

28 September 2023

General Comments

The emerging crops are looking well and although slugs are plentiful damage seems minimal. There are numerous reports of flea beetles in oilseed rape but in the main where crops are beyond cotyledon stages, they seem to be growing away well without any spray intervention. Aphid numbers are low in suction traps over the summer which is good news from the point of view of BYDV but check crops especially where early drilled.

Regional Comments

KIRKWALL

Aside from the odd late sown field, the cereal harvest in Orkney is effectively over. The kind weather has given farmers a relatively straightforward opportunity to secure their crops in good condition. Some dry barley has been harvested and golden straw has been baled. Grain yields are generally good, but straw is less than normal. Autumn grass reseeds have had a very good chance of establishment. Even fields ploughed and sown after barley has been combined off them will be able to be grazed with sheep very soon.

CAITHNESS

Spring harvest pretty much completed other than some pockets of oats and very odd patches of late sown barley. The consensus is yields have been good, around or above 3ton/acre for barley with wheat over the 5ton/acre. Straw slightly back on previous years. N levels in barley on the high side but still meeting spec for maltsters. The early sown winter crops are through the ground. There is a limited number of potatoes grown in the area, but harvesting is underway.

MORAY

Most of the spring barley in the region has been harvested but there are pockets here and there that remain uncut with September's intermittent rain showers not helping. A fair amount of straw has been sitting waiting to be baled too. Many cover crops, both EFA and an increasing non-EFA area have been established with decent levels of cover in early sown crops. Winter oilseed rape crops are looking good having emerged well and moved past damage from flea beetle and pigeons. Generally, conditions for sowing winter cereals have been good as the last of the winter barley and first of the winter wheat crops go in. Seed potato harvest seems to be a bit of a stop-start affair with the weather however quality seems good and average yields.

INVERNESS

The past fortnight has seen harvest finished in the Inverness area in reasonable conditions. Winter barley and oilseed rape are well established now with the warm weather providing them a good start. Some winter wheat is now through the ground and sowing is well on across the area. After harvest green cover mixtures are established reasonably well being sown in favourable conditions.

ABERDEENSHIRE

The word frustration comes to mind when describing the weather over the last few weeks (although I'm sure there are some other choice words being said too) with the lack of progress at getting harvest finished. Remaining barley crops are brackling now due to the heavy showers that have been seen over the last couple of weeks, and quality will probably be affected. Analysis of remaining crop quality will be essential to maximise marketing opportunities. Some growers however have finished harvesting, and are busy getting winter cereals sown, with some crops already emerged (1 – 2 leaf stage). Farmers using min till during this catchy weather seem to have the advantage at this stage. Oilseed rape crops appear to be well established now, with several true leaves. Reports however of uneven establishment have been heard due to Cabbage Stem Flea Beetle attack at cotyledon stage. Herbicide treatments are needed to control volunteer cereals. Tattie harvesting is in full swing as well, but the wet weather is sometimes making things a bit sticky. Here's hoping the equinoxal winds dry things up quickly and keeps the rain away for long enough to get harvest finished and winter crops sown in next wee while.

BANFF & BUCHAN

After the glorious start to September, the weather now feels very autumnal. Harvest is "getting there" across the area, while the usual earlier areas are pretty much tidied up, the later areas are more of a mixed picture. Some crops are starting to look weathered and beginning to brackle, particularly oats however there are some areas where the barley is only just ripe. Yields are decent although quality is mixed, and most malting barley samples seem to be too high in one specification – whether it be nitrogen, screenings, or skinning. Fortunately, the maltsters have moved the goalposts and deductions as opposed to rejections are the order of the day, which is very welcome considering the huge differential between the malting barley price and feed barley. As one harvest gets tidied up, the crops for the following one are going into the ground. Most winter barleys have been sown with the focus turning to sowing winter wheat. Winter cereals are receiving their grass weed herbicides, whether it be pre-, peri, or post emergence depending on time, weather and even technology available on farm. Oilseed rape crops are making good progress with graminicides being applied to remove volunteer barleys and take out any problem grass weeds. Slug and flea beetle damage appear to be minimal. Elsewhere, potatoes continue to be lifted, with the weather allowing excellent progress to be made. Green cover crops are being sown by those farmers who have selected this as part of their EFA obligations. Although grass growth remains good for the time of the year, cattle are being taken inside with their places in the fields being taken by finishing lambs.

