

27 April 2023

General Comments

Disease levels in winter cereals remain higher than for a few seasons and reports from winter barleys around the country speak of very visible *Rhynchosporium* infections. Delays with T1 sprays due to windy conditions will not have helped. Similarly, *Septoria* levels in winter wheat are higher than usual and we still have a few emerging cases of yellow rust. For both winter barley and winter wheat, they are beginning to jump through the growth stages. Spring cereals that went in at the start of April are coming through well, and brairds seem even. We are still getting more reports of gout fly damage than previous seasons, and from further north than before.

Regional Comments

KIRKWALL

Almost a week of dry and sunny weather has allowed most of the spring barley in the county to be sown in what was a flurry of activity. The small quantity of crop planted at the start of April has just broken the soil surface, but any further growth will be halted in the freezing arctic winds forecast for the upcoming week. Grass is beginning to green up but is in short supply in the many areas supporting significant populations of greylag geese.

CAITHNESS

It looked like the tide would never turn but thankfully a prolonged spell of good dry weather in the period has allowed nearly all, of the spring crops to be sown in very favourable conditions. In fact, the earliest sown is now through the ground, albeit the weather has taken a drastic turn for the worse in the past few days. Winter crops are looking especially good in the area. Some cattle have appeared at grazing in the past week as grass slowly improves.

MORAY

Earlier sown spring barley crops have finally emerged looking well in this cool wet spring. A flurry of activity last week saw large areas of spring barley land drilled before the weekend's poor weather set in. There is still a reasonable sized acreage of spring barley yet to be sown and, with current weather conditions, for the first time in many a year, plantings look to stretch into May. Winter oilseed rape is flowering with most crops at more than 50% buds open. There are a few pollen beetles around but not at high levels. T1 sprays have been applied to winter cereals with barley now past GS32 and wheat crops not far behind on average around GS31-32. There was some mildew present in both wheat and barley, but the aforementioned spray plans should have helped. Potato planting operations are under way.

INVERNESS

Like the rest of the country Inverness has seen a very unseasonable cold snap over the last few days. Prior to this, conditions were warm and dry, ideal for sowing spring barley, and most growers are now nearly finished, although sowing is still much further behind than other years. A lot of spring barley is now through the ground with the furthest on being at GS 12. OSR is flowering and winter barley and wheat are looking well although disease is still seen on older leaves.

ABERDEENSHIRE

The improved weather seen last week allowed a rush of spring crop to go into the ground and progressed winter crops which had stalled. Once again colder, wetter weather has returned this week bringing a halt to proceedings and slowing things down once again.

BANFF & BUCHAN

After a fine week of weather, the cold and wet has returned, with even showers of hail to remind us that it is still only early spring. The last week however has seen great progress made with spring sowing, with many of the coastal and earlier areas finished and even the later heavier areas in central and eastern Buchan able to get a start at last, with the first sown crops now coming through the ground. Oilseed rape fields have started to turn yellow, though hopefully the anticipated frosts do little or no damage. Winter barleys have had their T1 sprays, although are extremely mixed, with some very good-looking crops along with some poorer, thinner fields that are struggling to get away. The warmth of last week has however undoubtedly seen these crops perk up. Winter wheats are also starting to move through the growth stages and like the barleys, are quite mixed. Some fields may have benefitted from rolling however ground conditions have dictated that this was not an option this spring. While the last week has allowed cereal farmers to catch up on their spring workloads, the return to colder and wetter weather has led to frustration for potato growers with soils still quite cold at depth. Grass has greened up although is slow to grow as cattle are being turned out. With lambing also in full swing, sheep farmers will also be hoping for grass growth and any cold spells are brief with little harm caused.

KINCARDINESHIRE

A dry but relatively cold spell of weather has seen a huge amount of field work completed in the last week to 10 days. There is still a bit to do but most crops are now in the ground and focus is turning to potato planting. Winter oilseed rape is at varying stages of flowering depending on sowing date and area. Crops are looking well but there are signs of higher levels of light leaf spot in some crops. Winter wheat crops vary from late tillering to GS31 with the most forward crops receiving their T1 this week. Septoria is prevalent in older leaves with it moving up the plant in some crops. Winter barley has had their T1 applied last week and have quite a bit of Rhynchosporium in them. The earliest sown fields of spring barley are just emerging. Grass growth is slow. Cattle that have been turned out seem to be keeping up with growth.

ANGUS

The rain has been exchanged for cold winds in Angus which has slowed growth across the board. Nevertheless, spring barley sowing is almost complete, with many crops now through the ground. Some spring barley crops have not been rolled due to heavy showers throughout the countryside, but on the whole crops are rolled and pre-emergence herbicides are applied. Winter barley is at T1 timing however, many crops are patchy with areas which have been subject to frost heave struggling. There is quite a lot of Rhynchosporium throughout winter barley crops, so a robust T1 will be required. As ever, there is a variation in wheat crops, with the earliest having had a T1, and the latest, usually after potatoes, having only just had a spring weed tidy up. Oilseed rape is beginning to flower and potato planting has started.

