

2 March 2023

## General Comments

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Our monitored crop data is gathered from commercial crops that are walked fortnightly around the country so it gives an accurate picture of emerging threats around the country. We also use information on cases and enquires to our crop clinic to report to you as problems emerge. Things have changed quite markedly since the start of 2023 when soils were very wet and the cold spell in December had knocked disease and pest levels back quite successfully. After a dry few weeks, field work has been going on apace and the first spring barley drillings have started. At the moment there is more disease in winter cereals and oilseed rape than we have seen for a few years, with yellow rust starting to appear in coastal regions and early drilled crops of wheat. There are just a few reports but it does indicate an upwards trend. SRUC trials sites have moderate levels of light leaf spot in oilseed rape – again a bit higher than the last few years. Winter barleys have traces of rhynchosporium and net blotch. Winter crops still look well but the uptick in disease pressure is worth noting.

## Regional Comments

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### CAITHNESS

A drier period has allowed some catch up on spring work as dung spreaders, slurry tankers and ploughs have been taken out of hibernation as fields have become dried out. Still a lot of work to be done yet though. Winter crop is looking very well, having had fairly good temperatures throughout albeit quite a lot of rainfall. Fertiliser costs are still at the forefront of most minds, whilst Nitram has come down to the £600s, seed bed fertiliser has actually increased from last year's prices for a lot of growers. Fodder supplies some to be good, with various lots available for sale locally.

### MORAY

With the first of March heralding the start of (meteorological) spring, cereal growers are getting organised for spring barley planting. There are still some fields being ploughed but generally folk are ready to go but it's just a bit early yet. Winter barley crops are at mid-tillering stage with overwintering mildew present on some crops. Winter wheat crops on average are about three leaves and there seems to be a fair bit of septoria to be found, albeit mainly on lower leaves. Oilseed rape plants are looking well for the time of year, save for the light leaf spot, and range anything from 8–9 leaves to early rosette stage. As soil temperatures have increased and then

end of the closed period for NVZ's has passed, most winter crops have benefitted from applications of bagged fertiliser.

## **INVERNESS**

The weather in Inverness has been clear and dry over the last week. This has improved ground conditions and seen fertiliser being spread on winter barley and OSR. OSR which has been suffered with pigeon damage looks to be recovering. Septoria can be seen on old leaves in wheat but new leaves are clean. Ploughing is well up to date in the area and if favourable conditions continue spring sowing will begin soon.

## **ABERDEENSHIRE**

February has been a lovely spell of weather, and ploughing is up to date for a lot of farmers. Winter oilseed rape and winter barleys have had an early dose of fertiliser in most cases now, as T SUM 200 has been reached. The mild conditions have seen some disease continue to lurk in winter crops, so a good check will be needed as crops begin to grow. This week there has been a cold north wind, and some drizzly spells, which dampen things a bit, but nothing too extreme (so far!). Here's hoping this can continue, as there will still be a lot of work ahead for getting spring crops in the ground.

## **BANFF & BUCHAN**

While the days are lengthening the weather remains bitterly cold. With winter crops starting to yellow and looking for nitrogen and manganese, growers on the whole have managed to resist the temptation to start topdressing and with the short term forecast far from promising, patience is the order of the day. Winter crops have come through the winter in good order. Winter barleys are quite dirty however, with mildew and rhynchosporium present which is surprising given the cold snaps before Christmas. Oilseed rapes are not quite as far forward or as bold as last year although some light leaf spot is present. Ploughing is continuing with the 1st of March also meaning that those in AECS can plough in green manures and winter stubble. Cropping decisions have been made with EFA areas chosen. Cereal prices have rallied in recent weeks meaning the opportunity is there to "lock in" at a prices which should still leave a reasonable margin at harvest. Elsewhere, cattle trade is flying for both store and fat animal alike and the pig sector is starting to turn the corner with the latter (along with poultry) being particularly important locally as an outlet for feed barley and wheat.

## **ANGUS**

On the whole, a kind start to 2023 has left crops looking healthy and ready to start growing when the temperature allows. Farmers have been applying the first applications of nitrogen to winter barley and oilseed rape crops, usually opting for a small dose of 30 to 50kg/ha to get the season started. The ground is in good condition, allowing for ease of travel and is turning over well for those still ploughing. Geese and pigeons are still a concern as crops are not growing quickly due to lower temperatures, however, its nothing a few bangers can't sort out.

## **PERTSHIRE**

Crops are beginning to move and favourable ground conditions are allowing fertiliser applications to happen as required. Even though we have had some prolonged cold spells throughout the winter, disease levels are fairly high with disease of one sort or another being found in most crops.

