

10 June 2021

General comments

Temperatures have warmed and crops are starting to move on – ears out in winter barley over the countryside always feels like a turning point in to summer. Spring barleys are starting to extend and advanced crops are at flag leaf emerging so even they are getting to T2 and final spray timings. Despite the warmth disease levels are still low and it will likely be plant counts rather than disease that drives yields this year. With most crops looking well there is certainly potential for a decent harvest.

A reminder to complete IPM plans before quality assurance inspections – the annual plan is now hosted on the Plant Health Centre website at <https://www.planthealthcentre.scot/scottish-ipm-assessment-plan> and you can now select a mainly arable plan if this is your main crop, or a potato plan or a grass plan depending on your main crop. That means the questions are more tailored to your issues – for example in grass weeds are the main driver of pesticide use. We are starting to plan the summer events so details are at the back of the report. Sadly, still virtual but we look forward to seeing you in any venue.

Regional comments

Orkney

The increase in air temperature over the last few days has had a massive impact on the growth of all the crops. Grass has rocketed and the most advanced spring barley will be approaching the first node detectable stage. Whilst the barley is generally free from fungal disease, there are many obvious areas where crane fly larvae have been feeding. Hopefully these pests will reach their dormancy period soon as they are impacting on grassland too. First cut silages have been made and I expect there will be a longing for rainfall soon.

Caithness

At long last, some proper heat! A much improved period of weather throughout the period has seen crops really shift. We're certainly playing catch up compared to other years but better late than never! Later sown crops have also really started to catch the earlier sown spring crop. Winter crops in the area have also received a timely boost. First cuts of silage have been begun with bulk, not unexpectedly, down on last year. Grass is coming away better now and those later cutting may see better bulk. Turnip sowing has begun relatively on a par with timings of previous years.

Moray

A good spell of weather with plenty of sunshine and warm temperatures, has allowed first cut silage crops to be secured with yields seemingly better than anticipated. Winter barley crops are flowering and are generally looking well but rhynchosporium is quite easy to find. Flag leaves are out on winter wheat crops where low levels of Septoria can be found in some crops but not at significant levels. Pods are starting to form on oilseed crops as flowering comes to an end and petals start to fall. Spring barley crops have a wide variation in growth stages as some crops have only recently been sown whereas other crops were sown back in March. T1 sprays have been applied to the more advanced crops and net blotch and rhynchosporium is present in many crops.

Inverness

A very welcome spell of warm weather has seen growth in the Inverness area take off in the last fortnight. Spring barley is moving rapidly through the growth stages and are on the whole clean. Poorer crops have thinner areas, which is testament to the wet cold spring it was. Some Rhyncho can be seen in winter barley. Heads are emerging in Winter Wheat and are generally clean. Potato planting in the area is finishing and first cuts of silage are under way.

Aberdeenshire

The high rainfall seen in May has increased Septoria disease pressure in wheat, with symptoms now showing, particularly in varieties with lower Septoria disease resistance ratings. Most crops are not at growth stage 39. Again, due to the wetter weather experienced, Rhynchosporium is present in some winter barley crops. The earliest winter oilseed rape crops are coming out of flowering. For crops still flowering the AHDB Sclerotinia forecast should continue to be monitored. Spring barley growth stages are very varied due to a wide range of sowing dates. The earliest sown crops are at growth stage 37 – flag leaf visible.

Banff & Buchan

Something resembling summer has finally arrived with the cold giving way to a very welcome spell of warm and sunny weather. The ears are now fully out in the shorter than normal winter barleys and the flag leaves are appearing in winter wheat crops and as such it is time for the T2s to go onto the latter. Oilseed rape crops continue their somewhat protracted flowering period and crops have received their mid flower spray. Spring barleys have had their weed sprays and in most cases are also receiving their first fungicide. Trace elements have also been applied where known issues exist or where visibly required, with manganese deficiency becoming a bigger issue in recent weeks. Spring barley fields are also showing the effects of a challenging establishment period with many crops showing yellow patches – particularly where compaction has been an issue. While most crops are around GS30, later sown crops have struggled and several are reporting leather jacket damage– some of which is significant. Elsewhere, potato planting is finally finished although the cold spring has meant that even the first planted crops are barely broken the surface despite being planted for nearly two months. The warm weather has seen an improvement in grass growth and the first silage has been cut– while yields are not surprisingly below average, the favourable weather of late and good harvesting conditions means that the quality should be very good.

