

18 August 2022

General Comments

Within 24 hours of rain starting, we are seeing slugs emerging on the heavier fields – their ability to survive prolonged dry conditions is extraordinary. Stem base disease has been a feature in some of the winter cereals. Yield and quality in most of the combinable crops have been good to above average, but winter oats have been stressed by the hot and dry conditions and been poorer at some sites. Rain will help oilseed rape emergence although some of the very early drilled crops are already emerging. They will need particular care to try and manage too much growth and development before winter.

Regional Comments

KIRKWALL

Spring barley crops are slowly edging towards harvest and will be around the soft dough stage, however a continued lack of sunshine is prolonging the ripening process. Many arable silage crops (barley or oats under sown with grass) are ready to mow, but farmers are patiently awaiting a suitable forecast to get the crop cut dry and wilted sufficiently before ensiling. The ever-increasing population of resident greylag geese continue to patrol the county, hoovering up the grass and awaiting any opportunity to enter a barley field.

MORAY

Spring barley harvest has got off to an earlier start than anticipated with the last two weeks of wall-to-wall sunshine really bringing crops on. That has since been interrupted with two days of constant rain, which although has halted harvesting and sowing operations, was much needed for grassland. Yields of spring barley have been reasonable and good in some cases reflecting expectations of crops grown on light or heavier land. Quality has been good though with low screening and low nitrogen levels. Winter wheat crops are also ready to harvest now. Thoughts are also turning to next year's crop with producers weighing up the pros & cons of ordering and paying for next year's spring barley fertiliser now. When that quote starts with an 8 it focuses the mind a good deal.

CAITHNESS

Winter barley harvest has gone extremely well in the area with very good yields reported and ploughing already underway. A lot of spring barley has been sprayed off while spring oats also look well ahead of last year. Hay and silage look to be pretty much completed while grassland looks plentiful for the time of year. Swedes and forage rape are looking far better of the recent rainfall while the limited areas of potatoes are being lifted in good conditions.

INVERNESS

In the Inverness area there has been dry, hot weather over the past fortnight. This dry spell broke with heavy downpours at the weekend, which has brought harvest to a stop. Prior to this, spring barley harvest was underway with fair to moderate yields reported. Quality has been very good and moisture levels are some of the lowest ever seen in the area. Most spring barley is now ripe with only the higher and later sown crops still being at the hard dough stage. Winter wheat is largely ripe as well and most growers will start harvest once the barley crops are cut. Grass has been growing well, with intermittent showers and heavy dews providing enough moisture to stop most fields burning. However, the weekends rain has still been welcomed.

BANFF & BUCHAN

Following a week of hot and sunny weather which has ripened-off spring barleys, we have now had a couple of days of rain. With winter barleys finished some time ago, oilseed rapes are now also in the shed with good yields being reported. The spring barley harvest has begun, with the first loads to the maltings suggesting that quality and yields may be better than originally feared due to the dry summer. Just like the winter barley and oilseed rape, spring barleys are around 10 days earlier than normal. The hot spell of last week saw barley being cut below 15% in places however at temperatures closer to 30°C with grain being run through driers at night to help cool it down - a welcome problem to have, being much easier on fuel than having to put the burners on. Fields are still being sprayed off with glyphosate, with couch quite bad in places this year. Wheat and oat crops are still a bit away. The rain has provided a welcome respite for some, allowing grain to move and sheds to be cleared before the combines get going again. In addition, the first of the newly sown oilseed rapes are beginning to emerge and pre-emergence sprays may have a better chance of working now there is some moisture in the soil, although the bulk of the oilseed rape remains to be sown. Potato crops have now mostly been flailed although lifting has yet to begin. Feeders have begun appearing in cattle fields with the dry summer meaning grass growth has become very slow and sward quality has diminished.

ANGUS

The early harvest has progressed at a remarkable pace, with strong yield reports and low moisture in most crops. Spring barley has been variable to date however, most crops appear to have very low nitrogen content. Oilseed rape is being moved off farm, with high oil bonuses being awarded on top of good prices. The rain at the start of this week has been welcome for those growers with grass, and for new season oilseed rape which is due to be planted. Potatoes are being burnt down, with some regrowth present in some crops.

