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‘KEEP YOUR NERVE’ ARABLE GROWERS ADVISED

Despite the wet summer, late harvest and dry windy weather during September delaying drilling opportunities in many parts of the country, producers with severe grass weed resistance problems may now have to hold off drilling some winter wheat fields for as long as they feasibly can, warns agronomy group ProCam.

“Don’t take short cuts with weed management or seedbed preparation for the sake of a few extra days delay in drilling,” says ProCam technical director Dr. David Ellerton.

“Our 4cast data from the last 5 years consistently shows that the financial benefits from appropriate weed management, either through cultivations or herbicide treatment, will always outweigh the potential yield loss from delaying drilling the extra few days.”

Many growers on heavy soils have struggled to get good seedbeds this autumn due to the dry windy weather hardening the top few inches of soil despite all the rain in July and August. This has resulted in poor cloddy seedbeds unsuitable for pre-emergence treatments, Dr. Ellerton says.

In addition, the lack of rain has stopped the growth of grass weeds so vital for the production of sterile seedbeds making it impossible to deal with these through glyphosate or cultivations.

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The latent weed threat is considerable in many areas, particularly those where herbicide resistance is a growing problem or where Brome species have increased over recent seasons.

“Last week’s rain could have done with being two weeks earlier, but it has opened up the opportunity for proper seedbed preparation and pre-emergence treatment. It also means weeds will now germinate and so these can be dealt with appropriately as long as the weather stays mild.

“Despite the problems with harvesting and the lateness of the season, our advice would be to give priority to first wheats and fields with lower weed burdens and hold off drilling on high risk fields until you can be sure of a good seedbed and that pre-emergence applications will be effective.

“Holding off final seedbed cultivations or glyphosate applications until there is sufficient weed growth and delaying drilling as late as you can is now definitely the right approach for this season on these high risk fields.”

The 4cast data shows that certain varieties can tolerate later drilling and this should be borne in mind when deciding which fields may suit delayed drilling. If you are in any doubt, consult your agronomist, Dr. Ellerton adds.

“One benefit of delaying drilling of second wheats until mid October can be to lessen the damaging effects of Take All and 4cast data shows that this can often be well in excess of one tonne per ha.”

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PRO033

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Notes to editors

- i.) The ProCam Group employs more professional agronomists, crop walking more acres than any other organisation in the UK and now covers the whole of the British Isles from the South West of England to Northern Scotland.

- ii) ProCam 4cast is a predictive agronomy system designed to provide growers with agronomic information specific to their individual farming situation. The system is based on analysis of a specially developed database of UK crop production utilising practical agronomic results from one million acres of arable land each year built up over the last ten years.

- iii) The company is celebrating 25 years of trading in 2004 and is now the UK's leading supplier of crop protection products and crop advice having doubled the size of its business in the last three years alone.

Further information is available from Dr. David Ellerton, ProCam Ltd., Royston, Herts.

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