

27 October 2022

General Comments

Winter crops that went in early have established well. Weed control has been pretty good despite high levels of volunteers. A few may need post emergence tidy ups when temperatures drop and fields are passable. Ground conditions are starting to deteriorate now so the chance to continue winter wheat drilling starts to drop off although there are still a few pockets where that is planned. Reports of pests around the regions are generally very low and crops are also free of disease as we start to move into the late autumn period.

Regional Comments

KIRKWALL

There has been little let up in the poor weather, with rain – often heavy- appearing on most days. The barley straw which was waiting to be baled during the last crop update is still lying untouched. The next chance for capturing it may now lie with a hard frost or prolonged dry winds whenever that may come. There is still plenty of grass in fields, but the saturated ground has brought most of the cattle indoors for an early and long housing period.

CAITHNESS

Similar to our last report another mixed period of weather has seen very little happening in terms of field work. The area hosted the Scottish ploughing match at Stanstill Farm last weekend with mixed weather conditions but a very good weekend of ploughing enjoyed by competitors and spectators alike. Still some potatoes to be lifted in the area with reports of later varieties being of good size but smaller in number. Grass remains plentiful but more cattle are being housed now as fields start to get wet. Winter fodder stocks appear to be very good in the area.

MORAY

Despite a rather damp October so far temperatures have remained mild and winter crops in the area are generally looking well. Wheat and barley crops are clean and range from just emerged to 2-3 leaves, whilst some oilseed rape crops up to 7 leaves and are generally disease free and looking well. Most potato crops have been lifted and grading lines are now in full swing aiming to meet export deadlines. Carrot crops are in the process of being strawed down. A growing area of cover crops are now becoming more noticeable across the county.

INVERNESS

The past fortnight has seen the weather take a wintrier turn. Although relatively mild temperatures, there has been continued rainfall across the area, making for some very waterlogged soils in places. Winter crops got off to a good start despite this and are still looking well. The majority of cows in the area will now be housed, or very shortly be housed.

ABERDEENSHIRE

A milder and damper spell over the last few weeks has brought on winter cereals with good establishment in most places, some areas do look to have suffered slightly with wet areas in fields sitting in standing water. Winter rape looking very well going into the winter in most places. Still some silage being made to tidy up fields and make the most of the good late grass growth.

BANFF & BUCHAN

With the days shortening and soils very wet, sowing is now very much finished up, with the last sown fields of wheat still emerging. In the field, Oilseed rapes have, or are about to receive their light leaf spot sprays and insecticides. Winter wheats and barleys are clean and continue to grow away although now much more slowly. With the last of this year's malting barley finally moving off farm, contracts are circulating for next year already with good prices on offer making high fertiliser prices more palatable, although other inputs are now also creeping up. Decisions are being taken for next year and following another good harvest there is optimism for the year ahead, with more than a few considering purchasing something shiny and new. More farmers are considering the EFA green cover option- not just to negate the need for fallow but also for the nutrient retention and soil health benefits. There is also more soil sampling being undertaken and more interest in making recommendations bespoke for the field as opposed to blanket applications. Potatoes are mostly lifted apart from some ware crops with seed crops having been mixed in terms of yield and tuber numbers. Cattle have been taken in although the current changeable weather with moist air is not conducive to healthy housing.

KINCARDINESHIRE

With harvest now in the past, the attention now turns to the newly drilled crops for 2023. OSR has got off to a good start with most crops well established and looking strong going into the winter. With the current weather, we will need to be observant of the slug risk, especially if the warm temperatures continue. Most winter cereals have now been drilled with the exception of Winter wheat following tatties. Most crops are emerging well but again, care will have to be taken with the slug risk. Most tattie crops are now lifted with some good yields and quality being reported. Cattle are now coming in for the winter and forage crops are now being analysed with some good quality silages coming in.

ANGUS

Most growers are up to date with sowing and have the last of the pre-emergence herbicides on the wheat, with the exception of a few who are still planning wheat to sow after late lifted potatoes. Overall, winter crops are looking very good for the time of year. There has been a lot of volunteer potatoes this year, which has led to a concentrated effort to spray stubbles for the management of PCN within the rotation. Oilseed rape crops are in the process of being treated for Light leaf spot with many opting to include an insecticide to manage weevil population.

