

21 July 2022

## General Comments

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High temperatures, bursts of sunshine and high humidity make for stressful and disease conducive scenarios for crops. After a slow start to the potato blight epidemic this year in the dry cold conditions, we now have more frequent high risk Hutton periods and reported outbreaks around Perthshire. We are also seeing ear blights in wheat at our SRUC trial sites, and our clinic is dealing with higher than usual levels of stem base disease in both winter and spring crops. These can be worse in years with mild winters, but it is probably also a consequence of inherent varietal weakness to eyespot in almost all our current wheat varieties. Useful to check out areas of white heads so that you can determine if take-all or eyespot is to blame and plan accordingly for the following crop and its agronomy.

We have had reports of poor weed control of chickweed and mayweed so are checking out cases for specific resistance implications. But important to note that weed control has generally been poorer where actives were applied in the dry period this spring.

## Regional Comments

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### KIRKWALL

A lack of sunshine would be the biggest complaint in the county, particularly for those trying to make hay. However growing conditions in general have been very good, with some bumper crops of silage reported. The plentiful supply of grass is a godsend to those who made significant cuts to their normal bagged fertiliser applications. Spring barley crops are, in general, looking well with the most advanced at the very start of grain fill.

### CAITHNESS

An excellent spell of weather sees winter crop at least a week ahead of last year in the area. Some has already been sprayed off. Spring crops look in excellent shape for an early harvest too. Silage and hay making continues at pace with very good yields so far.

### MORAY

Lower Morayshire is burning up, with premature ripening in cereals on lighter, sandy ground with lighter heads and brittle straw. On heavier soils, spring cereals are faring well where they are still green and accessing moisture. Early sown crops are racing through the growth stages, with low pest or disease pressures, although this may change when the weather breaks later in the week. Winter barley harvest commenced, possibly 10 days earlier than normal, again due to early ripening and whilst there appears to be plenty straw, growers are reporting reduced grain yields, but have benefited from a lower moisture content. Winter rye is now cut in most places and

winter oilseed rape is being desiccated. The weather has been near perfect, albeit with a few small showers to make hay in the last 7-10 days with some opting to make hay, rather than silage as they normally would have. Growing crops of second cut silage appear to be lacking bulk, with grass burning up on the lighter ground. Upland Morayshire have also commenced silage operations with reports of bulky crops. With winter crops now being harvested, some growers are now questioning their 2023 rotation due to high fertiliser and spray costs. The river Findhorn and river Spey catchments are now also on water scarcity alerts. Morayshire would welcome some rain!

## **INVERNESS**

Like the rest of the country the Inverness area has seen very hot weather in the last fortnight. Conditions have also been dry and crops on lighter ground are suffering. The past week has seen winter barley harvest started in very good conditions. Spring barleys are on average at soft dough stage and some Ramularia can be found in some crops. Winter wheat is at early dough stage. OSR seeds are now black and turning hard. The dry, warm weather has also seen a great deal of hay making in the area in the past fortnight.

## **ABERDEENSHIRE**

As with most of the country, the area has been enjoying the good weather, and combines have begun to cut some of the early winter barley crops. Comments so far suggest yields are good, with moisture content below 15% during the hottest days. Some wheat and spring barley crops are burning up a bit on lighter land, and this is also noticeable on grassland as well. Lots of hay appears to be getting made in the area taking advantage of the good weather. Oilseed Rape is also starting to ripen and is ready for desiccation in most cases now.

## **BANFF & BUCHAN**

The combines have started rolling in the winter barleys as the hot and dry spell has ripened off crops. With most other winter barleys having been sprayed off in the last week, the bulk of the winter barley crop in the area should be finished by the end of the month- quite a bit earlier than normal. Similarly, oilseed rape crops are also beginning to be sprayed off or swathed. Neither the winter barley or the oilseed rape seems to have been adversely affected by the early ripening and plenty sun in June and July has helped with grain and pod fill. Some disease has crept into the winter wheats although overall, flag leaves are still staying green in the meantime however the odd whitehead can be found in some crops. The dry weather is impacting on spring barleys with any areas of lighter or shallower soil starting to die off. Early sown crops had a very wet, tough start and where this has impacted on rooting, may also see crops senesce early due to lack of moisture. Whether these stresses, along with the bright sunshine and flowering, results in Ramularia remains to be seen. Silages are still being made as EFA fields are cut and baled and second cuts are also being taken. The current spell of weather is perfect for making hay with some crops able to be baled only 3 or 4 days after cutting. Grass growth has struggled due to the lack of rain and while last week saw a welcome shower, more is needed the help green things up again.

## **ANGUS**

Crops across the region are ripening rapidly with the warm spell of weather being experienced. Combines have started cutting winter barley crops and initial reports of yields are between 3 to 3.5t/ac, slightly lower than expected, in part due to the low rainfall. Almost all the oilseed rape has

been desiccated, with some areas of some fields effected by pod midge. The winter wheat and spring barley is ripening quickly, the variation in soil type is clear to see in many fields with the heavier areas remaining green while light patches ripen off. Fertiliser prices seem to be on the increase again.

