

## Boosting sugar beet Yields

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Every sugar beet crop will justify at least one fungicide treatment, says ProCam's Technical Director, Dr. David Ellerton.

"A single fungicide treatment will give an extra yield of 5-10% with an even response of between 15-20% when disease risk is higher. These days most sugar beet growers have to go for higher yields with a target of at least 70 t/ha. One important contributing factor to achieving these high yields is preventing foliar diseases including powdery mildew, rusts, Ramularia and Cercospora," he says.

In terms of products Dr. Ellerton prefers fungicides that offer a broad-spectrum of disease control. "Products with this necessary broad-spectrum include Spyrale (difenconazole and fenpropidin) and Escolta (cyproconazole and trifloxystrobin). They are quite similar in terms of performance and both do a very good job. They also produce a positive yield response, which will easily pay over and above the cost of the fungicide and its application."

According to Dr Ellerton, starting fungicide early enough is important. "Spraying usually start from the late part of July onwards, just before disease takes off. The trigger is usually the first appearance of disease in the crop. Recent weather has been ideal for the early development of both powdery mildew and Cercospora."

"In a high risk situation two sprays are better than one, with the second spray being around the end of August/beginning of September. The second spray will need to have some rust control as this disease tends to come in later. In most cases and most years however a well-timed full dose treatment will do just as well."

"But you must be aware of the label Harvest Intervals when planning your programme. Spyrale has a Harvest Interval of 28 days and Escolta has a Harvest Interval of 21 days. Also the crop needs at least four weeks after treatment to get the full yield response."

"Several years ago all we did was a bit of Sulphur for mildew on sugar beet now and then, but with the need to improve yields and profitability in this crop, virtually all crops would benefit from at least one fungicide treatment," concludes Dr Ellerton.

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