

14 October 2021

General comments

The winter crops that got drilled before the rain have come through well and are looking strong and even. It has obviously got a bit stickier since then, and rain falling now is landing on soils that are already pretty wet. We have struggled a bit with trials with late delivered seed – caught up in the general problems with moving goods around at the moment, and that has been the wider experience too with rye seed from Germany particularly affected. The price of fertilizer is the main concern at the moment – winter crop decisions have been made but if prices remain as they are there may be decisions to be made around the viability of spring crops.

At the moment pest, weed and disease levels seem pretty low. The odd reports of slugs on fields after rape and heavy fields. Aphid reports are low which is good news in terms of BYDV risk and reduced use of autumn aphicides.

Regional comments

Caithness

Heavier rainfall in the period has been welcome for the winter crop in the ground. Spring harvest completed with most fields cleared of straw bales now too. The limited amount of swedes in the area look to have produced some decent yields by early indications. Some of the potato harvest in the area is still in the ground and conditions have certainly deteriorated from previous weeks.

Inverness

The past fortnight has seen the weather turn much wetter and colder than previously. This has had limited effect on field work, with the very favourable weather after harvest allowing most winter crops to be sown in good conditions and fairly early. Winter barley and osr are well established and thick. Winter wheats crops have seen worse weather after sowing, however, are looking well on the whole.

Moray

Winter barley crops are generally looking good emerging nicely and starting to tiller now. There is a little bit of mildew creeping in but otherwise looking good. Winter oilseed rape seems to have got off to a great start too with some very forward-looking crops although some have been affected by slug damage. Winter wheat establishment has been hampered by some heavy and prolonged rain showers but what is already sown is emerging well at 2-3 leaves. Large amounts of straw have been seen moving into and across the region destined for carrot fields or (mostly) outdoor pig units. Of course, the big question right now is, to buy or not to buy? Fertiliser that is. A lot of farmers appear to be holding off and waiting for either a drop in fertiliser price in the spring or a much-improved malting barley contract offer.

Aberdeenshire

The recent spell of wet weather over the past few weeks has delayed winter wheat drilling for crops not already sown. This wetter weather has also increased slug pressure and crops should be closely monitored for damage.

Banff & Buchan

The last fortnight has seen the changeable but generally dry early autumn give way to much more normal conditions for the time of the year, with the inevitable rain with the overcast skies and shortening days adding to the gloom. Harvest is all but complete however, there are still some pockets of oats to be cut to the east of the area. Sowing has come to a sudden halt with quite a lot of wheat still in the bag. The extra moisture seems to have kickstarted the oilseed rape with crops looking well, most volunteer sprays have been applied although there are a few question marks over the effectiveness of the pre-emergence sprays. Crops are not far off light leaf spot sprays and with the combined threat of CSFB larvae and winter stem weevil, means insecticides may also be applied. Winter barleys came through the ground very quickly although the change in the weather has seen them slow up a bit. Potato harvesting continues although lifting has been interrupted of late. Cattle continue to be taken inside although the changeable weather will not be doing housed cattle any good in terms of pneumonia. While grain prices have continued to rise, with oilseed rape in particular reaching unheard of levels, fertiliser, whether it is the rocketing price or lack of supply seems to be the main topic of conversation with no real sign of a settling of the market in the near future.

Kincardineshire

A change to more unsettled weather over the past couple of weeks has seen field work slow a little. Winter barley would all now be sown in the area and has established well. Crops are at the two to three leaf stage and are clean of disease. Slugs are working on some crops though. Winter wheat is being sown at the moment after potatoes, into pretty good seedbeds. Earlier sown crops have established well and are at the one to two leaf

stage. Again, there is little sign of disease. Winter oilseed rape is looking very well if perhaps a little forward at the moment, and consideration will have to be given to regulating growth before winter. Potato harvest is progressing with some of the larger growers needing another good week of weather to get finished. Yields seem to be lower this year but quality seems good. Cattle are still at grass on a lot of farms with grass still growing.

