hay or grain to introduce them to the dry feed prior to paddock entry) and monitor livestock regularly
- Pregnant or lactating ewes will have a deficiency of calcium and sodium, provide ad lib
- As a rough rule of thumb, 1 DSE will consume 1 kg of dry matter per day
- Estimate the amount of dry matter in the paddock and allow at least 2 kg DM/DSE per day for consumption, trampling and normal deterioration to estimate the potential grazing days
- Consider the placement of scrubs, water, hay and feeders in the paddock for best feed utilisation
- With greater bulk, higher stocking rate is best practice; however conserve groundcover in poor crops and poor soils by grazing at a lower DSE
- Weaner lambs and young sheep tend to move around the paddock more, so consider grazing them first and then graze older ewes to prioritize initial FOO for younger stock and conserve groundcover with older animals
- Spray topping or spray grazing can make plants more palatable to livestock when they become rank prior to haying off, timing is key for weed seed management

Options:

Oats — safe and cheap to grow and feed, dwarf preferably as lambs/weaners can be hesitant to graze crops that are too high

Barley — good quality, particularly for growing out weaners but sometimes they don't like the awns

Wheat — can be risky (depending on yield and protein levels), but can be grazed successfully after sheep have been slowly introduced to the grain (feeders or trailed out)

Peas — excellent for fattening sheep but can be risky so introduce slowly, also be aware of erosion in lighter crops

Lupins — good quality feed but be aware of lupinosis (if the crop/stubble gets wet)

Mixtures of the above can be good but are more complex to grow

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.grainandgraze3.com.au

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/nutrition/feeding-practices/drought-feed-calculator-app>

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/nutrition/costs-and-nutritive-value/feed-cost-calculator>

Permit to apply glyphosate to barley renewed

The APVMA have renewed the permit to use glyphosate (Nufarm DST and Weedmaster Argo) for pre harvest desiccation in feed barley crops. While not widely practiced on EP, this is a fantastic tool for ryegrass control and has contributed to significantly reduced ryegrass numbers in farming systems.

Make sure you get good advice on timing, and read the permit at

<http://permits.apvma.gov.au/PER82594.PDF>. Glyphosate treated feed barley should not be retained.

Reminders

- Attend the Minnipa Field day on Sept 19th
- Attend local sticky beak days and trial inspections — always something to learn at these days
- Don't let grasses set seed in pulses or pastures or hay crops. Investigate using glyphosate on feed barley to stop ryegrass seed set.
- Last chance to ensure fence lines do not contain weeds that will set seed
- Prioritise paddocks for harvest weed seed collection — e.g. chaff lining, chaff cart, narrow windrow burning, destructor etc.
- Do a full farm paddock inspection to assist with your rotation planning for 2019
- Update all chemical records — low in crop rainfall will impact on herbicide residues for next season paddock decisions
- Monitor insects in pulses and canola — most pulses have been treated once on Upper and Central EP for heliothis already, and a second later spray may be required
- Make sure you have very coarse or coarser nozzles so you comply with the application rules for 2,4-D products.
- Plan your supplementary feed requirements carefully if you anticipate a significant period of paddock feed shortage. Have a supplementary feed accumulation plan if you are a feeder, or have a stock reduction plan if you are a "seller".
- Thoroughly decontaminate all silos, augers, bins, trucks etc to ensure you do not contaminate new season grain with any old seasons grain or pesticide/fungicide products

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