

SEED TREATMENT NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the first edition of the Seed Treatment Newsletter.

This publication will be available each autumn and spring, it will provide an update on areas associated with the seed treatment business such as product profiles, research, global developments and pest outlooks. We hope you find the newsletter both interesting and informative and we welcome any feedback you may have.

At this stage the title of the newsletter is still a work in progress and will likely change in the next issue.

Seed Treatment Website Goes 'Live'

Prior to Christmas, we went 'live' with a new website. The seed treatment website www.seedtreatment.co.nz is designed to provide you with detailed information on our range of seed treatment products. Included on the website is information on key plant establishment pests which have a link back to the appropriate seed treatment products.



Insects Out In Force

Insect populations are often at their peak in autumn after egg populations develop through summer before pupating into larvae and adults. In most of New Zealand (except for Otago and Southland), the majority of pasture is established in the autumn and therefore the challenges farmers face from pest invasion can be very costly if best practice methods are not utilised during the re-grassing process.

To ensure successful pasture establishment we recommend following an Integrated Pest Management approach during the re-grassing period which utilises a number of pest management tools. An application of contact insecticide through 'broad-acre' spraying prior to sowing; cultivation; the use of treated seed; baiting; good fertility and grazing management all play important roles in minimising the effect and costly production losses from insects during the establishment of new pastures.

In situations where pest pressure is high it is always recommended to apply a contact insecticide with glyphosate prior to sowing treated seed which aids in the reduction of adult populations of insects such as Argentine stem weevil. Not all pests are controlled by seed treatments or contact insecticides with some such as slugs and black field crickets requiring the application of specific baits. Under high insect pressure it is not uncommon for there to be some plant damage during establishment. Paddock should be continually monitored during this period in case a further pesticide application is required.

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SEED TREATMENT NEWSLETTER

Autumn Insect Watch

- **Argentine stem weevil (ASW)**



Peak autumn feeding period: February and March

Present throughout New Zealand, ASW larvae feed inside the ryegrass stem, while the adults feed on the leaf foliage and at the base of establishing ryegrass plants during autumn.

Prospects for Autumn 2010 – Argentine stem weevils are largely unaffected by climatic conditions and therefore pose a challenge to newly sown pastures every autumn. Best practice is to sow a registered seed treatment in grass to grass sowings and also cultivated paddocks containing trash from the previous pasture or crop. (It is also recommended to apply a contact insecticide in the final glyphosate spray prior to sowing).



Argentine stem weevil damage, during autumn in Southland.

- **Black beetle**



Peak autumn feeding period: February - May

Black beetle is a major pasture pest in northern regions of New Zealand. The adults chew at the base of establishing ryegrass tillers which generally results in plant death.

Prospects for Autumn 2010 – A high number of black beetle adults survived through the 2009 winter which means a high population is likely to be present in northern pastures this autumn. Best practice is to sow a registered grass seed treatment in all re-grassing programmes in regions where black beetle is active.

- **Grass grub**



Peak autumn feeding period: March - July

Present in regions with light soils where conditions are dry in summer and cool in the winter, such as the east coast of the South Island and the volcanic plateau in the North Island. Grass grub numbers vary from season to season depending on the conditions. Grass grub larvae graze the roots of establishing plants causing poor growth and plant death.

Prospects for Autumn 2010 – With good pasture cover in most areas that grass grub populate, through the spring and summer, conditions have been favourable for grass grub survival, although populations appear to have dropped below the peak of two years ago. Most larvae present in soils will move into the plant feeding zone and develop into the third instar stage during early autumn. Best practice is to sow a registered grass seed treatment when grass grub numbers exceed 3 per spade square prior to sowing.

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SEED TREATMENT NEWSLETTER

Defending our pasture with seed treatment and endophyte

Farmers are outlaying a significant amount of working capital during the re-grassing process and for good reason as new pastures offer one of the best investment returns on farm. The vast majority of our long term pasture swards have a significant perennial ryegrass base, generally because it is a very good dry matter producer and is relatively easy to manage. Implementing best practice techniques through good planning is the key to a successful re-grassing programme. In most regions of New Zealand insect pests pose a threat to this profitable investment, particularly during the autumn months. For perennial ryegrass the best defence strategy is to purchase a perennial ryegrass treated with the appropriate registered seed treatment and inoculated with a novel endophyte such as AR37. With the seed treatment providing early plant protection and the endophyte providing longer term protection this combination ensures perennial ryegrass has protection from key pests such as ASW and black beetle adults throughout the life of the plant.

New Seed Treatment Technologies

Research into new seed treatment technologies is one of the fastest growing sectors in the global crop protection market with all the major agrochemical companies investing heavily in this area. As pressure increases to make agricultural production safer and more environmentally sustainable there is an increasing focus today on introducing plant protection technologies that can be introduced into the soil via seed. While there has always been a lot of research and development undertaken for products in the huge global grain market, increasingly new seed treatment products will be developed for the pastoral market particularly as this market grows internationally.

PGG Wrightson Seeds are well positioned in the market in terms of research and development. The business has strong links with the major chemical suppliers as well as a whole host of other suppliers linked to seed treatment technologies. With internal and external research capabilities in New Zealand, we are focusing on bringing new seed treatment products to the market that will provide cost effective solutions to some of the challenges farmers face out in the paddock.



Brassica seed treatment trial under evaluation at Kimihia Research Centre, Canterbury.

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What Is Happening Around The World?

- In 2010 Bayer CropScience expects to launch a biological nematicide in the USA for corn, soybeans and cotton.
- BASF is in the final stages of developing a triple-action fungicide seed treatment for corn.
- Nufarm America is bringing a full portfolio of seed treatments to the market and expects to have 15 products available by the end of 2010.
- Syngenta Seed Care has introduced the first seed treatment insecticide for small seeded vegetables. The insecticide is a component of the FarMore technology which delivers broad spectrum insect and disease protection for young vegetable crops against a range of important pests. In total Syngenta invests more than USD 2 million a day to discover and deliver innovative technologies.

While these treatments are not applicable to New Zealand, we are continually talking to these leading seed treatment companies to determine what may be of value to New Zealand farmers.

Superstrike Takes Up The ASW Challenge At Benmore Station

Sheep and beef farmer Andrew Sutherland, from Benmore Station, Omarama, has learnt first-hand the value of Superstrike seed treatment in the face of a heavy pest infestation in new pasture establishment. Benmore Station carries 12,000 Merinos and 280 beef cows. It also buys in around 400 calves for finishing at 18 months. Superstrike Feast II was direct drilled in March 2009 over 16 hectares of Italian ryegrass which had been decimated by Argentine stem weevil about six weeks earlier.

“We sowed untreated Italian ryegrass after Christmas as we needed winter feed for the calves and wondered why it was so patchy. There was a heavy infestation of pests, but by re-sowing Superstrike treated grass seed we got a very good plant establishment, despite the Argentine stem weevil still being quite prevalent when it was re-sown. You can save money with untreated seed, but Superstrike under a heavy pest infestation was the better option” says Andrew.



Andrew Sutherland (left) with Technical Field Representative Paul Verdonk, inspect the establishment of Superstrike Feast II at Benmore Station.

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