

20 July 2023

General Comments

Wet weather is driving disease and pest levels at the moment. In potatoes there were Hutton risk periods from the start of June with blight in crops following soon after. There are reports from Fife, Dundee, and Angus. Ear diseases are on the rise in wheat, with sooty moulds, microdochium and fusarium being noted in adopt-a-crops. On the upside reports of ramularia in spring barley remain low, although we have a way to run before being able to relax.

Regional Comments

KIRKWALL

The weather has been warm, wet, and humid of late which has made everything grow frantically. Barley is now well beyond the flowering stage with grains beginning to fill up nicely. However, the humid weather has seen an increase in fungal diseases. Silage making is nearing completion apart from those with 2nd cuts. The crops ensiled in July have bulked well. The forecast is quite unsettled, which is fine for slurry applications but annoying for those attempting to make hay.

CAITHNESS

A real mixed bag of weather during the period, summarised as warm and wet. Both spring and winter crops are looking really good and have, more or less, caught up on last year which is quite something given the start of the growing season this year. The very dry conditions have certainly not helped turnip growth rates in the area. Limited amount of hay made in the area so far while a lot of silage was made before the unsettled weather hit.

MORAY

The first few fields of winter barley have been cut and initial reports are generally not good with talk of very thin grains that just haven't filled enough. Hopefully that is confined to very light land such as that where those reports were based. Winter oilseed rape crops are ready to be sprayed off and some producers have managed to get applications on in between persistent rain showers. Heads on winter wheat are starting to fill up quite nicely with flag leaves still fairly green and crops at early dough stage. Crops of winter rye destined for anaerobic digesters have been harvested.

Most spring barley crops have now finished flowering with some at early milk stage of grain fill. Disease levels seem fairly low although some ramularia has been noted. Grass silage crops, whether those looking to secure one big crop or those seeking a second cut, seem to be lacking in bulk.

INVERNESS

The weather across the Inverness area has been as wet and unsettled as the rest of the country with frequent very heavy downpours being seen. The continued wet weather is literally battering crops, with heavier crops and overlaps going down in places. Spring barleys are now in dough development stage and Ramularia can be seen in some crops, aided by the wet weather. Winter barley crops are ripe in most parts and if there was favourable weather harvest may well be underway before now. Wheat is also at dough development stage and some lodging has occurred. Seed are now mostly dark and hard in OSR crops. The weather has also made it very difficult for silaging and hay making to be completed in the area.

ABERDEENSHIRE

Aberdeenshire has experienced significant rainfall over the past few weeks, some dry spells have allowed farmers to continue with silage cuts and harvest has begun in the earliest winter barley crops.

BANFF & BUCHAN

The last few weeks has seen the heavy showers continue and while at one stage the precipitation was very welcome, a settled spell of sunshine is now much needed as we fast approach harvest. Winter barleys are being sprayed off and despite their earlier challenges, appear to have filled out well, benefitting from the sunny June. Oilseed rapes are slowly turning from green to light brown, with some crops having had their pod sealants applied although the northeast bucks the trend with swathing still very popular. Alternia is now appearing in crops, particularly where lodging has occurred. Winter wheats, like the winter barleys are looking good despite some disease being present however could do with sunshine to help grain fill. The wet weather when combined with wind has also seen patches start to lodge in some crops. Spring barleys have had a strange growing season, being sown later than normal, racing through the growth stages, and ending up receiving their T2s earlier than usual. While still relatively disease free, sunshine is now desperately needed to fill grains, with most crops aimed at the malting market where quality is key. The weather is impacting other sectors, the combination of heat and rain has been great for grass growth although it does mean that silage-making has become a catchy affair. Potato rogeuing continues although it too is having it challenges with last year's late aphid populations resulting in higher levels of leaf roll being found and with blight warnings also now being issued, growers need to be vigilant. The current weather is also making keeping to tight fungicide programs and intervals much more challenging.

ANGUS

There has been heavy rainfall in Angus over the last few weeks, which has caused some crops to lodge. Potatoes are making good progress with many flowering, but there is some blight pressure due to the weather. Most of the spring barley crops are looking clean and are now in the dough development stage. Winter barley has either had round-up applied or is ripening naturally, with the earliest starting to be combined this week. Winter wheat is quickly moving from the late milk development stage into the dough development stage.

The oilseed rape seeds are ripening in the pods, and the oilseed rape crops will start getting sprayed off this week. There are patches of grass weeds appearing in some fields, predominantly barren brome, but also loose silky bent. It is therefore recommended for growers to identify and record these patches now so that they can be controlled next season.

PERTSHIRE

The continued rainfall has put most of the harvest on hold with only some winter barley harvested where they have missed the daily rainfall. Hope is for drier weather to get the winter barleys harvested, especially those which have been sprayed off. Crops are generally looking well with minimal disease however there is some lodging due to the heavy downpours. Spring barley and winter wheat crops looking relatively clean and are ripening off well. Winter oilseed rape, if not already done, will be sprayed off this week, weather permitting. The ground is holding up to the rainfall well but as the main harvest approaches it would now be a good time for some sunshine and heat.