Angus

Winter crops in the area are generally looking well. With over 30mm of rain falling last week in the area, potato harvest progress has been slowed. Winter wheat sowing is progressing, but many are waiting for the potatoes to be harvested to get the wheat in.

Perthshire

Unsettled weather has made the end of the potato harvest a start/stop affair and also slowed up the drilling of the following wheat crops. However, a large proportion of winter crops were sown early this year into good conditions and these crops are now well established and most have received autumn herbicides. Winter oilseed rape is now approaching the timing for a light leaf spot spray and for those with a history of rape winter stem weevil then an insecticide will be added also. The main topic at present is the price of fertilisers which are increasing at an alarming rate.

Lothians

Cereal harvest in the Lothians is complete with only small areas of beans to harvest. Grain yields in general have been average to good and straw yields similar, average to good. Potato harvesting is progressing well, but it has been halted in our area over the last few days with wet weather, but most growers are well through their harvesting programs. Winter sowing has been slowed down in the last few days but overall, most growers are progressing very well with the favourable conditions over the last few months. Most of the wheat land still left to plant is 1st wheats behind potato and veg crops. Winter crops are establishing well with most winter wheat and barley ranging from GS 11-16. Winter oil seed rape crops are ranging from GS 0.4 to 1.5 in some very forward crops. Slug and Flea beetle damage is very limited.

Borders

October has brought 52mm of rain so far. The rain has halted winter wheat drilling on some heavier ground for now, however good progress has been made in most areas. The most forward winter wheat crops are at 1 leaf emerged. Oilseed rape is well advanced at 8-9 leaves, with some backwards crops suffering more from slug damage. Mildew can be found on some leaves. Winter barley & winter oats are at 2 leaves emerged, with most crops having received a pre-emergence herbicide. Fields designated for potatoes can now be soil tested for PCN.

Stirling

In Stirling most winter crops are now sown, the early sown winter oilseed rape crops are thick and growing well, whereas the later ones are a bit patchy in places. Winter barleys are tillering and well established on the ploughed ground but a bit patchy on some of the min-till ground. There are traces of mildew about on some of them. Winter wheats are

through the ground and at various stages. Some of the later sown ones are a bit patchy particularly on the headlands. Weeds are germinating well in the winter barleys and should be sprayed once ground conditions allow.

Lanarkshire

Temperatures are still relatively high and winter crops are growing well with most winter barley showing at least two leaves. Pre emergence sprays seem to have worked well as there is little sign of weeds at this point. Some signs of compaction at headlands can be seen in places, with plants yellowing. Ground conditions are still good, allowing grazing by cattle to continue. This is a huge benefit, easing pressure on forage and straw stocks at the other end of the winter and reducing the likelihood of respiratory issues in the current weather conditions.

Ayrshire

Weather over the last couple of weeks has been unsettled in Ayrshire and temperatures have been up and down. Winter Barley establishment in the region overall has been even with some crops at GS13. However, it is still early to see if there are any deficiencies present. Grass growth has continued to be good, with some farmers taking advantage and getting a late cut of silage from fields that have got away over the last couple of days.

Dumfries & Galloway

After having a pretty wet, miserable spell we are finally moving into some better weather. The last of the post emergence sprays will be applied this week once the ground is dry enough to travel. Grass growth has been high considering the time of year and some farmers in the region have been making silage this week to help fill pits that have been emptier than usual. Winter crops are all in the ground and looking very good at the moment and autumn sown grass reseeds have had a good take and are looking well.

Stranraer

The rain gauges are filling up and largely all sowing is done. The last few fields of silage have been lifted and thoughts now turn to housing cattle towards the end of the month. The majority of cereals have gone in as planned but there have been a few fields left in grass as a result of the rising fertiliser costs. Forage crops sown in July and even the fodder beet which struggled through the summer are looking tremendous, however some later sown crops are struggling after an invasion from turnip sawfly caterpillars. Maize and fodder beet for lifting has yet to commence but soils are still in good condition for the time of year.