

More Black-grass, More Resistance, Fewer Herbicide Options focuses on need for top quality stale seedbeds

Date added 25/08/08

Cultivations and cultural control are an increasingly important part of the strategy to achieve top level grass weed control, according to ProCam's Technical Director, Dr. David Ellerton.

He points out that stale seedbeds are often quoted as being the key to good cultural control, but such stale seed beds need to be as effective as they can be in the context of more black-grass, more resistance and fewer herbicide options.

"Good cultural weed control starts with the combine and straw management. A short chop (10cms/4inches) and even spread of all straw and chaff across the full width of the combine aids a more even incorporation of the straw into the soil and speeds up straw breakdown," advises David.

"Cultivating close behind the combine is usually a guarantee that the soil is moved under optimum conditions. Whether this first cultivation is a shallow discing to stimulate weed growth or a deeper soil movement aimed at improving soil structure, the land must be consolidated to conserve moisture and ensure a good seed/soil contact for optimum weed germination. A stale seedbed still needs to be a seedbed!" he reminds growers.

Effective cultivation and consolidation immediately after combining preserves sufficient soil moisture for good stale seedbeds and weed growth in even the driest of summers. As well as preserving moisture, good consolidation ensures the high level of soil contact essential for the rapid germination of small weed seeds.

After the primary cultivation Dr. Ellerton advises growers to inspect their stale seedbeds regularly and be prepared to spray with Roundup (glyphosate) as soon as there is sufficient weed growth, usually at least 14 days after cultivation.

Overall Dave Ellerton advises that the key to successful stale seedbed management is patience. "If there is moisture present, most black-grass seeds will germinate in September or October. But this could be any where from 4-6 weeks after harvest."

He warns that going in too soon to spray or drill may miss some black-grass which will then come up with the crop. "Ideally two stale seedbed cycles will give the best results as it overcomes the problem of early germinating seeds inhibiting the germination of other seeds."

"Climate change brings more uncertainty to our weather and with it an understandable reluctance to delay drilling too long, but one field has to be the last drilled. Perhaps this should be the one with the most black-grass!"

In conclusion David points out that the best quality stale seedbed recipe involves good combine operation, shallow cultivation, effective consolidation, and appropriate timing of a Roundup application.