PERTSHIRE

Wet weather has made the end of the potato harvest a bit tricky but most crops have now been sown into good seedbeds and time will tell if the last few fields of planned wheat get sown or not. The warm weather means that crops continue to grow and oilseed rape crops are now well advanced and receiving the light leaf spot sprays. Winter cereals are now also well advanced for the time of year and most have received autumn herbicides. A few farmers have now begun winter ploughing in preparation for spring cropping.

FIFE

After another half inch of rain over the weekend, field conditions are decidedly soft! With potato harvest in its last stages, there will be a few fields left to be worked up and sown in wheat but a settled spell of dry and windy weather will be required to allow this to happen. Winter oilseed rape fields are looking well without signs of rape winter stem weevil and cabbage stem flea beetle as yet! Some fields may require a weed tidy up when the temperature drops low enough for a Kerb application. Early sown winter wheats and winter barleys are looking well and weed control seems to have been satisfactory, later sown wheats after vegetables or potatoes are emerging quickly. Some of the later sown fields have not been rolled or had pre-emergence weed control applied, these will have to be monitored for slugs and post emergent weed options.

STIRLINGSHIRE

Recent weather will limit any movement with crop sprayers at the moment meaning post emergence applications will be challenging. Winter barleys and winter oats have established well and on the whole are looking strong. Early sown winter wheats are rowing up nicely and however later sown crops have been held up with recent wet weather but will still establish well. Some crops are starting to show yellowing (manganese deficiency) on overlaps and wheeling's. Oilseed rape crops have established well and have grown away from slug and flea beetle damage. Leave growth varies hugely between crops ranging from 1.2 to 1.9 in forward crops.

LOTHIANS

The West/East Lothian rainfall split continues through October; SEPA recording 100mm at Harperigg, and 50mm at Haddington for example, and illustrates the variance. Crop establishment progress has however been productive with the early harvest affording plenty of time for stale seedbeds and cultivation preparations for sowing. Most have snatched the opportunities in October amongst the showers to fulfil their drilling targets. Crops have rapidly emerged as daytime temperatures have rarely dropped below 10°C and plant stands are well set up as we head into winter; winter wheat GS 12-13, winter barley GS 13-14 and oilseed rape GS 1.7. The often gusty and showery weather has made application of pre-(peri) emergence herbicides somewhat more difficult with plenty choosing to delay cereal weed control until ground conditions permit. The crops are clean so far and free from pest damage, although those with the earliest sown cereals will have taken a decision on BYDV control given the warmer daytime temperatures we've seen.

BORDERS

Drilling of winter cereals is now mostly finished. Establishment has been aided by mild conditions and 76mm of rain for October. Early sown winter wheat crops are beginning to tiller, while other crops are ranging from leaf 1 – 3 emerged. Winter barley crops are at tillering. Disease pressure appears low, however mild conditions will increase risk of powdery mildew. Oilseed rape crops is at 8-9 leaf stage, with growers preparing for light leaf spot sprays. There have been some reports of mildew.

LANARKSHIRE

A lot of the good done by the longer dry spells in the summer seems to have been undone by an extended period of rain, punctuated by torrential downpours. Water can be seen lying in many fields and the effects of compaction are evident on a lot of headlands, where crops growth is poor. However, disease and weed pressure is still low. It is likely that fields gates will now be closed for the winter. Despite grass still being available, all but those on the driest soils have cattle housed.

AYRSHIRE

The wet weather has continued in Ayrshire over the past fortnight, with some very heavy localised showers. As a result, the ground conditions are very wet meaning more cattle have come into housing and some are starting to move onto forage crops. The earlier sown winter crops generally look okay but those that were sown a little later are struggling a little with the conditions.

STRANRAER

The wet Autumn continues and sees a large proportion of cows now housed or onto winter systems. Ground conditions are average at best and at the moment it looks like winter cereal drilling will be finished for 2022. Maize crops have been harvested and fields appear to have stood up okay. Overall, it has been a good growing season in the south west and harvest was relatively smooth.