



MALCOLM CASE-GREEN

SDHI fungicides work best when applied at full flag-leaf emergence (GS39) rather than at flag-tip emergence (GS37).

Mind the gap for better spraying

- Beware of interval between T1 and T2
- Consider a strobilurin where yellow and brown rusts threaten
- Hybrid barley needs robust T2

By Louise Impey

■ Accurate spray timing should remain the key focus as the flag-leaf treatment approaches in winter wheat, as stretching it too far could prove costly.

With the main target at T2 likely to be septoria, there is every reason to stick with spray intervals and ensure that the gap between T1 and T2 isn't stretched too far, says Zantra's technical director, Chris Bean.

"Four weeks is the absolute maximum," he stresses. "But three weeks is better."

Christine Lilly of Frontier Agriculture is of the same opinion. "Our feeling is to try not to let it go beyond three-and-a-half weeks."

The loss in performance of the triazole fungicides, especially in an eradicant situation, makes it difficult to rectify situations where septoria has been able to take hold, they note.

As an SDHI is likely to be part of the mix, Mr Bean's advice is to wait to apply the T2 until the flag leaf is fully out at GS39. "If you spray at flag tip, which is GS37, you don't get the redistribution of the fungicide into the lower part of the leaf."

That timing difference was worth 0.3t/ha in 2014, but was much higher in the 2012 season, he reveals.

"It's something that we've seen in our trials and has been confirmed in manufacturer's work. The SDHIs don't like going on too early – they work best at full flag leaf emergence, which is different to the old triazole + chlorothalonil or strobilurin mixes."

Miss Lilly points out that hitting the ideal timing on all crops can be tricky on larger farms. "That's why sprayer operators tend to start spraying when the flag leaf is half out. It lets them finish by the time it's fully out, which is better than finishing late." →p16

APPLICATION ADVICE

Delay sprays at your peril

■ A week's delay at the flag leaf timing caused yield potential to fall by 0.5-1.0t/ha, with further losses incurred as the delay increased, according to Agrovista trials.

"Nothing can fully make up for poor timing," says the company's Mark Hemmant. "But attention to a few key application areas, such as boom height, adjuvant use and water volume, can make a difference to disease control."

Flat fan nozzles are more effective in normal spraying conditions, although air induction nozzles are less prone to drift, he adds. "Where they have to be used, adding Velocity, an oil-based adjuvant, can lift their efficacy."

Furthermore, alternating forward facing and vertical nozzles improves nozzle performance and also reduces drift, he says.

"The optimum boom height is 0.5m above the crop. Doubling it increases drift by a factor of 10 with flat fan nozzles."

Finally, Mr Hemmant reveals that water volumes of 100 litres/ha have given better disease control than 200 litres/ha where yellow rust was the target.

"It increased work rates by a third too, allowing more of the crop to be treated at the optimum timing."

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