

30 September 2021

## General comments

---

The busy period of autumn drilling work continues but harvesting has moved on to the vegetable and potato fields. Soil conditions have stayed fairly good so soil damage after heavy wheels is much lower than usual. The heavy rain this week makes it a bit stickier. Winter cereal and oilseed rape crops are coming through and have benefited from a rare combination of nice weather and moist soils.

Once field work starts to quieten down then catching up on annual IPM plans could be bumped up the pile. There have been over 400 farms complete plans since the new one went live in January. It is a way of baselining your integrated pest management actions and getting a score. It also lets you explore which interventions and practices would have most impact. IPM is so many different practices which can be applied in an almost infinite number of combinations, so the new plan is the first time it has been possible to pull these together into a single score. The annual IPM plan is also part of annual quality assurance inspections. The plan is hosted on the Scottish Plant Health Centre website at [Scottish IPM Assessment Plan | Plant Health Centre](#)

## Regional comments

---

### Orkney

The spring barley harvest is all but complete, except for the odd field of straw which is still to be baled. With field conditions firm underfoot and generally dry above, it has been one of the least stressful harvests of recent years. Straw yields have been below average, but some bumper crops of grain are reported. With grass reserves depleting, farmers hope the weather will not break too soon as winter cattle fodder will be stretched to cope with an excessively long housing period.

### Caithness

All done bar the shouting! Some very small pockets of spring crop to be tidied up and minimal straw still lying in the bout. However, it has been a relatively stress-free harvest this year. Winter crop is all in the ground, now with the majority already through the ground. Some winter wheat was direct drilled over the weekend too. Potatoes have been lifted in tremendous conditions.

## **Inverness**

The last few days have seen autumn weather come in with a vengeance. Sunday night saw heavy rain and much cooler temperatures. Apart from this recent change, the past fortnight has seen very warm temperature with intermittent showers. This has made for excellent harvest conditions, with almost all combining and baling completed in very good conditions. Winter barleys have established very well, crops are tillering and looking very lush. OSR crops are also advanced for the time of year.

## **Moray**

Most of the spring barley harvest is complete in lowland Moray, although further up the hillsides there are still some fields to be cut. Away from cereals, potato crops are being lifted and straw is being lined up on the end of carrot fields ready for strawing down for winter. Oilseed rape crops have been in the ground a while now and are looking very leafy (5 – 6 leaves), good ground conditions and warm temperatures having led to ideal growing conditions. Early sown winter barley is emerging well too and is at 2 – 3 leaf stage. Winter wheat crops are going in too as well as EFA green cover crops.

## **Aberdeenshire**

In most areas harvest has now drawn to a close. Overall, quality reports of malting barley have been good. Sowing of winter crops has continued up until the rain experienced recently. Early sown crops have established well, with some very forward winter barley crops in some areas.

## **Banff & Buchan**

Harvest for the most part, has been completed and growers are happy the 2021 harvest has produced that uncommon quartet of good weather, good yields, good quality and good prices when one or two out of the four is the normal most years. Most straw has also been baled with a flurry of balers getting things tidied up over the weekend. Heavy rain has now arrived however providing a reminder that we are now very much in autumn. Oilseed rapes have established well, with the dry weather seen over the last month meaning the onslaught from slugs never occurred although in most crops you don't have to walk far to see the telltale holes in the leaves from flea beetle damage. Extra vigilance will be required to look out for larvae. Winter barleys have rocketed through the ground, taking advantage of the warm dry seedbeds. Some winter wheats have also been sown although there is still a bit of ploughing ongoing suggesting there are still a fair few fields to be sown. The roads

seem to be full of tractors pulling carts of potato boxes as the potato harvest is in full swing. Cattle are beginning to be brought in and today's rain will see this accelerate.

## **Kincardineshire**

A good spell of weather over the last few weeks has seen growers in the area complete harvest and straw is mostly baled as well. Yields are around average for spring barley of between 2.5–3t/acre but straw yields are back. Winter barley is mostly sown with many crops well established. Winter wheat is being sown in great conditions with some early sown crops through the ground. Winter oilseed rape is growing well with early sown crops looking strong with 5–6 leaves and some of the later sown crops with 1–2 true leaves. Potato harvest is progressing in good conditions and reports are that yields are slightly lower than normal, but skin finish is good. Grass growth has been exceptional with the mild conditions of late, with many growers taking a 2nd or 3rd cut to tidy things up before winter

## **Angus**

A prolonged spell of good weather has finally broken with some heavy showers this week in Angus. A lot of progress has been made establishing new season crops over the past fortnight, with most of the winter barley and a proportion of the wheat sown. Potatoes are being lifted in good order, hopefully leaving the ground in a suitable condition for wheat to be established but we will wait to see what the weather brings. Oilseed rape is mostly well established with some slug damage observed, but generally rape crops look well. Growers who have beans have been busy combining them over the last week with some good yields reported.

