

Rob Addicott – Manor Farm Monitor Farm Update

Meeting held: Kilmersdon, Radstock, 26 March 2015, 5.30pm

Speakers: Rob Addicott; John Cussans, NIAB TAG

Summary of Monitor Farm meeting

The group walked, and based discussions around, a problem black-grass field which also included some BASF plots (unlabelled) trialling new control chemistry. John Cussans of NIAB TAG led discussions on non-chemical control strategies in conjunction with chemical measures, centred around the slide to the right:

Non-chemical control of black-grass in winter wheat



Method	Number of experiments	% reduction achieved	
		Mean	Range
Ploughing	25	69%	- 82% to 95%
Delayed autumn drilling	19	31%	- 71% to 97%
Higher seed rates	16	26%	+ 7% to 63%
Competitive cultivars	5	22%	+ 8% to 45%
Spring cropping	5	88%	+78 to 96%
Fallowing/grass leys	-	70-80%/year (of seedbank)	

Based on review, by Lutman, Moss, Cook & Welham, Weed Research, 2013

From a wide-ranging debate, the following points were noted:

- Only plough out of a disaster in a rotation, not a successful break crop or fallow. Don't plough too frequently.
- Fallowing needs to be for two years for effective control
- When higher seed rates are used as a strategy, 'go big'. Perhaps + 50%. Then economics need checking. High seed rate barley and/or barley hybrids effective. Again economics?
- Competitive winter wheat cultivars will not necessarily be consistent as control strategy each year
- While maize could provide a break, some experience already in the locality of resistant black-grass in maize
- Spring cropping is not the total 'silver bullet'. Black-grass numbers can be reduced in spring crops BUT control in some spring crops is more difficult and can still result in high seed return overall.
- Direct drilling/strip drilling unlikely to be completely successful in isolation but when combined with other approaches can be made to work
- When using chemical control, employ tank mixes and treat early while weeds are small
- Pre-em spray timing critical with weather

The group agreed the best strategy for Rob would be to find a livestock farmer to put a two-year grass ley into the rotation but options were limited the area. Failing this, the field drainage needs checking. Drill timing critical for optimum conditions. However it was acknowledged that £150 – 200/ha could be spent on attempting control and the crop could still get written off. In practice, the HLS options will be moved onto this land.

The essential message from John Cussans, whether black-grass was a problem or not, was "farm as if it is there". Use inversion tillage strategically, spring crops, chemical mixes, seed rates and a diverse rotation as an integrated approach. On a cautionary note, he warned that if any future restrictions on the use of glyphosate came about as a result of regulation changes and/or stewardship for resistance management, we need to start establishing a broad range of measures in the control of black-grass across the rotation rather than rely too much on multiple applications of that one active.

The Grain Marketing Challenge

The four teams reviewed the latest grain market information and updated their decisions around marketing a wheat crop for each of the 2014, '15 and '16 harvests. Stuart's team are leading the averages by 'a thin whisker'. However all teams still have a lot of the 2015 harvest to market and no team has made a decision to commit any of their 2016 harvest.

Next Monitor Farm meeting:

Manor Farm, Stratton on the Fosse,

Nr Radstock, BA3 4QF

16 June 2015

Evening – time to be confirmed

Monitor Farming in action – tackling issues together

Farm summary:



- 350 acre core tenancy
- 230 acres share farmed
- Co-operation with neighbour enables labour and machinery costs spread over 900 acres
- Labour – Rob and neighbour
- Farm soils vary from red clay loams to brashy clay loams to clay loams
- Average rainfall 850mm/yr
- Crop rotation is wheat – barley – rape – wheat – wheat – s beans
- Grain stored on farm and marketed by Rob
- Independent agronomist
- Exit from dairy 2000