

14 March 2024

## General Comments

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Crops that look yellow and hungry are benefiting from fertiliser going on and soil conditions are beginning to improve although ploughing and travel in some heavy fields is still soft and sticky. Winter cereals and oilseed rape crops are beginning to pick up at last and thoughts begin to turn to TOs. There will be some catch up needed where autumn herbicides were missed but despite missing out some field still look surprisingly clear of weeds. Some do not though! The first of the spring barley crops have gone in but for many drilling is still a week or two away yet. Disease levels are pretty low in the main, but we have reports of mildew, septoria, rhynchosporium and light leaf spot.

## Regional Comments

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### CAITHNESS

A slightly drier spell has allowed spring ploughing progress to be made, albeit many fields are still fairly wet. Still a lot of spring work to be done though. Last week saw some straw being baled in the area. On the winter crop front, looking surprisingly well for the winter it has been, some top dressing has been applied in the past week with ground holding up well.

### MORAY

The past fortnight has been a little drier than the preceding months allowing some more ploughing to be done but large areas of the county that would normally be turned over by now still retain their stubble cover. With no noticeable increase in temperatures, until today, there has been little movement in crop development except for oilseed rape as crops move into stem extension stage. Mildew, rhynchosporium and light leaf spot can all be found in the relevant winter crops but all at low levels. With their pale-yellow leaves, winter barley crops have been showing their need for nitrogen and this has been met with fertiliser applications being made to all winter crops. Applications of lime and farmyard manure have also been taking place.

## **INVERNESS**

The past couple of weeks has seen Spring arrive to the Inverness area. Ground conditions have finally dried up enough to allow ploughing and spring work to get underway in earnest. A great deal of ground has been covered but with little to no winter ploughing done most growers are behind where they would like to be. Despite this the first spring barley on the Black Isle was sown in the last few days and with the weather drying quickly now others will likely catch up soon. On the whole winter crops are looking well now and are beginning to perk up with the warmer weather and fertiliser applications having been made.

## **ABERDEENSHIRE**

“Another (driech) day in paradise” – would sum up the recent weather, with slow progress in field work and farmers grabbing every drier moment to get a bit of ploughing or muck spreading done. Although it might not necessarily feel very warm, crops are beginning to grow with fertiliser having been applied to winter barley and winter oilseed rape crops allowing them to green up as well. Disease levels still appear quite low at present, but with this wet weather rhynchosporium, light leaf spot & septoria will not be far away, and consideration is being given to applying TO sprays in winter barley at present.

## **BANFF & BUCHAN**

The weather in the area continues to present its own set of challenges – many arable farmers are up to date with ploughing however many of the mixed farms with other commitments still have quite a bit to do. Top dressing has started, as winter barleys, in particular have, started to look hungry with Manganese also being applied. Crops have come through the winter fairly well although really need some sunshine and warmth to get them going. Oilseed rapes have greened up and are starting to climb although the welly boot spray is still some way off. There are exceptions, with later sown or low-lying areas more marginal, and in some cases, decisions will need to be made about taking these crops forward, though thankfully these are in the minority. Falling grain prices have also started to focus the mind on achieving quality and selling price although fertiliser is much cheaper than last year.

## **ANGUS**

Weather remains damp making progress slow. Most winter crops have now received some nitrogen although there are fields which still cannot be travelled. There are a lot of crops which did not receive an autumn herbicide, and this will need to be dealt with in the spring when it warms up a little. Disease levels are not particularly high although can be found in most crops. Winter ploughing is progressing but there remains a lot of land still to be turned over. The first drills have been out planting spring barley on the lightest of soils, but most are waiting for a decent spell before making a start.

## **PERTSHIRE**

Ploughing is advancing but is probably behind where it should be for the time of year. Compound fertiliser and nitrogen is being applied to winter crops as and when ground conditions allow. Crops have not yellowed as much as they have coming out of some previous winters but are now looking for the nutrition as they begin to grow away. No spring drilling has been reported yet in the area.