Kincardineshire

Weather in the area has been warm, dry and sunny over the past few weeks with growers on the coast getting periods of sea harr. Winter oilseed rape has been in flower for a long time. Crops are definitely shorter than normal but have branched well and there looks to be good pod development in many crops. Disease levels are generally low. Winter wheat is at GS39 or started booting and is looking good. There are low levels of Septoria and mildew in some crops especially those thicker crops. Winter barley is currently flowering and

is shorter than normal with low levels of rhyncho. Grain heads look to be a good size. Spring barley is suffering from shallow rooting and lack of rainfall on the heavier fields. Crops are yellow in places and need a good night's rain. Crops on lighter land seem to be suffering less. Crops are growing quickly. Potato planting is now finished in the area and crops are emerging. Weed control has been applied with some fields being a bit soft after the deluge of rain a few weeks ago. Grass is growing well at the moment and a lot of good silage has been made in the last week. Yields seem to be good. There is concern at the moment over second cut yields as there is no sign of rain on the forecast for the next 10 days or so it is unclear how effective fertiliser applied now will be.

Angus

Crops are moving quickly through the growth stages, making up for lost time from the cold spring. T2 applications are being sprayed on the winter wheats, with most crops having flag leaves out and winter barleys have fully emerged ears. Oilseed rape is still flowering, with many crops developing a high percentage of their pods, however, later crops are not as far advanced. Spring barleys are mostly tillering, with under sown grass and clover, where applicable, also establishing well. The last of the potatoes are being planted and time will tell if the warmer soils will help them to catch up early planted crops.

Perthshire

Winter oilseed rape has had a long flowering season this year but most crops are now towards the end of flowering and into pod set and look well. Winter barley is flowering and generally the gates are closed until harvest. Winter wheat is at flag leaf with the most forward crops now at ear emergence and these crops are generally a dark green colour with the moisture in the ground allowing uptake of nutrients. Spring barleys crops have, in many cases, received too much rain and any wet or compacted areas are yellowed although many of the early sown crops on drier land look very well. Recent settled weather has allowed most to catch up with spray applications.

Fife

Crops have jumped through the growth stages over the past 10 days. T1 sprays and weed control has mostly now been applied to spring barleys, these have motored from growth stage 25, 10 to 14 days ago and are now between GS32 and GS37. Weeds seem to be dying back and disease levels are controlled. Winter barleys are starting to flower and are relatively clean, the odd spot of Rhynchosporium can be found low down on older leaves. Winter wheats are at GS47, most having only had their T2 fungicide applied middle to end of last week and disease levels have been well controlled with only evidence of Septoria low down the plant on older leaves. Oilseed rape flowering is ending and pod-set has begun, very little evidence of disease. Irrigators are back in operation in vegetable fields and silage is being made everywhere today!

Lothians

The wide variation in tiller production and indeed tiller survival, both in autumn sown and spring sown cereals, remains evident across the Lothians. Predominantly a factor of variable drilling conditions at the time of establishment, the weather patterns experienced since haven't been conducive to crop compensatory growth. This would appear to support a wide variation in yield expectations this year particularly in winter wheat and spring barley as crops move out of crop construction phase into the production phase. In contrast winter barley, having rooted deeper earlier, looks to be the most robust although potentially too leggy in some crops. The most forward spring barleys have leaf 2 now emerging and appear free from early disease, remaining protected with T1's applied in good order. In wheat, Septoria remains low in the crop for the time of year with little pressure on the top three leaves. Yellow rust has for the first time however been seen in the wheat trial plots at Cauldshiel with the characteristic yellow banding moving ahead of the first sporulating lesions.

