

## IS THIS THE BREAK?

### Season to Date:

It's been fairly wet around the Harvey/Bunbury region in the last weeks or so (approx. 60mm this month so far), and we are hoping this will extend throughout all the regions very soon (Margs and Busselton having only had approx. 9mm this month). By now most have put their seed out for early germination and dryland paddocks should they have needed a top up. With the early rain we would be expecting good germination and hopefully this rain will continue throughout the season so good growth rates can be achieved. With germination of seedlings kicking off it is important to monitor crops for pests and weeds. Broadleaf herbicides can commence when weeds have sufficient leaf area, but if you have clover coming up in your crops be sure to make sure they are grown out enough to survive your spray program. Speaking to your local agronomist about the best spray program for your system is recommended.

**Grass Weeds:** These can be difficult to control, for example when talking about barley grass, most herbicides that affect barley grass will also target ryegrass. Delaying seeding and allowing germination of grass weeds is one control option. Knocking down grass weeds once they germinate with an effective herbicide and then following up with seeding a ryegrass crop afterwards can work, however this doesn't suit every system, and your local agronomist will be able to give you the pros and cons of this option. A second option is grazing the weed, barley grass for example can be a reasonable source of feed during winter if managed correctly in a rotational grazing program.

**Pests:** African Black Beetle (ABB) is one to keep your eye out for when seedlings are beginning to come up. They feed on the roots of newly developing seedlings and can cause significant damage. When sward density is high in a well-established pastures they are less of a problem. To assess if you have a beetle problem it is recommended to select a few random one meter square sites in a paddock and dig up the top 20cm of soil and count the beetles, more than 4-6 beetles/square meter indicates a problem and warrants action. Speak to your local agronomist about pesticides programs if you believe you have an issue on your farm.

Red Legged Earth Mite (RLEM) is another one to be aware of in autumn. They hatch as the weather begins to cool down and after adequate rainfall, from eggs that were laid back in spring. It takes approximately 2 weeks of favourable conditions for them to hatch. Knocking them over early in the first generation is key, as the first generation will start to lay eggs and begin the cycle very quickly (3 weeks or so), with next generations taking only 8-10 days to hatch. Chemically coated seed is available for new pastures, and sprays are available for pre-sowing, at sowing and post emergence to control RLEM. One effective control method is using the TIMERITE calculator and spraying in spring. For a short time period in spring RLEM have finished laying winter eggs and haven't produced their summer eggs, and so, eggs are not present. Eggs are impervious to sprays, so this makes it the ideal time to spray to knock out the mite, and break the life cycle for the following season.

**Upcoming: Dairy Innovation Day! 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016 at Darren and Sharon Merritt's new dairy – 181 Elgin Road, Elgin. To register go to: [www.westerndairy.com.au](http://www.westerndairy.com.au) and click on the DID link – its free!**



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