AGRONOMY NEWS SPRING 2018

Pushing production in Spring

It has been a busy start to spring with many customers applying spring blends ahead of what is hopefully going to be a big harvest in Gippsland. Our agronomists have been out and about doing soil tests and monitoring growth as customers begin to cut silage. It serves as a timely reminder that if you're looking to get the most out of your silage and push your harvest production hard, you need to ensure you're applying nutrient at lockup stage or be sure to apply replacement nutrient in Autumn.

We are continuing to work on many of investment projects as planned at the start of the year. We are driving our continual improvement objective of improving our efficiency, minimising down time and ensuring our customers continue to receive quality service, and the tractor in Leongatha is an excellent example of us doing this.

Pest Profile: African Black Beetle *(Heteronychus arator)*

Although the African Black Beetle is know to remain relatively inactive during winter and be more of an issue between November and May, we want to take the opportunity to raise awareness of it now. As we have experienced a drier winter than usual we may expect an increased risk of African Black Beetle activity. Young larvae do not tolerate high soil moisture well and our winter conditions have proved to be more favourable to them in this case.

What to watch for: Dead, stunted and missing seedlings in new ryegrass paddocks. This can be especially evident in direct drilled paddocks, and plants can present as having the "sap sucked right out of them". The larvae eat the roots and organic matter and the adult beetles tend to chew on the plants just above and below the ground, often chewing right through the stems.

How to identify them: The adult is a soft bodied shiny black beetle that grows between 12mm to 15mm. While it looks similar to the red-headed cockchafer the body and head are parallel where the cockchafer will widen out towards the back end. Larvae will also look similar to the red-headed cockchafer but has a smoother head and the colour will be a light brown-orange rather than the dark red-brown.

Control: There are a number of control options. We suggest you speak to your local insecticide supplier as there are preventative options which are generally applied early to mid October.

Adult Black Beetle

Koo Wee Rup
150 Sybella Avenue
Koo Wee Rup
Ph: 03 5997 2203

Leongatha
96-102 Horn St
Leongatha
Ph: 03 5667 3100

Tinamba
620 Heyfield Upper-Maffra Rd
Tinamba West
Ph: 0427 220 127

Millet and Sorghum – Nutrients are key

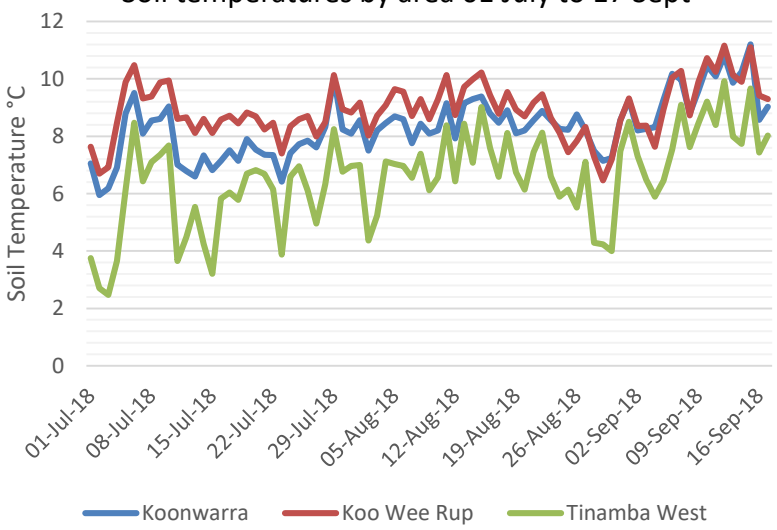
As the predicted dry summer approaches, many are looking for a water efficient summer crop that still produces good yields. Millet and sorghum are typically safe options for both dairy and beef enterprises. Fast growing and water efficient, they can fill the gaps where ryegrass may be slow to grow under stressful summer conditions. Good soil preparation, nutrient input and grazing management are key in maximising your potential yield.

Soil temperatures at planting are critical to crop success and should be considered when planning for the crop. Millet and sorghum require a higher minimum soil temperature than other summer crops, with millet requiring 14°C and rising while sorghum preferers 16°C and rising. When selecting a paddock for planting, consider one with good water holding capacity and relatively fertile soils, while keeping in mind these plants do not tolerate waterlogging.

Ideally the seed should be drilled to a depth of 1-2 inches, sown with DAP and rolled to ensure good soil to seed contact. Phosphorus availability is critical during the initial stages of growth as it helps build good plant structure and root formation, allowing the plant to increase its availability to soil moisture and improve resistance to lodging. Likewise, nitrogen is essential for growth in these plants and regular applications of nitrogen will help to increase yield. Ideally nitrogen applications should occur post-grazing/cutting to maximise regrowth potential. Potassium should also be added at these stages as it helps with storage and movement of water and nutrients around the plant. This contributes to the plants water use efficiency and ability to cope with moisture stress in dry conditions. Exact nutrient inputs will differ between farming enterprise, soil types and the presence of visual deficiency symptoms.

Whilst millet and sorghum are mainly used are grazing crops, they can also be made into silage and utilised later in the season as extra fodder. Ideal cutting heights may vary between variety but as a general guide you should cut sorghum between a height of 0.8-1.3m as this allows a good compromise between quality and quantity. Cutting or grazing sorghum too early may pose a risk for your animals as sorghum produces prussic acid levels that may be toxic to animals during early growth stages or in plants under stress. Newer sorghum varieties have been selectively bred to lower this risk, though stock should still be monitored closely while grazing. Millet does not carry the same risk so grazing heights can be lower. Grazing heights for millet varies between varieties, although leaving millet to grow past the ideal grazing height will result in a loss quality and decline in palatability.

Soil temperatures by area 01 July to 17 Sept



Monthly Rainfall Totals (mm)

Month	Koo Wee Rup	Koonwarra	Tinamba West	Longford
July	73.8	81.4	N/A	23.6
August	56.8	95	N/A	24
September*	18.2	32.6	N/A	14.6

*September data is until 17th of the month.

Average Monthly Soil Temperatures (°C)

Month	Koo Wee Rup	Koonwarra	Tinamba West	Longford
July*	9.19	8.62	7.06	7.98
August	9.35	9.15	7.88	8.80
September**	10.25	10.69	9.10	10.69

*July soil temp data for Longford begun on the 19th of July
** September data is until 17th of the month

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