

13 April 2023

General Comments

On winter wheats, Septoria levels are higher than usual across all varieties, and it is usually later in the season that we see the benefits of varietal resistance kick in. Yellow rust levels have been stable so some report but not much more than previously. On winter barley Rhynchosporium and mildew are reported, with one report of brown rust (at the SRUC trial site in Midlothian). Oilseed rape is starting to grow away rapidly, and light leaf spot sprays are due. As with other winter crops, disease levels are higher than for a few seasons and light leaf spot is the main issue being reported. We are continuing to get lots of reports of gout fly in wheat from all the way up the east of the country so much further north than previously experienced.

Regional Comments

KIRKWALL

Virtually no progress has been made on the spring barley front in the last fortnight with the frequent showers restricting sowing in all but the very driest of land. Less than 5% of the spring barley area will have been sown so far, and the unsettled forecast for the coming week looks likely to hamper any attempts at further groundwork.

CAITHNESS

It's been a case of better late than never as seed drills finally got out the sheds this past week. Ground conditions have been good and dry albeit temperatures are still fairly low. Some windy conditions have certainly helped to dry ground though. There are still some getting ploughing started especially on heavier soils, so as whole the area will be around 3 weeks behind normal. Winter crops in the ground continue to look good while fodder stocks seem to be holding up well with spring grass still in short supply. Some growers only ordering their seed fertiliser this week have been pleasantly surprised with a price drop.

MORAY

Weather and ground conditions have improved considerably over the past two weeks and seed drills have been going flat out to get caught up with spring barley establishment with a large amount of acres sown this past week in particular. Winter wheat crops are generally clean and at or approaching GS31 whilst winter barley crops have reached GS32. Winter oilseed rape plants are now quite tall (waist height) and starting to flower (10% buds open). There is some light leaf spot around but mainly confined to the lower leaves.

ABERDEENSHIRE

Unfortunately, the cold temperatures and variable weather conditions have continued over the recent weeks, delaying grass growth and spring sowing. Currently, the weather looks to improve in the next few days with some much-needed sunshine forecast. The cooler weather has however kept disease pressure low in most crops, though levels should continue to be monitored, particularly as temperatures increase.

BANFF & BUCHAN

The cold and wet weather has taken its toll on spring sowing. Some areas around the coast and on lighter land have been able to make a start although in most cases the drill remains in the shed and seed remains in the bag. With the weather forecast far from promising for the rest of the week, there will be much to do in the second half of the month. Soils are still cold and even after a couple of dry days remain raw- not exactly the best recipe for spring barley establishment. Later sowing means a bit more thought re: seed rates, however seedbed conditions will also have to be factored in. This weather has also impacted on the winter crops- while winter oilseed rape is not far off the yellow bud stage having received stem extension fungicides, winter barleys are very mixed. Some barley crops are haring away, looking very good and have received their T1 sprays whereas others continue to look very sorry for themselves with manganese deficiency prominent, despite applications of manganese being undertaken. Winter wheats continue to slowly grow although are looking well. Despite the cold spell, there has been a noticeable greening of grass fields over the past 10 days and with it the appearance of ewes and lambs.

KINCARDINESHIRE

Spring so far can only be described as "slow". Temperatures are slow to rise, and fields are slow to dry out. Spring sowing has started in the earlier drier parts of the region, but folk are having to be selective, and parts of fields are still wet. Most growers will need a week of drier weather before they make a start. Winter crops are beginning to move now. Winter barley is at GS30 with some nearing GS31. There is quite a bit of Rhynchosporium in crops which should be handled with upcoming T1 sprays. Winter wheat is at GS25 with some at GS30. There are signs of Septoria on older leaves, but new leaves are generally clean. Winter rape has jumped with early sown crops at the start of flowering and the rest at green bud. There are signs of light leaf spot in some crops. Grass is greening up with some growth in fields which had FYM/slurry or nitrogen already applied.

ANGUS

Catchy weather in Angus has prevented many from making significant progress with spring barley sowing, however, good weather at the weekend helped most to make a start. Oilseed rape is at the green bud stage with the earliest crops (those not grazed with pigeons) beginning to flower. Winter barley is approaching T1 timing, with some growers applying a herbicide first as a separate pass to any fields that need a tidy up. Winter wheat is at a variety of growth stages with some later crops following potatoes still to receive a herbicide, while some will likely be ready for a T1 application next week.