PERTHSHIRE

Harvest was progressing rapidly until Sunday evening when the rain started. However, the rain is most welcome and has reduced the fire risk and provided plenty of moisture to get new crop oilseed rape away. Spring barley yields seem to be higher than anticipated with many reporting good 3t/acre plus crops along with good straw yields. Winter wheats seem to be more variable with some poorer yields balancing out some good yields. Hopefully, the rain is now passed for another while to allow the remainder of the harvest to be gathered in safely.

FIFE

With the hot dry weather over the last few weeks, a lot of Fife crops have been harvested at very low moisture content. Reports of fair yields and quality are coming in, though a lot of spring barley is described as retaining awns. Winter wheats have been yielding okay with higher yields coming from wheats grown on ground with higher clay content or FYM applied. WOSR also seems to have yielded well. Prolonged thunderstorms and heavy rain showers Sunday night into Monday will have lowered the fire risk in Fife, though maintenance checks and availability of firefighting equipment on harvesting machinery should still be observed. Green covers are being sown into EFA areas and, with this moisture, should get up and away well and some 2023 WOSR crops are starting to be sown.

STIRLINGSHIRE

Rain finally made a welcome appearance although it stopped harvest. Harvest is well through on winter crops, just a few fields of winter wheat to finish. Spring barleys are under way, those on the lighter land and earlier sown have been harvested. The rest are catching up quickly. Some fields have taken a beating with the heavy rain and are going down in places, more so those in oats. Oilseed rape is being sown and the rain will be a welcome relief to those with crops already in the ground.

LOTHIANS

With the weather breaking on the week beginning the 15th of August for the Lothians the rain is welcomed. Progress has been very good over the last few weeks with many well into harvesting both winter wheat and spring barley. Reports are yield has been average to good with quality being met for malting barley. Straw yields have been good and, with the exception of some fields harvested over the weekend not having been baled, mostly all straw has been baled in very good conditions. Most are also making good progress with sowing of oilseed rape and with some moisture now in the soil it should be off to a good start. Another week or so of good weather and there won't be a lot of cereal harvest to tidy up towards the end of the month.

BORDERS

Harvest is nearing completion for many farmers, with the remaining crops of spring barley and winter wheat ready for harvest. The dry conditions have meant we are probably at least 2 weeks earlier than normal. Grass availability is becoming more of an issue, with some livestock farmers thinking about establishing a forage crop on available stubble, however success will be moisture dependant (only 10mm of rain recorded so far for August). Cereal yields are reported to be average or above average, with reports of above average straw yields. Oilseed rape yields appear to be above average. Oilseed rape drilling has commenced, with rain earlier in the week, giving growers more confidence. Growers should be on the lookout for slugs.

LANARKSHIRE

Another very hot and dry spell of weather has ended with torrential downpours, at the weekend. Fortunately, most unharvested crop is still standing, and the dry soil was more than capable of absorbing the rainfall. As a result, ground conditions are still good. Small areas of early sown spring barley have been cut before the break in the weather, but most of it is still to harvest. Winter wheat is in a similar situation, with any going for wholecrop already in the pit and a few early fields combined. Most remaining crop looks like it should be ready for the next spell of dry weather. The rain has been welcomed by graziers, with grass visibly greener this week.

AYRSHIRE

Some glorious sunshine over the last fortnight has meant that winter barley harvest is finished, and winter wheat is under way. The settled weather allowed a lot of the straw to be baled and in a lot of cases cleared from the fields. Spring barley crops are still variable as those that were later sown are coming into dough development. The weather broke at the weekend with some thundery, heavy showers which will have impacted some crops. Grass continues to grow well, with many people having fields that are getting away from stock.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

A glorious spell of weather has allowed for harvest to push onto the later stages. Spring barley and winter wheat is around 75% complete with mixed yields. Generally spring barley crops have been achieving above average yields for both grain and straw with many reports of 3t/acre yields and 2t/acre straw. Grain moisture content has been around 14%–17%. Grass growth has slowed down due to the dry weather. Some third cuts are being taken early before the grass starts to disappear. Forage crops are generally looking well.