

28 March 2024

General Comments

Winter crops are still looking variable, and there are plenty of manganese deficiency symptoms about. More rain, cold temperatures and some snow are not helping matters. Disease levels in winter barley are starting to pick up, with more reports of rhynchosporium levels ticking upwards. Oilseed rape is starting to lift up but some areas are still slow. Some reports of septoria in wheat as would be expected his time of year, but very little in the way of other diseases. The cold weather will have checked any aphids but do keep a look out. The wet weather is suiting slugs with reports of them roaming the upper leaves of oilseed rape.

Regional Comments

CAITHNESS

The majority of ploughing is now completed in the area but that is where the good news stops. A couple of warm spring like days last week saw some seed drills get hitched on tractors but they never made it out the shed as normal service resumed with wet, cold conditions. On the whole winter crops are looking good and had really started to benefit from the rise in temperature last week albeit for a short period. Fodder and straw supplies are still plentiful in the area.

MORAY

Wintery showers and cold weather this week have spoiled a decent spell of dry weather over the past 10 days. More ground preparation has been taking place with a few producers making a start with spring barley sowing on lighter land. Both winter barley and winter wheat crops are tillering well with some winter barley crops edging toward stem extension stage. Some Septoria is appearing on winter wheat and mildew is present mainly on winter barley but also on the wheat, which will be tackled shortly with T1 sprays. Oilseed Rape crops have taken a jump up and are almost at green bud stage. A good amount of soil sampling and subsequent lime applications have been carried out over the past month or so.

INVERNESS

It is looking like the previous good weather was a fools spring with the past week seeing the return of cold temperatures, rain and now snow. Spring work has almost stopped again, ploughing has been progressing well, but many are now waiting for the weather to improve before sowing. Winter crops are clean but are needing warmer and drier weather.

ABERDEENSHIRE

"Rain, rain go away come again another day". Last week saw an improvement in conditions, but since Saturday field conditions have taken a step back again with rain delaying progress. Some muck spreading, fertiliser spreading, ploughing and TO sprays were applied last week (in between the windy conditions), but the frustration at not getting a settled period of weather is a common topic of conversation with farmers at the moment. The wet weather is causing increased disease pressure for winter cereals and oilseed rape, as rhynchosporium, septoria and light leaf spots are noticeable in most crops now (to varying degrees). Winter barley is progressing slowly at present, but most crops are between tillering and early stem extension, with winter wheat at the tillering stage in most crops. Flower buds are also starting to emerge in Winter rape fields as they approach the traditional welly boot height for an early spring fungicide.

BANFF & BUCHAN

The last week of March sees weather warnings for snow and more heavy rainfall with only a few farms having managed to get any spring sowing done. Ground conditions have improved in most cases with top dressing and spraying of winter crops now being caught up with. Oilseed rape crops are remarkably not far off welly boot stage and will be due to get a light leaf spray. Manganese deficiency is showing in some winter barley crops and weeds are starting to show where no spray has been applied or weed control has not been very effective. With a good uptake of soil sampling in recent years, there appears to be more lime being applied this spring. While grain prices have eased in recent months, falling input prices in the form of fertiliser and pesticides has given some comfort for this year although the results of previous successful years has seen a number of producers invest in new machinery. Elsewhere grass is starting to grow despite the cold conditions and more ewes and lambs are appearing in fields.

KINCARDINESHIRE

A fine week or so of weather last made things look like spring was just about here. Land was beginning to dry up and growers were starting to get caught up with ploughing. Colder/wetter weather has put a stop to things this week. Winter oilseed rape on the coast is in stem extension with the odd flower bud emerging. More inland crops are a slightly later stage. Light leaf spot can be found especially in those crops that were not treated in the Autumn. Most crops will have had 2 applications of fertiliser with the last one looming. Winter barley is around GS23/24 and is looking good considering the conditions it has come through. Rhynchosporium can be found on the older leaves. There are reports of crops having been written off due to frost heave and the wet conditions. Most crops have had their first N application with the second approaching when conditions allow.

Winter wheat is variable in the area. Growth stage varies from GS15 up to GS23/24 depending on sowing date and area. Crops have received their first N and have responded well. Septoria can be found on the older leaves. There hasn't been any spring barley sown at the moment but sowing of vining peas has begun. Grass is beginning to grow but colder conditions are holding things back.

ANGUS

The weather has stopped play yet again having just dried up enough for people on lighter land to make a start to drilling spring barley at the weekend. A little bit of spring barley which was sown about three weeks ago is now through the ground, but most are still waiting to make a start and there remains a fair bit of ploughing still to be done. Winter crops which were not washed or flooded out are generally looking good with most having received some nitrogen which has helped green things up. Winter oilseed rape is well into stem extension with most forward crops having a few yellow flowers visible.

