

BATTLE RIVER AGRONOMY UPDATE

The home stretch is approaching and we are about 3 to 4 weeks away from general harvesting. This seems to be a good time to share some of my impressions from the year, and perhaps give you some tips on things to keep an eye out for as you go through the harvest this year.

WEEDS

Resistance is real and spreading much faster than any of us would like to acknowledge. I would suspect that as much as 35% of the fields I scout show either Group 1 or Group 2 resistant wild oats – in some fields, we are seeing both. It's time to reacquaint ourselves with Avadex! The other weed that really caught my eye this year was Group 2 resistant cleavers. If you are a pea grower and struggling with the level of cleavers control you are seeing out of Odyssey, there is a very real possibility that your cleavers are resistant. Be prepared to look into alternate control options.

DISEASES

With the long periods of high humidity and the tight rotations many growers are using, it is no surprise that we are continuing to see high levels of cereal leaf diseases. Cereal leaf fungicide continues to be one of the best investments that you can make in terms of protecting your yield potential. Fields without fungicide have much higher incidence of disease and a heavily infected flag leaf means lost yield. It's a little early yet to tell if canola fungicide was a paying proposition in 2014. While I am seeing a scattering of prematurely ripened plants in some fields, so far the culprit has been virulent blackleg, which is an increasing problem we need to keep an eye out for.

INSECTS

The big focus for us is on insects that affect canola. While I am seeing grasshoppers in the cereals, they are not present in large enough numbers to do significant damage this year. Wheat midge is also present throughout the area, but they never reached levels that would indicate spraying was necessary. However, if you had midge flying when your wheat was flowering you may still see downgrading from the damage. In the canola, I am seeing only a scattering of Bertha Army Worms in a handful of fields. There are very few hotspots being reported right now, but if you farm south of Camrose, you will be interested to know that Alix and Stettler are two of those hotspots, so keep watching! Lygus bugs are present, but at levels well below economic threshold. There are diamondbacks to be found throughout east central Alberta, but again the numbers are low enough that we shouldn't be too concerned. It takes about 200 per M2 to reach economic threshold, and we are only at about 10% of that number. Something to note is that in the last week I have started to pick up significant numbers of flea beetles when I am sweeping for lygus bugs. Flea beetle levels in the fall give us a good indicator of the levels we should expect next spring, so this is good information to have. More importantly, I am noticing a shift in species. I am capturing an increased number of striped flea beetles and less crucifer flea beetles this year, especially in the Camrose area. Our current canola seed treatments are less effective on striped flea beetles, so increased populations means an increased chance of having to use in season insecticide next year. So as you are harvesting this fall, make sure you make note of how many and what kind of flea beetles you are seeing.

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