## **FIFE**

Winter Crops are generally proud. However there is not as many fresh white roots unground as may be expected which does go to remind us that it is still early and cold. Winter barley and Winter Oilseed Rape is generally getting the first dose of nitrogen. Weed control from autumn herbicides has generally been good but there is still plenty of time and space for spring germinators. Yellow Rust has been spotted in Skyscraper winter wheat. This is disappointing. Winter barley has varying levels of mildew, rhynchosporium and net blotch. Some of the green cover crops have very high levels of all these diseases as well as gout fly. Whilst there are benefits of having green cover there is a downside to creating a green bridge.

## **STIRLINGSHIRE**

Recent drier weather has seen a lot of dung, slurry spreading and ploughing. Most crops established well in the backend with some wheats now quite forward. Others have suffered from the wet weather and are under stress. Disease on crops is limited to septoria on the lower leaves of winter wheat with barleys clean on the whole just needing nitrogen. With the weather picking up top dressing has started on the drier earlier fields on winter barley and oilseed rape. Some of the heavy carse ground is still a bit tender yet to carry machinery.

Most oilseed rape has come through the winter well, although a bit patchy in places. One or two have suffered from severe grazing damage by pigeons and geese. Some of those crops have also suffered from wet feet. However, as it warms up they should recover

## **LOTHIANS**

Considering the big freeze over winter, autumn sown cereals look plenty forward enough for the end of February/early March. It's particularly noticeable where there is better soil fertility following rotational break crops or where manures have been applied. From a disease control point of view, I would rather see less leaf area this early in the season in these crops and indeed, opportunists have been grazing back down with sheep where practical. Having said that there is still a considerable range of ground cover in wheat, with those wheats in predominantly cereal rotations no further forward than main stem and one tiller in some places. Growth regulator programmes will need to be adapted accordingly. Yellow rust has made an early appearance in Skyscraper, drilled late September, and will need a preTO timing application to eradicate. Oilseed rape is starting stem extension phase and crops either seem to have entirely escaped the ravages of pigeons or been hit hard right across the field. Ground conditions have been favourable for travelling, allowing for 1st Nitrogen applications to rape, barley and the hungrier wheats, but with soil temperatures only recently starting to rise and colder weather potentially due next week, there is reason enough to hold back on feeding those forward wheats.

## **BORDERS**

Soil temperatures have risen from 5 °C to 7 °C in the previous week, which has prompted growers to start spreading compound fertiliser and onto winter cereals and nitrogen onto Oilseed rape. The most advanced oilseed rape crops are at stem extension. light leaf spot can be found on lower leaves. Winter wheat growth stages are variable, ranging from (GS14 – GS22). Disease pressure remains low on most crops, however yellow rust has been spotted on some susceptible varieties. Winter barley is ranging from GS23 – GS24. Disease pressure remains low, with inactive mildew and some rhynchosporium in some crops. Winter oats are ranging from GS21 – GS23. Disease pressure appears low.

## **LANARKSHIRE**

Winter crops have got through a relatively kind winter in good order. The odd patch of bare ground as a result of flooding in the autumn is still apparent. Plant population is adequate and there is little sign of fungal disease at this stage. Generally, crops are not yet looking hungry for their first spring application of nitrogen yet. Ground conditions are reasonable for the time of year. Some slurry and FYM has been going out and the odd field on drier ground has been ploughed.

## **AYRSHIRE**

After a wet start to the year, February has been a dry month here in Ayrshire especially in the last week or so. This has allowed people to get on to stubble with dung and some of the dryer earlier areas are now getting on to plough. Nights are still cool but there has been a bit of warmth during the daytime.

## **DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY**

The temperature in the region is steadily warming up, with grass greening up and slowly growing especially where slurry has been applied. Winter crops have come through the winter very well and are looking pretty good. First nitrogen applications are currently getting applied to winter barleys crops and generally disease levels are low. With the recent dry weather, spring crop cultivation has started and some farmers will be looking to get some urea on grass in the coming weeks for spring grazing.

## **STRANRAER**

Dry conditions over the last couple of weeks have triggered the mucking out of sheds with FYM ready for application to fields being sown into Spring crops. Winter cereal crops are jumping and have definitely responded to a break from the relentless rain over autumn and winter. Winter barleys are showing some symptoms of manganese deficiency but winter wheats and barleys will be looking for some trace elements and Nitrogen very soon. Grass growth has also lifted, again with a few dry weeks helping to dry up what was saturated ground throughout winter. Despite this change in the colour of the landscape cattle remain in doors and adequate soil temperatures could still be a way off.