

10 November 2022

General Comments

Many fields are now pretty wet, and thoughts start to turn to inside jobs. We go into the winter in quite a good position with winter cereals and oilseed rape well established and carrying relatively low pest, weed and disease burdens. Slugs have needed treatment in at risk fields such as wheat after oilseed rape. We have a few reports of mildew on early drilled winter barley, but this doesn't merit treatment – check again in the spring when considering TO treatments.

Regional Comments

CAITHNESS

Winter crop in the area is looking extremely good, benefitting from mild temperatures during the period. Grass is still plentiful, but cattle are beginning to be housed. Fodder and straw reserves are very good.

MORAY

With a drier start to the previous month, ground conditions have improved to allow some spraying to be done and the last of the winter wheat to be sown. Some winter barley crops are now tillering with others still at 2–3 leaves. Mildew is evident in many crops although levels are low and of little concern. The majority of winter crops are in a good position for going into the winter months.

ABERDEENSHIRE

A wet mild spell in the last couple of weeks has kept winter cereals growing away. Winter cereals look clean for the most part. Majority of cattle are now housed although the milder damp weather last week was not ideal.

BANFF & BUCHAN

The clocks changing means that the nights are now long and cold with things having an end of year feel. For some, this can be a time of reflection, for cereal growers however it is now time to focus next year's crops following the excellent harvest of 2022 when price, yield, weather and quality all came together. Those with crops in the ground will be pleased so far with winter barley,

wheat and oilseed rape all looking well going into the winter with autumn sprays having been applied and sprayers now parked up in the shed for another year. Ploughing has begun in earnest and soil testing is being carried out by some for both liming and nutrient budgeting purposes. With maltsters showing their hands earlier than normal, cropping can be finalised, and inputs ordered. While forward prices remain very good, fertiliser, sprays and power costs continue to cause concern. The last couple of years have been good financially for arable farmers meaning that more than a few will be treating themselves to new machinery this winter although there is some eye-watering year-on-year price increases with lead times stretching well into next year. Finally, as we reach the time of year for making lists of presents, a repeat of the harvest 2022 would be a welcome surprise for most arable farmers to find in their stocking this year.

KINCARDINESHIRE

The last few weeks have seen the weather turn a lot wetter and mixed with colder temperatures and a few night frosts. Luckily most field work is now complete with only a small acreage of potatoes to lift. Winter crops have emerged evenly with no washed out or blank areas so far. Winter oilseed rape is in many cases advanced for the time of year but is now slowing with the cooler temperatures. Grass growth has slowed considerably, but there is still some good grazing about in the area. Most cattle have now been housed or are in the process of being housed. Winter ploughing has started on some farms, but wet field conditions has slowed progress.

ANGUS

Looking back over the past season it is clear it has been filled with challenges, from market volatility and soaring fertiliser prices to one of the driest summers experienced. However, this season has also come with reward for many: with great yields and strong prices. As mentioned in previous issues, winter crops have been established in good seed beds overall, and the Angus countryside is looking surprisingly green. Let's hope the winter isn't too wet.

PERTSHIRE

Ground conditions are now wet, with drainage systems now well and truly into action. Crops however look well, and most people have managed to get all spraying up to date and the sprayer put away for the winter. Slugs can still be found in the usual susceptible areas, and some have required treatment. Winter ploughing has begun but mainly restricted to lighter land at present until things dry up again.

FIFE

Fields are wet! Very little field work has taken place since the last report. There are a few fields of winter wheat still waiting to be established once ground conditions allow, but in the main most winter crops are sown and growing well. Slugs in wheat, especially after oilseed rape, have required treatment with ferric phosphate in some areas and has worked well. Some very forward, well tillered, winter barley has mildew developing. A few weeks of frosty temperatures would help control this. Geese are now settling in quite large numbers on ex-veg and potato fields. Winter oilseed rape crops are forward and fairly disease free; some are awaiting lower temperatures and dry conditions to allow Kerb applications to tidy up weeds and cereal volunteers. Carrot harvesting has continued in sandy fields which will allow the strawing down on the breaks that are left.

STIRLINGSHIRE

Continued wet weather has led to waterlogged land with some crops showing signs of nitrogen deficiencies (not uncommon for the time of year). Winter barleys and winter oats have established well and overall are looking strong. Early sown winter wheats are rowing up nicely, however later sown crops have been held up with recent wet weather but will still establish well. Most crops are starting to show yellowing (manganese def) on overlaps and wheeling's. OSR crops have established well and have grown away from slug and flea beetle damage. Leaf growth varies hugely between crops ranging from 1.2 to 1.9 in forward crops.

LOTHIANS

There's a plus side to kindly weather late summer and into Autumn; seedbeds work down to a fine tilth and crop establishment looks a picture, true indeed of this year. The downside is that following this a significant amount of rain in October has given some places 120mm, the field gate closes quickly to the sprayer and earlier than one would like perhaps; those soils just aren't travelable, being too fine to drain freely. Autumn herbicides are having to be deferred here. This week the region will reach the 170-degree T sum for mid-September drilled cereals, indicating that the second wingless aphid generation could be starting to emerge – a good time now therefore for visual field inspections to assist in deciding whether a pyrethroid spray is warranted. All crops are looking well set ahead of winter and thoughts are now turning to fine tuning N requirements for 2023.

BORDERS

Drilling of winter cereals is finished. Ground conditions are well saturated following a total of 96mm of rain for October. Winter wheat & barley crops are at tillering. Disease pressure appears low. A drop in temperature combined with some November rainfall has increased the risk of slug damage particularly on later drilled cereals, however most early drilled crops have established well and have avoided damage. Oilseed rape crops are at approximately 8-9 leaf stage. Light leaf spot sprays have been applied. Soil temperatures have dropped, and some growers will be aiming to apply a grass/broadleaf weed herbicide providing ground conditions are favourable.

LANARKSHIRE

Wet weather has not relented leaving all but the lightest fields, saturated. Winter crops can be seen yellowing in places especially where water has been lying. Temperature are still mild but fungal disease has not become an issue yet. Grass is still available but only sheep can graze it without causing serious soil damage.

AYRSHIRE

Starting to feel like a broken record, but again we have had a very wet couple of weeks here in Ayrshire. The October total rainfall was well above average for most of the county. Ground is very waterlogged as there hasn't been much chance for water to get away, which means winter crops are starting to struggle with the conditions. However, in a brief break in the weather at the end of last week, people took the chance to get their maize harvested.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

It has been very wet over the past couple of weeks and all field operations have come to a halt. Forage Maize yields have been good, and harvest is nearly complete. There are a few remaining fields which will need to wait until ground conditions improve. Winter crops are all established and generally looking well although the recent high rainfall has turned them a paler green. Most cattle are now housed or grazing forage crops.

STRANRAER

The wet weather has not let up in November with approximately 400ml having fallen since 1st September. With many tramlines sitting in water autumn pesticide applications are stalled for the moment. Winter Barleys are sitting between GS 22-23 and Winter Wheats GS 13-21. Despite the increasingly wet ground conditions crops have established well. There are a few maize crops still to be harvested with very variable yields across the Southwest this year. With plentiful grass growth this season and largely pleasing crop yields we head into winter with good stocks of forage on livestock farms and compared to other parts of the country have had a reasonably unchallenging season.