

24 June 2021

General comments

Crops have moved forward quickly and suddenly we are at final head sprays. Applications are going on to wheat crops and T2's on to spring barleys. In the crop clinic we are seeing some of the after-effects of the cold weather, with scorches after sprays being more common and often linked to days where there had been wide swings in temperature. Patchy emergence in potatoes has also been a feature where issues like free living nematodes, symphalids and rhizoctonia have more chance to be damaging in slow, cold emergence.

It has been good to see some of you at our FAS webinars this week and hear more about your experiences of the season. Next week we have the Arable Scotland event and details are at the end of this report. The Arable Conversations are tackling some of the many challenges. Working in more integrated ways and reducing our reliance on pesticides is self-evidently the way ahead but how this will work in practice will have many drivers. It will need to align to net zero targets and be compatible with what is profitable, sustainable and in line with what our markets want. The sessions will be led by a chairperson who will be joined by a number of panellists who work in food production, academia and farming. Please join and take part in the sessions - there are four throughout the day on markets, net zero, IPM and sustainable rotations.

Regional comments

Orkney

Whilst the increase in air temperature and abundant sunshine have been most welcome, the lack of rainfall is now beginning to tell on most crops. Spring barley, grass reseeds and swedes in light soils are evidently suffering worst, but hopefully the rain on the forecast will fall and relieve some of the stress on both the crops and the farmers. The flag leaf is visible in many spring barley crops and the presence of net blotch and manganese deficiency are not difficult to find.

Caithness

It's really been more of the same in this period. An excellent spell of weather sees both winter and spring crops looking very good in the area. Albeit spring crops are still catching up compared to 2020 growing season. As silage season picks up pace, reports are of better bulk compared to the very early cuts in the area. Other than that, a "wee" drop of rain wouldn't go amiss!

Moray

A good spell of mainly dry, warm weather has seen spring barley crops advance rapidly to booting stages in the furthest-on crops and T2 sprays are being applied. Spring oat crops are not too far behind, and both are generally disease free. The heads on winter barley crops are starting to fill out with most crops at watery ripe stage, to early milk stage. Winter wheat crops heads are fully emerged and indeed are flowering, whilst oilseed rape crops are now laden with pods with the bright yellow patchwork now absent from the landscape for another year.

Inverness

The past fortnight has seen largely dry sunny weather continue across the Inverness area. After one of the wettest Mays in many years June has now been dryer than ideal, with some tatties growers now looking to irrigate crops. Spring barley crops are now between awns peeping and head fully emerged. Crops are clean but, in some places, looking thin. Winter barley is moving into the early stages of grain fill, with mildew seen in some crops. Wheat crops are clean and now flowering. The spell of dry weather has seen silage making well underway in the area along with some early cuts of hay.

Aberdeenshire

The continued dry weather has kept disease pressure low, however Septoria pressure in wheat is relatively high, due to wetter weather earlier in the season. All wheat crops have now received their main T2 fungicide spray. Spring barley crops are variable depending on soil type and location.

Banff & Buchan

Crops are growing remarkably quickly at present. Most spring barley crops are at awns peeping, with crops exceptionally clean in terms of disease. Final sprays are in the process of being applied. Some crops are looking exceptionally stressed in some of the later areas where crops were sown into poorer seedbeds. Now that winter barley heads are out and well through flowering, they are looking surprisingly decent in most areas, given the weather that they had to experience earlier in the year, likewise oilseed rape crops in the area which are now into pod filling. There is a little bit of disease to be found right in the base of some winter wheat crops, but like the spring barley crops, disease levels are very, very low. Heads of wheat crops are in the process of coming out, with advanced crops having received their head spray already. Like cereals, grass has been growing exceptionally quickly and there have been some large crops of silage made in the previous week. Blight sprays are continuing in crops of potatoes, but many of these crops were planted late this year.

Kincardineshire

Winter barley in the area is now at watery ripe and needs a good spell of sunshine to fulfil its potential. There are traces of Rhyncho in the crops and they are slightly shorter this year. Winter wheat ears are emerging and are looking well. T3 sprays will be being applied in the coming days. There are signs of Septoria and mildew at varying levels depending on variety. Winter oilseed rape has podded well considering the early spring weather. Crops are shorter than normal but the yield potential looks good at the moment. Disease levels are low. Awns are emerging in SB and crops are variable depending on sowing date and soil type. Disease levels are low. Potatoes are growing at speed and irrigation is starting this week. There are reports of patchy emergence in earlier planted crops. A lot of silage has been cut over the last few weeks. Yields have been average, to good and a good spell of weather should mean that quality will be good too.

Angus

Crops in Angus are generally looking well, with the large variation in growth stages observed earlier in the season less visible across the region. Winter wheats are nearing T3's and most crops will be sprayed later

this week or early next. Spring barley awns are peeping and crops are mostly very clean. Oilseed rape is mid pod set, with few flowers remaining on crops. Livestock farmers have been busy making silage while the sun shines and lower than average yields have been reported, likely due to the colder spring.