## **PERTSHIRE**

Recent hot weather means crops are ripening early this year with winter barley harvest now well underway. Winter oilseed rape has mostly now been desiccated, with combines expected to begin next week on the earlier crops. Winter wheat and spring barley is now changing colour with many patchwork fields showing up the differences in soil types and moisture retention. Aphids can be found in many crops at low levels and should be monitored.

## **FIFE**

Fife winter barleys are about to be, or have been harvested, yield and quality are reported as average. WOSR crops are approaching harvest, some having been sprayed off in the last week, so these fields will be getting close to cuttable 14 days after the glyphosate application date (normally takes a few days more than this for the rape to be fully harvest ready). Pod size looks good and mostly free from disease. Wheat and spring barley on more sandy or thin soils are dying off through lack of moisture, but crops on stronger soils are still looking promising.

## **STIRLINGSHIRE**

The recent dry and hot weather is bringing on crops rapidly. The winter barley harvest has started. Many winter wheats have lost all their green leaf area as they start to suffer stress due to lack of moisture. Spring barleys are all clean and like winter wheats, are in the dough development stage. They too are starting to lose their green leaf area as well. Oilseed rape crops have been desiccated and are almost ready to harvest, in some crops the topmost pods have already shed their seed.

## **LOTHIANS**

To date July's rainfall over the first few weeks has seen an average of 18mm across the Lothians, with central recording 19mm, the west 8.2mm and the east 26.44mm. The last week has seen relatively little rainfall with forecast expecting high temperatures at the beginning of the week of publishing. Currently many have made a start to Winter barley with crops ripening quickly with the extreme sunlight and temperatures. Most have now sprayed off winter oilseed rape and are expecting a quick harvest following winter barley. Spring barley is also turning quickly especially on lighter land with moisture being the limiting factor. Winter wheat is more variable with most crops beginning to senesce. Harvest is set to be on the early side if weather conditions continue, although many will still be happy to see rainfall after an opportunity to make a start to harvest.

## **BORDERS**

It has been a dry July, with only 18mm of rainfall to date. While I write, it looks highly likely that the record highest temperature for Scotland, previously recorded at Greycrook, St Boswells in 2003 (32.9C), will be broken. It has been an early start to harvest, with winter barley harvest now well underway. It is too early to give an accurate report on yields. Many oilseed rape crops have been desiccated, with harvest probably a week away for some crops. Incidents of pod-based pests or

disease appear low. Spring barley is at early dough stage. There is little evidence that yields will be significantly impacted by disease. Winter wheat is at soft dough stage.

## **LANARKSHIRE**

As the mercury rises, combines have started to move in Lanarkshire. Some farmers are reporting their earliest harvest ever. In the high temperatures, straw is in great condition and often being baled behind the combine. Spring sown crops still have a fairly green tinge to them, but this would be expected as, in a normal year, harvest would be at least a month away. Warm, dry conditions have made both silage and hay making easy. Things are not yet too dry to affect growth, but soils are starting to crack which will provide drainage benefits well into the back end of the year.

## **AYRSHIRE**

A much more settled couple of weeks here in Ayrshire, with a lot of second cut silage and hay being made. Spring Barley crops in the area are variable with some looking better than others. The first of the winter crops are just starting to be combined this week after a spell of dry sunny weather. Yields are over 3t/acre and a decent amount of straw, which due to the good weather has been able to be baled behind the combine. Some winter barley crops have had a smaller grain size.

## **DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY**

We have had some tremendous hot dry weather over the past week, which has helped ripen up the winter barley nicely. Over the past couple of days combines have been out making a start to the winter barley harvest. Yields have been variable but are generally averaging between 3.25t-3.5t acre at 16-17%. Straw yields have been very good with bales being made straight behind the combine if not, a day later. Spring barley crops are generally clean with most crops around the soft dough growth stage. The past week has seen a significant quantity of good quality hay being made and dry second cut silage.

## **STRANRAER**

Winter barley harvest is well underway with variable results and the fields which have struggled with disease and manganese deficiency are showing in poorer yields. Straw yields look like they will be higher this year and this should be considered when replacing P&K offtake to ensure yield potential for next year is not compromised. The varied weather of late has floored some areas of winter crops, in particular oats and with the unexpected growing conditions this year PGR applications could have been higher. Grass growth continues to be very pleasing and silage stocks which have been under pressure over the last couple of years are being replenished with minimal fertiliser inputs. There is an increase in forage crops being sown to try and shorten the winter and reduce costs over winter, with plenty of moisture and some heat in the last few days these crops have potential to yield well if soil fertility is optimum. Fodderbeet crops look especially good. With the lack of heat and sunshine in the southwest Maize crops do not look like they will break any records.