

Stowmarket Monitor Farm Update

Meeting: Soil management and crop establishment
Date: 31 March 2015
Venue: Jeff Claydon's farm, Wickhambrook
Speakers: Jeff Claydon
Charlie Eaton

Brian Barker
Monitor Farmer



Summary of meeting

- Soil management
- Use of cover crops
- Cultural control of black grass
- Drill choice
- Cultivation strategies
- Costs and efficiency of different systems
- Nutrition at crop establishment



In-field sessions examined soil structure and identified the benefits of cover crops:



1. Better drainage
2. Higher organic matter level
3. More workable soil structure
4. Greater availability of nutrients
5. Earlier drilling of spring crop
6. Reduced weed burden
7. Cost savings in subsequent crop
8. Reduced soil erosion



Drainage and cultivation practice – key messages

- Aim to achieve free passage of air, water and roots
- Increase organic matter to improve soil porosity, stability and fertility
- Higher organic matter increases the ability of the soil to withstand pressure
- High axle loads and ground pressures cause compaction
- Compaction creates an impervious layer, trapping water on the surface
- Good drainage is fundamental (black grass also prefers wet soil)
- Consider varying cultivation depth from year to year
- Soil moisture content and temperature more important than time of year

Soil Moisture Content



Next Monitor Farm meeting

Lodge Farm, Westhorpe, IP14 4TA

10am on Friday 19 June 2015

Farm Walk - 10.30am to 1pm

BBQ lunch – 1pm to 2pm

Benchmarking – 2.30pm to 4pm

Farm Summary

- 628ha of combinable crops – mixture of owned, rented and contract farmed
- Cropping includes wheat, barley, OSR, linseed, herbage grass and beans
- Family partnership
- Range of farm diversification enterprises
- Conservation work balanced with pushing arable yields
- Labour consists of Brian Barker, two full-time employees and various family when required