Perthshire

Crops are growing rapidly with spring barley and winter wheat now at ears emerging and receiving final fungicides in a timely manner as settled weather is allowing spraying to proceed almost unhindered. In general, winter crops look full of potential, but spring crops are more mixed with some looking very well and others which suffered on heavier/wetter areas having lost some tillers and looking a bit thin in places. Winter oilseed rape is now at pod fill although some crops which were badly affected by the frost have low pod numbers in places.

Fife

Fife crops have developed very quickly over the last couple of weeks due to the hot weather. Spring barley in some areas have gone a bit yellow due to stress caused by a combination of compaction and heat. Overall spring barley have very low levels of disease, unless they are an older, niche market variety then quite high levels of mildew can be found. Most winter wheats will be having T3 "head-wash" sprays applied later this week. Low levels of Septoria can be found mostly low down in the plant. Where the interval between T2 and T3 has been stretched yellow rust can be found, especially in Istabrac. Winter barleys are mostly finished flowering with the most advanced starting to senesce. Winter Oilseed Rape pods are filling with fairly good size and number. Petal fall seems to have completed without too many sticking to the plant and causing areas of infection. Field beans are flowering with only a low incidence of chocolate spot being seen. Irrigators are going most days on vegetable and potato fields but overnight showers of 2 – 5mm are keeping cereal and grass crops growing.

Lothians

At the time of reporting the weather has been very dry and growthy, with most crops racing through the growth stages and there are some large variations within growth stages. Forward winter wheat is well through flowering, and T3's should ideally be on before anthers are visible. It is noticeable how much more Septoria is advancing up to leaf 1 and 2 in those varieties with low resistance eg Elation. Spring barley ranges from awns peeping to heads fully emerged. There is a large variation in yield potential with those fields drilled in testing conditions never really making good. These poorer more open crops seem to be attracting high numbers of Leaf Minors too which is not helping where flag leaf grazing is occurring. Winter barley is half to mid-way flowering with some at the milky to doughy stage. Winter oilseed rape is also showing green seeds and pods filling. Disease levels remain relatively low. Crops have jumped in height recently with them starting to look very good compared to how they looked a few weeks ago.

Borders

With only a few scattered showers of rain (3mm) over the last couple of weeks the ground conditions have remained exceptionally dry. Winter wheat crops are starting to flower, with the more advanced crops at mid-flowering. Septoria levels have remained low, although in one field has been found on leaf two. Cereal leaf miners have caused flag leaf damage in one crop. Winter barley crops have finished flowering with grains filling, crops are ranging from GS73-77. Disease remains in the crop with Rhynchosporium found on the lower leaves. Spring barleys have progressed well reaching inflorescence emergence, ranging from GS 51- 55. Winter oilseed rape crops have low incidents of disease with pods forming (GS5.5-5.9).

Stirling

The spring oat and barley crops are growing well, with most at ear emergence and all generally clean. SB is at GS 49 at the end of booting with awns peeping on all crops. Some of the spring barleys are a bit patchy with yellow patches where they have been wet or have some drainage issues. The bulk of winter barleys have

finished flowering and are generally clean although there is some mildew present in a few crops at a low level. In some fields you can see some loose smut. WB is at GS73 at the early milk stage. Winter wheat is half-way through flowering (GS65), again most crops are fairly clean, the main disease present being Septoria which in some crops has risen up the plant where there has been poor protection. Oilseed rape is clean and looking well. Field beans are flowering and also clean.

Lanarkshire

Better growing conditions have seen crops racing through growth stages. Adequate rainfall has been enough for to keep things growing but not too much as to inhibit any spraying that has been needed. Grain is starting to swell in winter crops and ears have fully emerged in spring barley. The good weather has also suited grass growth. Most have been able to get a cut of silage with some employing a multicut system getting their second cut after as little as 31 days after first cut.

Ayrshire

Summer has arrived here in Ayrshire and it is just what we needed. After a good week of hot weather and light showers, silage has really bulked up and crops have really moved on. The spring barley has entered ear emergence at GS51 and is looking well. There does seem to be some variation in crop height which will no doubt have impacts on straw in the back end. The winter crops are still ahead and are generally somewhere between the end of flowering (GS69) and early milk development (GS71), with the kernel just forming in some of the winter wheat. Again there is some real variation in crop height, even within the same field, with as much as 13cm difference being observed. Some Septoria leaf blotch identified in some of the winter crops otherwise they are in good condition.

Dumfries & Galloway

Weather in the area has been warm, dry and sunny over the past few weeks with the odd rainy day which has resulted in some good crop growth. Spring barleys have moved through the crop growth stages very quickly and are ranging from awns peeping to ears fully emerged. There is little sign of disease at the moment, but T2 fungicide applications are being applied for Ramularia and Rhynchosporium protection. Winter barleys are starting to ripen with some fields being ready to harvest for wholecrop very shortly. Grass growth is exceptional at the moment, and second cuts should deliver some excellent yields.

Stranraer

The dry weather is continuing in the south-west with some areas beginning to suffer. Hopefully, the rain forecast this week will amount to more than dampening the dust. Cereal crops continue to grow well with focus at the moment mostly on silage crops and preparing for sowing of forage crops. Silage is coming in in good condition and yields appear to be pleasing.