## **FIFE**

Field conditions are very variable as are weather conditions. There is still a large area of un-cultivated stubble throughout Fife, as well as areas of winter crops still waiting to have fertiliser applications as field conditions are still unsuitable – winter barleys, having looked fresh and green for a large part of the winter, now look hungry but with only low levels of mildew and the odd spot of Net blotch. Oilseed rape crops are between ankle and mid-shin and show signs of light leaf spot (where pigeons have not grazed off leaf area). Recommendations for LLS control is waiting to be applied as virtually no fungicide was applied in the autumn. Winter wheats are very variable, some have been ploughed out, few have been patched as weather did not allow, some are working with what they have, and a *very few* fields are looking well. Septoria is present on older leaves, but no yellow rust has been found so far, tillering is slow with a lot of crops currently at GS21/22. Grass weeds are starting to actively grow where no pre-emergence was applied. A settled spell of weather would be of great benefit to allow a start to field operations for 2024.

## **STIRLINGSHIRE**

Things are still wet in general across the region though things are greening up. There are more fields that have been ploughed since our last update, but some fields are still inaccessible. Daffodils are out and we are well passed our T-Sum 200 and some who could get on their ground have applied NPK to crops. Sowing has still not properly started yet with the weather we have had. Cereal crops of WB and WW are overall okay, a few with mildew damage but most crops putting down roots and tillering out. Winter beans and most winter oil seed rape is particularly good motoring on through their growth stages.

## **LOTHIANS**

With temperatures reluctant to rise and no real prolonged dry spell to speak of, Spring still seems a way off and crops are struggling to make any headway with perhaps the one exception being the more forward crops of oilseed rape. Earliest sown autumn cereals have certainly fared better through the winter this season. The continuously wet soils have made for lazy root development and poor early tillering in later established crops. All opportunities have been taken to get first nitrogen on crops where travel has allowed, although inevitably some winter sown wheats will come out where plant numbers are too critically low. The only real consolation so far is the lower levels of septoria, the absence of yellow rust and delayed weed emergence. With much of the spring barley likely now to be April sown, getting seedbed N on in good order is going to be a priority.

## **BORDERS**

T-sum 200 was reached in St Boswells on 20<sup>th</sup> February periodic warmer temperatures (soil temperature 7c) and less rain over the last two weeks crops are noticeable growing. Most winter cereals are still tillering, but early sown rye is at growth stage 30, with oilseed rape starting to extend (flower buds enclosed or above). After staying green throughout the winter some yellowing in winter barley is starting to appear. Fertiliser has been applied to winter oilseed rape before growers move on to other winter cereals. There are reports of spring plough and sow, but it was not known if the crop was beans, winter wheat or spring barley. Rhynchosporium is present in some winter barley with others clean. Septoria is easily found in wheat and light leaf spot in oilseed rape. Sprayers are starting to be seen on the many winter cereals that did not get autumn herbicide or oilseed rape that did not receive follow up treatments for volunteer cereals or light leaf spot protection.

## **LANARKSHIRE**

Winter crops have gotten through a relatively kind winter which only seen a few cold snaps. However, relentless wet weather in Lanarkshire over the past month or so has almost ground field work for spring cropping to a halt as many fields are still impassable. There have been a lucky few with drier ground, who have managed to spread fertiliser on their winter cropping. Many have taken advantage of a dry spell of weather last week and have been spreading dung and slurry across the district, which has given grass a needed boost. As time marches on towards busy lambing and calving periods, there will hopefully be a break in the weather to allow farmers to continue groundwork and get drilling underway.

## **AYRSHIRE**

After a dry windy spell ground conditions lighter soils have improved, and some people have managed to get a start with ploughing. Heavier ground could do with more time and with a wetter week forecast they may need to wait a little longer. First nitrogen applications are starting in winter crops with some needing it asap as there are few crops looking rather yellow at the moment.

## **DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY**

The weather has been fairly unsettled over the past couple of weeks. Winter crops have come through the winter well and have been recently receiving their first nitrogen dressing. Crops yet to receive N are looking hungry due to the amount of rainfall we have had and the rising temperatures. Some spring work has started with dung being applied to stubbles; however, the ground has a lot of drying to do before machinery is fit to travel. Grass is starting to come away, and some farmers are starting to apply light applications of urea.