PERTSHIRE

Spring drilling remains catchy with a lot of crops still to be sown for the time of year. Winter oilseed rape is mostly at green bud and growing well although some crops are still troubled by pigeons. Winter wheat is approaching growth stage 30 and Septoria can be found in many crops. Winter barley is at GS30 and now growing rapidly. Gout fly has been seen on some early sown winter crops and frost heave has been an issue this winter.

FIFE

Winter crops have leapt on with the slightly warmer weather and have their feet into the fertiliser applied the last time ground was fit for machinery. Winter barleys and wheats are around growth stage 30/31 and have visible Septoria in the wheat and Rhynchosporium in the barleys, not all winter barleys had the recommended TO applied due to the wet weather, the more backward winter barleys have had TO applied in the last few days. T1 fungicide recommendations will be applied in 10 to 14 days for winter wheats so long as weather plays ball. Spring barley seeding went into full swing towards Easter Weekend, seed beds are looking good but there are unsown wet areas in quite a few fields.

STIRLINGSHIRE

It's been all go this Easter weekend with the sun shining and the lighter ground is being sowed with spring crops. Some of heavier land has been ploughed and prepared for seed beds. Ground has had an opportunity to dry out with a few weeks of slightly less rain! But this has really been the first opportunity for farmers to get going properly. WB crops are looking okay with some Rhynchosporium present. WW is motoring on but has a touch of Septoria. OSR crops have started flowering across Stirlingshire though some later sown fields are not there yet in their growth stage. A couple of pollen beetles seen on each plant given the warmer weather and the crops remain fairly clean of disease.

LOTHIANS

Drills have been quick to the field on the back of some blustery drying days and indeed the ground has dried out surprisingly quickly for many with some great seedbeds being created for spring cereals. Germination should be rapid and even, and some are electing to broadcast fertiliser ahead of the drill to encourage early uptake and offset the later start to drilling this year. The first of the season's potatoes are going in too this week. Temperatures continue to fluctuate considerably from day to day and grass growth seems to have taken a check. Crop development

in winter cereals is also moderate to slow in the absence of a sustained lift in daytime temperatures. Disease levels are higher in winter cereals this year over last; yellow rust outbreaks are a concern this early in the season and have recently been seen to re-infect previously damaged leaf tissue forcing a TO fungicide application. Some wheat has been affected by fly larvae damage too, (eg frit/opomyza), and particularly in those younger tillers which are now showing the symptomatic leaf senescence effect from stem damage further down. Oilseed rape development continues unchecked with flowers now opening in the most forward crops.

BORDERS

Spring sowing got off to a tentative start at the beginning of last week and gathered pace through Easter weekend being a good two weeks later than usual and spring beans are still being planted in East Berwickshire. The soil temperature at St Boswells is 12°C at the time of writing, so with adequate moisture grain should come through quickly. Before the soil was suitable for drilling many growers took the opportunity to apply further nitrogen to oilseed rape and winter barley and progress with fungicide on winter rape, winter barley and tidy some late winter weeds in autumn cereals. Winter barley crops are mostly at GS30 but will not take long to get to first node if temperatures are maintained. Rhynchosporium is present in most crops with mildew in more susceptible varieties. Winter oats are at late tillering to GS30 with active mildew present in many crops. Early sown winter wheat is at GS30, but most crops are still tillering. Septoria tritici levels high on dead or dying lower leaves in weaker varieties and the recent unsettled weather will have raised the disease pressure compared to the past few years. There are reports of yellow rust, but none seen in the monitored crops. Yellow flowers are starting to appear in winter oilseed rape, but the majority of crops are at green or yellow bud. Light leaf spot and phoma can be found on the lower leaves. Pollen beetle are present, but well below threshold levels.

AYRSHIRE

Weather has been very patchy here in Ayrshire over the past fortnight, with every dry day coming with a couple of wet days. Easter weekend brought some dry sunny weather which allowed some people to get on ploughing, with a lot of tractors working well into the night to beat the wet weather forecast this week. There remain some spring barley fields yet to be ploughed. Winter crops are variable, with some having had a light dressing of nitrogen and others that haven't yet.

DUMRFRIES & GALLOWAY

The weather finally dried up for a week which allowed for spring work to begin. It was all go with ploughs and drills with there now being approximately 50% of the springs crops in the ground. Winter crops have been receiving their final nitrogen applications and winter barleys are fast approaching their T1 fungicide application at growth stage 30-31. Grass growth rates have picked up and first nitrogen application have been spread over the past couple of weeks.