

## Agronomy News February 2018

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### Looking back at 2017

Last year was very much a case of weather having a dramatic influence in many ways.

Most areas received a generous break, and then struggled with a dry June and July. The southern Mallee had a better run in this period, which offered farmers there the incentive and opportunity to topdress nitrogen prior to tiller set.

The outcomes of break crops were largely capped by severe frost (9/16/17 Sept) and then heat events (23, 23 September).

Those first frosts knocked flowers off canola and lupins, but also defoliated lentils and peas. These same frosts also impacted cereals at stem elongation

### Winning moves

- Fallow or brown manure. The extra moisture turns a good cereal crop into a great crop
- Topdressing in late July- it rained on August 3
- Persisting with grain legumes...this will pay off in 2018
- Spartacus CL barley lived up to its reputation as a high yielding, easy to harvest crop
- Treating seed with imidacoprid removed agonising decisions about Russian Wheat Aphid

### Contemplation and action points:

Identify low yielding paddocks and consider if frost, lack of moisture or root disease was a contributing factor

Action point- if root disease was likely, conduct a number of **Predicta-B** soil tests.

If medium to high levels of rhizoctonia AG-8 or crown rot are detected, a one year break crop is worth + 0.6 t/ha, and a 2 year break crop is worth + 0.5-1.0t/ha, and +0.4 t/ha in the second cereal phase.

If low to medium levels of rhizoctonia AG-8 and crown rot are detected, this can be effectively managed with **Rancona Dimension** seed dressing at 3.2L per tonne.



## Summer weed control

With two big rains and a wet topsoil profile the usual suspects have gone mad.

Thankfully we have had cool conditions and unstressed weeds, so most jobs have had excellent results.

Pulse stubbles with old mature fleabane and whip thistle are our challenge at the moment. Basically they need to be double knocked as they now have thick stems and deep taproots.

As glyphosate imparts very little effect on fleabane, the 2,4-D rates need to be very high- 1.5-2.0L of a 475g/L product with slightly higher than normal rates of glyphosate for heliotrope. This is because there is a slight antagonism between 2,4-D (Surpass type) products and glypho, although AMS or Kombo helps with this.

The second knock with paraquat at 1.5-2.0L/ha should be 10-14 days later. Night spraying helps a lot with paraquat, and an oil if daytime spraying above 28C. High water rates are critical.

The way to think about the double knock is the first application affects the internal issues of a big robust plant, and the second application kills the external tissues. So effectively it is an inside and out comprehensive treatment.

If we let time go by, no chemical treatment will be effective- cultivation is the last option then



**ZuluEvo** is a 720g/L 2,4-D that is compatible with glyphosate

660mL/ha Zulu Evo is equivalent to 1.0L/ha of a 475g/L IPA



## Seed treatments

**Imidacloprid 600-** 2017 wheat and barley crops from imidacloprid treated seed had close to zero infestation from **Russian wheat aphid**. Given the wet summer and burst of green grass on roadsides, it is likely RWA will flare up in 2018.

The cost is now only \$38/ tonne, so a 50kg/ha sowing rate comes out at \$1.90/hectare. This treatment also covers the standard corn aphid and oat aphid commonly found in barley.

**Pickles-** I'm showing my age calling them pickles,

**Raxil-** remains the value for money wheat seed treatment for smuts and bunts.

**Baytan-** given its coleoptile shortening effect its best to avoid using Baytan on wheat (and we should include Spartacus barley on sands where sowing depth is variable. If you saw any loose smut in Spartacus last year use Evergol or Rancona.

## Fertiliser

The fertiliser market has been hard to predict. Both APs and urea remained stable for many months, which probably suggested a settled international market.

Both AP and urea segments have crept up recently, and given we are into February, this is a clear indication of the domestic supply and demand market separating from the international scene. This an obvious BUY signal on a rising graph.

The other prompt to lock in is securing warehouse pick up appointments and trucking opportunities.

See Smithy for more details.

## More action points:

Time to start spotlighting; no, not for rabbits, but to monitor mouse activity

Introducing mature sheep onto the farm reduces feed sources for mice

Continue summer weed control aggressively. Large weeds will require increased glyphosate rates.

Soil test to accurately determine your phosphorus and nitrogen expenditure

## Deep nitrogen and sulphur sampling

We now have a trailing rig to take soil samples down to 60cm

Nitrogen is one of the largest expenses for cereal and canola crops- some soil tests could prevent over spending or hit that target yield.

We normally do both a shallow soil test (0-10cm) as well as the deep nitrate and ammonium nitrogen (\$30/paddock), and add sulphur for \$20. Sampling with the rig is \$150

## Grazing cereal stubbles

Most of the cereal stubbles have left around 60kg/ha of grain behind the header and lost heads.

When this grain level falls to 40kg/ha, the sheep will actually lose condition walking around trying to pick this residual. This is the equivalent of 100 grains in a square metre, or 10 grains in a 31 cm x 31 cm quadrat. Another consideration is that the two summer rain events have lowered the value of the leaf content of the stubble.

To best utilise the paddock (and stretch out the total summer feed base of the farm), add some supplementary grain as barley through a feeder. This way the ewe maintains a condition score of 3 or more all summer long, and this will pay off handsomely as increased lamb survival later on.



The M3800 HD is the fully mobile version of the 3800 litre Advantage feeder. It has become very popular for lifetime ewe management especially in early autumn

# PEARSONS

Pearson's Grain and Transport  
Swan Hill Stockfeeds

## Wheat varieties

**Scepter** has performed very well for the last 3 years, particularly on red or light country. It topped the Walpeup NVT site at 3.68t/ha.