PERTSHIRE

The last few fields of harvest are proving difficult to get in the shed, however most are now finished harvest and on to next year's cropping. Drilling of winter cereals is progressing reasonably well, and early sown crops are now well established but there remains a lot of wheat still to sown.

FIFE

The very changeable weather in the last week has made the gathering of the last spring barley, spring oat and spring bean fields difficult. Most are cutting when the weather is okay, and accepting drying will be required. Potato harvest is underway but again affected by the wet weather. WOSR crops sown into the warm moist soils have accelerated past the vulnerable stages for flea beetle and slugs, ground cover is looking good, and the pigeon menace has yet to set in. Early sown winter barleys are looking well but sowing of later winter barleys and the start of wheat seeding is yet to really take off, again due to weather. Windy, drier weather would be appreciated to allow harvest completion and seeding of the 2024 crop.

LOTHIANS

Wetter across western districts for September to date, (e.g., Whitburn 87mm), east Lothian, drier (e.g., Haddington 40mm, Dunbar 35mm). The last fortnight has been frustrating for those with crop still to cut and straw still to bale and September will close out with some combining remaining for spring barley and spring oats. Field cultivation progress continues relatively unhindered despite the gusty and squally weather, and dry enough to work over pea ground behind the viners in preparation for wheat. In fact, the second week of September saw a lot of min-tilled ground worked and drilled through what was a warmer, drier spell and those crops have now emerged and are establishing well. Oilseed rape looks well too, as do brassica fodder crops in general, including fodder beet.

BORDERS

There has been 47mm of rain in the last 2 weeks, causing disruption to those finishing harvest and those drilling cereals on heavy land. There are a few crops of spring oats, spring barley and beans still to be harvested. Seed testing of home saved seed has highlighted large variations in thousand seed weight. Growers must remember to account for this when deciding on seed rates. Oilseed rape is back in the ground, with crops now ranging from 1 leaf to 7 leaves. Some crops have suffered flea beetle damage, however cooler and wetter conditions have reduced the threat. Drilling of cereals continues. Early sown crops of winter wheat and winter barley are already emerging. There is still a risk of slug damage particularly on crops which are direct drilled or following oilseed rape.

LANARKSHIRE

The weather remains turbulent with sudden heavy downpours across Lanarkshire, this is interrupting slurry applications across the district with many contractors left unable to spread much at all in the past week. Harvest is complete bar the odd one or two fields remaining in the area and these crops look in poor condition with potential for low yields. Winter sown crops are in the ground and forage crops are establishing well. Many fields still have bales lying but the poor weather conditions have left fields wet and unpassable without causing damage to the land. Grass is still plentiful but again due to adverse weather conditions the risk of poaching is now high, many farms are considering bringing cattle inside and dairy farmers certainly have their cattle in at night.

AYRSHIRE

Much of the spring barley was combined in the dry hot spell at the beginning of the month. There is still the odd field that is to be finished, with people taking a chance whenever the weather lets up, but it has been a very wet couple of weeks. Cultivations for winter crops have also had to be done whilst dodging showers. Grass growth is still good with some winterers moved on to dairy ground early to stop it getting away. Surprisingly ground conditions are holding up well despite the heavy rainfall.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

The weather over the past week has been generally unsettled, however a few dry days together has allowed spring barley harvest to be finished up and straw baled. Most winter barley crops have been drilled with some crops well up through and looking good. Forage crops and grass re-seeds are also looking excellent. Silage is almost complete with there being the odd field needing tidied up as the grass continues to grow. Maize harvest has recently just started in the area.