

Stowmarket Monitor Farm

Meeting 6: Open Day & Farm Tour

19 June 2015

Lodge Farm, Westthorpe, Stowmarket

Brian Barker (Monitor Farmer) & Tim Isaac (AHDB)

For more information, visit: cereals.ahdb.org.uk/Stowmarket



Brian Barker

Meeting summary

- Update on Monitor Farm project
- Latest changes at Lodge Farm
- Farm tour:

Spring bean canopy
Oilseed rape risks
Winter wheat nutrition
Cover crop establishment

- Choice of crop establishment system



Oilseed Rape – risk vs reward

- Good yields and gross margins in the past, but:
- Loss of neonicotinoids has increased damage from flea beetle
- Much time spent controlling pigeons and other pests
- Negative net margin shown in 2014 benchmarking, so OSR dropped for 2016
- May return in future, but price needs to be over £350 per tonne
- More grass seed and beans will take up the area in the rotation



Cover crop benefits

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



More information available in AHDB Information Sheet 41: Opportunities for cover crops in conventional arable rotations

Choice of crop establishment system

Attendees split into three groups to evaluate the three different systems on show:

System	Pros	Cons
Conventional	Consistent, easy, reliable, flexible	High cost, time consuming, damages soil
Strip Till	Consistent, lower cost, retains moisture	Have to drill earlier, looks rough, more management
Direct Drill	Versatile, lower cost, kinder to soil, saves time	Yields may dip, timing more critical, doesn't loosen soil

Next meetings

Date	Agronomy Group 10.30 to 12.30	Lunchtime Market Reports	Business Group 1.30 to 3.30
Friday 6 November 2015	Macro-nutrition	Crops	Buying strategy
Friday 4 December 2015	Fungicide strategy	Fertiliser	Marketing theory
Friday 8 January 2016	Micro-nutrition	Crops	Costs of production
Friday 5 February 2016	Harvest management	Fuel	Marketing practice

All winter meetings start at 10am at Lodge Farm, Westhorpe, IP14 4TA and include lunch, unless otherwise advised.

- To attend the meetings, please contact your AHDB Cereals & Oilseeds Regional Manager: Tim Isaac tim.isaac@ahdb.org.uk 07964 975078
- To find out more about AHDB's CropBench+ benchmarking tool, please contact: Holly Howsam holly.howsam@ahdb.org.uk 07767 001543