**Beckom** topped the Kyalite NVT by a noticeable margin (3.25t/ha). It is mid maturity and AH quality. Beckom is supported by boron tolerance and yielded similar to Scepter in the dry year of 2015 (-3%) and the big year of 2016 (+4%) averaged over 5 NVT sites.

**Cutlass** is a worthy replacement for Yitpi (+7%) on the basis of later maturity/ frost avoidance. Cutlass is APW quality and suits April/ first week of May planting dates.

**Corack** is the pick of early maturity APW types as it yields higher than Cutlass, but probably should not be sown too early.



**Scepter** has a naturally lighter leaf colour than Yitpi or Kord CL

## Do we drop pulses?

Not completely...Chickpeas at current prices are well worth chasing, and using Jumbo 2 lentils with a high asco and BGM resistance rating make them cheap to grow.

The nett nitrogen input from growing pulses is also worth \$46/ hectare

The break crop effect is worth \$130/ha

***Pulses store well in silos, and a 2018 crop could be worth considerably more in July 2019***

## " Current Pulse indicator pricing delivered Wimmera"

Medium red lentil \$420

Small red lentil 470

Field pea 275

Desi 630

Kabuli 860

## India imposes import tariffs on pulses

There has been a significant shockwave to pulse markets since India announced a 30% tariff on chickpeas and lentils, following a recent 50% tariff on field peas. Import duties into India are nothing new- beans have been historically 10%, and wheat 20%.

In short, India bought in too much pulse stock on a rising market, motivated by their two year drought. This created an Indian domestic price crash for their own farmers when yields rebounded.

The Indian balance sheet for pulses is a bit conflicting- the government is sitting on a 1.8 MT pulse buffer stock (a reaction to the two year drought), and had a record 23 MT harvest, yet imported 5MT against a 24 MT annual demand.

They simply need to clear some stocks. To speed this up export duties have been suspended, so Indian farmers have the opportunity to offload overseas.

Input: Newly sown winter lentil crop of 1.76 million hectares is expected to yield 1.26MT.

Output: Some good news; 500,000 t of chickpeas and lentils will be sold off the buffer stock by March 2018 (250,000 t already gone)

It must also be remembered that significant enthusiastic markets still exist in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The latter destination prefers small red lentils (Nipper and Hurricane).

The last three years of very high prices have to be considered a fortunate spike, and today's prices are likely to be the low point, a reaction to the tariffs.



44Y90 and Banker CL topped the 2016 Ultima NVT at

### Canola market

Somewhat flat, but may respond to La Nina conditions influencing soybeans in Brazil and Argentina

### Canola- practical tips

1. Pre-bait for mice. They are breeding up again
2. Sow early eg. 20-22 April
3. Run low populations for hybrids- 15-20p/m
4. Plant no deeper than 25mm soil cover
5. Apply nitrogen requirements before seeding, at seeding or soon after crop emergence.

Canola most valuable players

Clearfield; **44Y90, Banker, 43Y92**

Triazine; **Invigor T4510, Hyola 350, ATR Bonito (OP)**

### Pulse inoculants- BASF

BASF have acquired New Edge Microbials in Albury, who specialise in peat inoculants (slurry) and freeze dried granules (slurry) under the **Nodulaid** range.

Jumbo Packs (peat) of Group F will treat 500kg peas, vetch, fabas and 250kg lentils. Mega Packs of Group F will treat 1000kg peas, vetch, fabas and 500kg lentils.

Chickpeas (Group N) and Lupins (Group G) are available in Jumbo and Mega packs 500kg and 1000kg respectively.

### Pulse inoculants- Monsanto

There have been a couple of changes in the Novozymes/ Monsanto inoculant line up.

**Cell Tech** (peat slurry rhizobia-only) has been discontinued.

**Tag Team** (dual action rhizobia and phosphate solubiliser) is available as a dry seed peat as well as a granular down the tube form.

Tag Team peat can be applied as a wet slurry, or as a direct as a dry coating.

Tag Team dry peat product can be applied either when filling the seed truck, or from loading the seeder out of the truck as it has a sticker in built. This is very common in Canada when inoculating peas with a *Nuttal* 12 volt dry inoculant applicator.

For those with 3 bin seeders, Tag Team granules are now 18kg bags instead of 16.5kg, which treats 5.5 hectares at 30.5 cm row spacing.



Even coverage of dry Tag Team by an electrically driven dispenser on the airseeder loading auger

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## Chemical update

It's been a fairly sharp rise for a number of chemical commodities since July. Glyphosate, paraquat and clethodim have moved the sharpest, as well as a slight rise in phenoxyes and simazine.

The Chinese Ministry of Environmental Protection has focused on the industrial centres, particularly in the Shandong Province. Water and air quality has been declining, so the MEP have been progressively visiting factories in 28 cities and handing out "canaries" to those not meeting standards.

Crop protection factories are certainly not alone in this- 30 oil refineries have been shut down for example in the blitz.

One thing is certain, and that is the environmentally compliant factories will remain active and increase production rapidly to capture potential sales volumes for the Northern Hemisphere spring market. The non-compliant factories will also improve their impact on river pollution to get back in the game. This should instigate a softening in the glyphosate price.



## Bulk treated cereal seed 5-40 tonne- discounted POA

Spartacus CL barley

Scepter and Trojan wheat



2,4-D damage in cotton

The top half of the plant is most affected, and the flowers die off and fail to produce cotton bolls

## Off target spray damage continues

Last year and 2016 as well had two very significant instances of phenoxy spray damage on vineyards. There have been a number of minor vineyard damage cases reported this year, but the big one is extensive and severe damage in cotton.

The scale of the damage is likely to be aggravated by inversion layers rather than drift caused by wind.

It is a sharp reminder of the risk in spraying all through the night- we will be paying more attention to managing all forms of off target to prevent this happening again and raising the ire of regulatory bodies.