## **Perthshire**

The autumn drilling campaign is well underway in largely good conditions and with enough moisture to activate residual herbicide applications which have generally been applied pre-emergence of the crops. Slugs have been an issue on the usual heavier land following oilseed rape, but in general crops have been emerging quite quickly and getting away from the slugs. Winter oilseed rape has also emerged well and many of the direct drilled crops have received a graminicide to control volunteer cereals and an eye must be kept on the flea beetle, but most crops are now beyond risk of damage.

## **Fife**

A great spell of weather has allowed most farms to finish harvesting their combinable crops, with many cutting spring field beans over the weekend. New season winter barleys and wheats are being sown into good seedbeds and winter oilseed rape crops are looking well. Early sown winter oilseed rape has up to around 6 leaves while later sown are at cotyledon/1st true leaf stage, with little sign of flea beetle so far! A fair amount of rain fell Sunday night into Monday 26th/27th which will allow pre-emergence herbicides the best opportunity to work if applied to damp soil. Potato and vegetable crops are being

harvested with little noticeable damage to soil structure so far, with luck the weather will remain largely settled and allow the potato harvest to continue in good conditions.

## **Lothians**

Harvest in the Lothians is by in large complete. Establishment of winter crops have progressed well despite the broken weather of the last few days. All winter oilseed rape crops are sown and overall looking well as a result of the favorable weather and ground conditions. As for winter barley and winter wheat, the vast majority of farmers are up to date with drilling and crops are establishing well. Autumn herbicide applications e.g., pre-emergence spraying is overall up to date as favorable ground conditions have allowed equipment to travel.

## **Borders**

The total rainfall for September is 36mm, 24mm of which has fallen in the previous 2 days. Moisture is welcome, however heavy downpours have brought wheat drilling to a halt on heavy ground. Winter oats & barley are beginning to emerge in some fields, some wheat has been drilled, but the vast majority is still to go into the ground. Seed beds are in excellent condition. Oilseed rape is at 6-7 leaves unfolded with some slug damage & flea beetle damage. Later drilled crops should be monitored, but damage appears to be insignificant in most cases. Winter barley volunteers have been successfully targeted by post emergence herbicides in most cases.

## **Stirling**

The good soil conditions have allowed winter cereal plantings to continue. Germination is quick and those sown earlier are away to a good even start. The earliest winter barley is just starting to tiller, the rest at around 3 leaves and clean but odd bit of slug damage. Winter wheats are just being sown, the earliest at 1-2 leaves but again clean. With the dry summer, the heavy carse soils have broken down well to make good seed beds. Weeds are coming away particularly chickweed in the min till crops on the lighter ground. There seems to be more winter oilseed rape about, the earliest at six leaves and well developed. There are some aphids about at the base of the crop. Later sown crops are a bit patchier, particularly on the heavier soils but growing well. Slugs and flea beetle were problems in some crops.

## **Lanarkshire**

With harvest well and truly over, there has not been much activity in the stubble fields. The little winter barley that has been sown is, mostly, still to emerge. Some earlier sown, direct drilled crops have raced away, taking full advantage of above average soil temperature. After a late period of accelerated growth, grass is starting to slow down. Good ground conditions have meant that graziers have been able to keep cattle out. Many have also taken a late cut of silage, in preparation for the winter.

## **Ayrshire**

Weather over the last couple of weeks has been wet and warm, however temperatures are starting to dip now as it begins to feel more autumnal in Ayrshire. Winter cultivations are well underway with those crops sown earlier up and through and looking well due to the good growing conditions over the past few weeks. Cover crops are also starting to go in the ground. Spring beans have been harvested. It's been a dry year for beans with some crops suffering with drought and some doing ok, depending on localised weather events. Despite the wetter weather recently, fields are drier than they would be normally at this time, meaning that plenty of internal hedges are being cut now that the cutting window is open.

## **Dumfries & Galloway**

The harvest is all finished in the region, winter crops have been drilled and post/pre-emergence herbicides are applied. Winter barleys have germinated and are around the two-leaf stage and are looking very well. Maize harvest is underway in the region and good yields are being reported. The weather has been very good this summer and although first cut yields were light, grass has been growing well at the tail end of the season and most farmers have plenty silage to get them through the winter. The last of the silage is currently being made to tidy up overgrown grass. Reseeds and forage crops are also looking good as they have had near ideal growing conditions this backend.

## **Stranraer**

Weather in the southwest over last couple of weeks has been more mixed but still warm and dry for the time of year. Winter Barley plantings are well ahead and have emerged in good conditions however supply of seed rather than weather is the issue holding most farmers up. Concern also turns to the escalating price of fertiliser and issues around availability. This confirms the importance of soil samples and a nutrient budget to examine where efficiencies can be made when it comes to purchasing and applying fertiliser. The last of fields for silage have been baled and grass growth and ground conditions are still very good for time of year. Turnip saw-fly caterpillars are leaving their mark on forage brassica crops and will decimate green leaf very quickly, so if you haven't seen your crop lately it would be worth a walk through to check.