PERTSHIRE

Spring drilling is getting towards a conclusion with drying winds having helped and some long hours having been put in. Earlier sown spring barley is now through the ground, but a large proportion is still to emerge, and cold weather means it is taking in excess of two weeks to emerge. Winter barley crops are growing rapidly with most having had the T1 fungicide and now into stem extension. Winter wheat crops are a bit more varied with some crops at T1 and others which are still tillering. Winter oilseed rape is now coming into flower and generally looks well although some pollen beetles have been seen.

FIFE

Long hours were spent last week sowing spring cereals before a threatened wet weekend, luckily the rain did not come to much and large areas have now been sown and rolled. Forward winter wheats are scheduled for T1 fungicide if the wind plays ball. Winter barleys were mostly given their T1 sprays last week. Winter barley is jumping through the growth stages with slightly warmer temperatures and longer day length. Oilseed rape crops are also motoring on with some getting into yellow bud/early flowering – disease levels seem to be under control and numbers of pollen beetle have not triggered insecticide applications. Grass is growing and lambs and cattle are looking well with sun on their backs. Vegetable and potato planting is well underway in Fife, though un-sown wet areas are noticeable in most fields.

STIRLINGSHIRE

Despite the cold weather, most spring crops are now sown, and the earliest ones are now brairding. All looking very even. Most winter crops have now had their T1 sprays, disease pressure is low, the usual Septoria on the lower leaves of winter wheat and a bit of Rhynchosporium in the winter barley. Crops have come on well over the last two weeks. Oilseed rape is still flowering but the instance of pollen beetle has reduced most likely due to the cold weather and sprays should not be required. Leatherjacket damage has been seen in grassland this year but not in spring crops out of ley so far this year.

LOTHIANS

April to date has been much drier than March with most areas having had less than 25mm rainfall so far. Progress with spring cereal establishment has been rapid therefore, albeit somewhat later than normal given the heavy rain in March. Emergence too has been quick and even which is one consolation. Priority will be in getting fertiliser on to give crops every chance of developing quickly. Forward winter cereals are at GS 32 and the majority through GS31 with leaf 3 emerging and ready for T1 sprays where not already applied. Disease pressures remain higher than typically seen in early March with some varieties of wheat having succumbed to yellow rust earlier on and will need careful monitoring through the season to prevent further outbreaks. Oilseed rape canopies show a wide variety in the extent to which flowering has developed between crops and rate of development appears slowed by the cold easterlies of late and occasional inland frosts. The first of the potatoes are in aided by good field conditions. Grass growth reported as variable in light of fluctuating daytime temperatures.

BORDERS

Ground conditions have dried up, only 20mm of rain recorded at Greycrook in last two weeks however cold nights and wind has been preventing spraying. Spring barley is just through the ground (GS10). Winter barley is at GS31-33, with many crops sprayed with a T1. Rhynchosporium can easily be found. Winter wheat is at around GS31. Some Septoria, but in general new leaves are clean. T1 spraying taking place when weather conditions allow. Oilseed rape is at 20% flowering. Small amounts of light leaf spot and pollen beetle can be found at below threshold numbers.

LANARKSHIRE

Although continued low temperatures have not seen the growth that would be expected at this time of year, winter cereals have been responding to fertiliser applications. Again, these have been later than usual due to poor field conditions. Weeds have also started to appear but there is little sign of fungal disease at this point. Spring sowing has been late with a lot of catching up getting done in the last week. Even earlier sown crops have been slow to emerge. Grass growth, too, has been slower than usual. It is most abundant where there has been no sheep. Some cattle are out in the fields as silage stock start to dwindle.

AYRSHIRE

It is amazing what a week of good weather can lead to, Ayrshire is filled with freshly ploughed and cultivated fields! Some of the winter barley around Prestwick has only just begun tillering at roughly GS20 but some fields have been particularly hard hit with Rhynchosporium, likely exacerbated by recent cooler, wetter spells of weather. What spring crops are through the ground are only just, at roughly GS11 – 13 but otherwise looking relatively good. Another dry week would really do the trick and some warmth would really move things on.

STRANRAER

The cold, wet and windy Spring continues to slow progress in the southwest. Some winter wheats are getting T1 sprays this week now that the wind has finally dropped but overall crops are really needing to see some heat. Drilling of spring cereals is still ongoing. Attention will turn to first cut

silages in the next week or so, but these are not expected to be heavy crops and with some cuts perhaps being later due to delays in slurry and fertiliser applications because of wet weather. Many grass fields will be in need of some remedial work after the wet autumn and late spring, and we may see grass yields impacted where there has not been enough P&K applied last year to replace the offtakes on the bumper silage crops taken in 2022.