Borders

No rain since the 27th May has seen ground dry up and has provided favourable conditions for 1st cut silage and spraying spring crops. Oilseed rape crops are ranging from end of flowering to pods forming. Incidents of stem and pod based disease is low. Winter wheat crops are at booting with growth stages ranging from flag leaf swollen (GS45) – ear emerging (GS51). Septoria is present at leaf 2 at low levels. Favourable spraying conditions in the last 2 weeks have allowed for timely T2 sprays. Winter barley is at early – mid flowering (GS65). There are some cases of rhynchosporium at leaf 2, however the majority of crops are clean. Winter oats are at late booting. There is little sign of mildew. Spring barley is ranging from ranging from GS 32 – 39 (flag leaf visible). Visible incidents of disease remains low.

Stirling

The warm weather has been welcomed here in Stirling for another week. Crops really have pushed on, especially in the last 2 weeks. Looking around Stirlingshire in general things are very green with little disease. Although some of the spring crops particularly Oats have had establishment issues and are a bit patchy. There appears in some cases leatherjacket issues out of grass. The WW has taking its time to develop on both the heavier and lighter soils. Flag leaf sheath is now opening so crops are averaging around GS 47. The WB is also looking fine with tall crops going through anthesis, crops are varying from early to mid GS 61–65. Pest issues here remain low with cereal leaf beetle populations obvious. Some competing meadow grasses and rye grasses in the lighter soils are coming though some crops to. The WOSR is at GS 6, 2–6, 3 right at the end of flowing with pod seeds being a mix of greens, some seeds remain translucent. Finally, the SB growth is slow on the carse, it's now tillering out and stem exertion beginning to occur GS 28 on average. SB on lighter soils much further ahead at GS 31 with T1 sprays ready to be applied.

Lanarkshire

Temperatures have risen sharply leading to increased growth across all crops. Most winter barley has now passed GS49 with awns visible and flag leaves starting to show on spring barley. With the rapid change from low to high temperatures with dry conditions, disease pressure is low. Weeds are starting to grow as well, but good ground conditions will not hamper spraying. The higher temperatures have also meant that grass growth has increased. This has pleased the many keen to take advantage of the good weather to get first cut silage or, at least, reduce supplementary feeding to stock outdoors.

Ayrshire

It is amazing what a good spell of sunshine and showers can do to move things on. Most of the spring crops are at GS30 or just slightly behind, with spraying having taken place in many fields in the last few days. The winter barley has also shot on and has now mostly entered booting at around GS43 – 45 and the ramularia seems to have receded somewhat. Elsewhere across the southwest, Arran and the Kintyre Peninsula seem to be only slightly behind Ayrshire in terms of crop growth. A lot of first cut silage has been completed in the last fortnight, with reports suggesting that the crop was light generally.

Dumfries & Galloway

We have finally had some consistent hot dry weather over the past couple of weeks. Crops have been moving along the growth stages quickly and are all generally looking good in the region. Winter barleys having been stretching up and are in the early to mid tillering stage. The initial thought that straw might be short does not appear to be the case now. Winter wheats have recently had there T2 fungicides applied and are generally at flag leaf to ears emerging in some forward crops. Spring barley is mid to late tillering at the moment with some barley fields looking very well and some a bit patchy where the wet cold spring has had

an effect. T1 fungicide applications are starting to be applied. Grass growth has fairly picked up, most farmers have delayed cutting by a week or so and have managed to harvest some good 1st cut yields. Second cuts crops are growing nicely at the moment.

Stranraer

The last week two weeks have seen a burst of growth with the warm weather and regular moisture arriving. Grass silage crops have bulked up well and with reasonably settled weather for harvesting silage quality should be good. We are seeing a lot of clover in swards most likely due to the low grass covers early in spring which has enabled the clover in the base of the sward to receive enough sunlight whilst emerging from winter. Whilst we see a surge of growth try to make the most of this grass either with more livestock or by shutting up and cutting for silage if you feel the grass will get away. Spring crops are growing quickly but so are the weeds, fumitory and chickweed are to be found in most fields. Winter wheats look tremendous and the extra spend to protect yield is justified with the forecast futures prices. Fodderbeet crops are generally around the 8 leaf stage with variable weed control but overall they don't seem to have been too affected by the late frosts. The jury is still out on Maize crops. Thoughts will now turn to forage crops and due to a shortage of weed control options soil fertility and crop nutrition is essential to give that seedling the best chance of competing with weeds.