PERTSHIRE

It now looks like there will be very little spring barley sown in March this year with most still awaiting a chance to get the seed drill out. Winter sown crops have mostly received some nutrition and are green up and beginning to grow on now. Winter barley is mostly still tillering but will jump when heat arrives. Winter wheat is also mostly tillering but some of the earlier varieties are now approaching growth stage 30. A large proportion of the wheat crops have still to receive a herbicide and also await a warmer spell to get this job done. Winter oilseed rape is growing rapidly and most has now received the light leaf spot spray.

FIFE

WOSR has jumped into stem extension with green buds visible above the leaves on most forward fields, new leaf is starting to hide pigeon damage. Winter wheats are still slowly tillering but do have septoria easily found on most plants, no yellow rust found so far. Winter barleys are due TO fungicides as and when weather and ground conditions allow! Fertiliser applications are being applied with deeper tramlines being accepted as the norm. With good weather over the past three or four days, some spring beans have been sown over the weekend and spring barley on the sandiest of land. Some more breezy and sunny days would be very welcome.

STIRLINGSHIRE

In Stirling despite the wet weather, the majority of crops particularly on the dry field are looking well, there are a few crops on some particularly wet and heavy carse ground that have suffered, but they are the minority. Most crops have now had their spring nitrogen and the effect can be seen in those that received it a bit earlier. Spring work has undoubtedly been delayed with some fields still to plough, mainly on the heavy carse. This has brought up a bit of dilemma for some completing their SAF early as they don't know whether they are sowing spring oats or spring barley. The winter cereals are all tillering, but the winter barley would appear to have less tillers so far than in a normal year.

Disease is minimal with the usual septoria on the bottom leaves of wheat. Oilseed rape has motored on as usual with maybe a bit less pigeon damage generally. It has the green bud emerging but again some on the wet carse are struggling a wee bit.

LOTHIANS

With temperatures still reluctant to rise, a particularly cold snap through the last week of March, and no real prolonged dry spell to speak of, crops are struggling to make headway with perhaps the one exception being the more forward crops of oilseed rape. The more forward wheats are only just hitting GS30. Most will have seen between 50 and 80mm rainfall through March prohibiting any chances of spring crop establishment, bar for a very few on lighter land. 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. Placement of phosphate in with the seed seems to have more effectively aided establishment and growth this year. Many will have first nitrogens on winter crops where travel has allowed, although inevitably, some winter sown wheats may still come out where plant numbers are critically low. The only consolation so far is the low level of septoria, the absence of rust and delayed weed emergence.

BORDERS

Progress on spring jobs is slow, as after every drying spell more rain appears, with 64mm in March so far. Fertiliser applications are going on, ploughing is ongoing and only a couple of farmers have drilled any spring barley. Early sown winter barley and winter wheat have reached growth stage 30, but the majority of winter cereals are still tillering. Rhynchosporium levels have increased in winter barley over the past couple of weeks and septoria can be found on the lower leaves on winter wheat plants. Oilseed rape is extending and is at the green bud stage.

STRANRAER

Progress continues to be slow in the Southwest due to the wet conditions. 212mm of rain in December and 100mm in both February and March has left the ground fairly well saturated and although total winter rainfall at 848mm is slightly lower than last winter it is the lack of more than one dry day at a time that is taking its toll. Winter crops are suffering from manganese deficiency and there will be many still to receive Nitrogen, due to the ground conditions. Crop losses are minimal but there is definitely some remedial work needed to improve drainage after last year. Very little ploughing has been done never mind drilling of spring crops. It is expected there will be an increase in the maize area planted this year, about 10% of this increase could be attributed to the replacement of spring barley in rotation. The dry spells have hit spring barley yields over recent years and with limited seed availability maize is being seen by dairy farmers as a more attractive alternative. There have been a few brave souls who have taken an opportunity to get Nitrogen onto grassland but largely, ground conditions are holding up the spring applications and cattle are still housed.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

The weather has been very wet over the past few weeks and as a result little spring field work has started. There has been the odd field ploughed on lighter land, but ground conditions need a good few days to dry out before its fit for machinery to travel. Winter barley crops are looking well with some due their second application of nitrogen. Most are at the mid tillering stage and with some approaching GS30, they are reasonably clean with a little rhynchosporium present in some crops. Early first cut silage manure application are due immediately however the wet weather forecasted may delay applications.