FIFE

With heavy localised showers nearly every day in the last 2 weeks ground conditions have gone from firm and dry to very soft. Winter barleys are at harvestable stage with a few early crops having been cut between showers over the weekend, those crops that were sprayed with glyphosate last week are very brackled after the wind and rain of the weekend. The more naturally ripened seem to be standing up to the weather alright so far, and if there is a break in the weather towards this weekend, may get harvested in around 7 days. Winter wheats are ripening, some exposed sites have flat wheat after the high winds and rain over the weekend, with little evidence of aphids (they may have drowned!). Spring barleys are looking well, though there are a few fields that have flat areas on overlaps and under trees. Disease wise, crops are fairly healthy. WOSR crops are variable in growth stage, as they have been all year, range from having glyphosate and pod-stick applied to green seed filling pods. Over all pods are looking big with good sized seed, though a few fields have lost a few of the top pods to what could be an *Alternaria* infection. Hopefully the weather will move to a more summer like forecast towards the end of this week and allow harvest to get in full swing.

STIRLINGSHIRE

The weather has been very unsettled over the last two weeks however despite that the winter barley harvest has started with yields looking reasonably good. Winter wheats which have been well protected are relatively clean with a bit of Septoria however where protection has not been so good in some crops, Septoria has exploded up the plants onto the flag leaf, which will certainly affect yield. Spring barleys are clean with some maybe a bit shorter than usual. There are some patches where the crop has gone down due to the rain, but these are limited and mainly where there has been overlap with fertiliser. Oilseed rape crops are ripening well, and some have been sprayed off with glyphosate. Hay is well behind due to the weather. It is gradually being worked at in small areas at a time.

LOTHIANS

Wet weather has led to a very catchy start to winter barley harvest. Inland from coastal regions, most areas have exceeded June's rainfall already this month (Crichton 68mm, Gladhouse 59mm, Harperrig 74mm). More north-easterly areas have seen less rain, Dunbar, for example, 31mm so far this month. Rainfall has indeed been very variable and currently it's down to luck as to whether progress is being made with harvest. Showers continue to be very localised. Most have now made some progress with straw being baled behind the combine with the uncertainty of the forecast. Winter wheats are at cheesy ripe stage and winter oats somewhat further forward with grains already hardening. Rye crops for AD have been cut. Lodging is evident in a few crops of wheat but only typically on overlaps adjacent to endriggs; of more concern will be the loss of green leave to sustain grain fill because of the very dry weather earlier in the season. The more forward oilseed rape crops have been desiccated, and whilst yield potential remains promising in the main, there are signs of some pod losses from Alternaria infection. Vining pea crop establishment has benefited from July's rain with even crops growing away well. Fodder beet emergence and subsequent development seems to be less uniform however, possibly due to localised compaction issues rather than drier soils.

BORDERS

Crops are progressing well, with plenty of warmth and rain. Winter barley harvest is underway when the weather allows. Oilseed rape is being sprayed off on some farms with harvest looking to be around the corner. Winter wheat crops are around the mid to late dough stage, disease can be seen in crops with Septoria, and yellow rust is also creeping in. Spring barley crops are at late milk/early dough stage with very little disease to be found.

LANARKSHIRE

The hot, dry weather remains a thing of the past, with temperatures remaining around twelve to fifteen degrees. Numerous spring barley crops in the area are now at growth stages 75 and creeping towards dough development. Winter barley is currently at GS91 and above, and oilseed rape is at GS80-81. The weather remains a main topic of conversation at the moment. With unpredictable downpours farmers are tentative to cut their second or third cut silage, but many find themselves taking the risk when a break in the weather occurs. Combines have been seen, with a few farms beginning to harvest their winter crops.

AYRSHIRE

Another few weeks of wet weather in Ayrshire and all the hot dry weather seems to have been long forgotten. The patchy, very localised showers have been making it hard for people to time silage cuts, with many getting a bit of rain at some point. The first of the earlier sown winter crops have been combined this week. Spring barley is sitting around GS 65.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

The weather over the past two weeks has been very unsettled. Winter barley harvest has recently started but with there being very few consecutive dry days, little has been cut. Yield reports so far have not been great with most grain yields being under 7.5t/ha and grain weights are low. Spring barley crops are around GS86 with most having ramularia present. Grain and straw yields do not look promising, fields that have suffered from the drought are very thin and straw length is short. After the rain arrived, grass growth in the region has been excellent with many farms desperate for some dry days to get second cuts ensiled.

STRANRAER

Wet weather is delaying any real progress with harvesting of winter barley with most grain harvested having to go through dryers. Oilseed rape will be ready to start harvesting next week but as with winter barley the concern is resulting losses due to the very autumnal weather. Forage crops and grass are growing well and there are now no obvious signs of the very dry weather we experienced in June. Maize crops are a mixed bag depending on drilling date but certainly looks in need of some more sunshine and warmer weather. Spring barleys are also a mixed bag depending on sowing date and soil water availability but due to the dry weather spring crops are typically quite short and are not expected to return any bumper yields.