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Scenarios where growers are spending significant sums per hectare only to reduce weed populations by modest percentages give rise to thoughts of hand-roguing



## Spring workloads stacking up

**Luke Bullock** debates the compromises faced by growers when weighing up nitrogen applications after such a wet start to the year

With pre-spring technical meetings almost over, attention is gearing towards the spring ahead. Having braved some of late February's sideways rain, I can only hope that we will not face a droughty spring this year!

I am sure many of you have begun fertiliser applications or are at least optimistically hoping to do so once the reappearing field lakes of this winter drain away – hopefully for the last time this spring!

As expected, some decided to apply nitrogen earlier than their neighbours, perhaps to make the most of weather windows and favourable ground conditions.

However, this does raise some concern over the value of such early applications. If the crop is not growing and further rainfall is forecast, it seems likely that some of that application may be lost.

Furthermore, focus must be drawn to the condition of the crop. It is not unlikely that plants within portions of even the same field may be further ahead in their growth stages than those in less favourable portions of the same field.

Such scenarios are even more

likely in co-treated cropping blocks. These differences may perhaps be down to North/South facing slopes, or waterlogging.

Many do not have access to variable rate nitrogen applications, and for others, it is impractical to divide applications within a field – even if this would be the dream in the imagination of an agronomist! Such conditions therefore must lead to firm judgements regarding nitrogen application timings, whereby a compromise must be met, with the priority of not limiting crop growth and development.

My attention is also drawn towards thinking about fungicide options for the spring ahead. T0s should consider a variety's rust susceptibility, and the addition of an azole or strob.

Brown Rust can easily be found in Crusoe now and yellow rust can pop up in just five days in varieties such as Skyfall, Zyatt, Gleam and Graham. A T0 is a good chance to get on top of early-drilled and strong crops with plant growth regulators.

Amongst my colleagues at Crop Management Partners, it seems that Iblon (isoflucypram) available as Vimoy alongside



Brown rust can already be found in Crusoe

Proline (prothioconazole) offers decent Septoria and Rust control at T1 and T2.

Alternatively, Revystar is an option, but price will dictate this. For its decent flag leaf protection against Septoria, Univoq (fenpicoxamid + prothioconazole) has a strong role to play for those willing to use it. Alternatively, Proline with Adepidyn holds some T2 promise if the latter can pass through legislative clearance with the Chemicals Regulation Division in time. The value of Folpet, with its multi-site control, must also be considered for fungicide resistance management.

Thoughts also pivot towards spring weed control, particularly in winter crops. The picture for many is varied. I, for one, know of a few fields that sadly did not get a pre-emergence application due

to the weather, despite best efforts. These will require some determined control shortly.

Elsewhere, successful applications surprisingly seem to have not been washed away, and control appears decent. As pre-emergence control offers us the best window for weed control, careful consideration must be paid to the value of (potentially expensive) spring weed control options.

Scenarios where growers are spending significant sums per hectare only to reduce weed populations by modest percentages give rise to thoughts of hand-roguing. This is easy for me to say from the comfort of my desk. But this option is particularly valuable against the odd grass weed plant, which must be seen as ground-zero colonies, particularly if there are harvest students about...