

ISSUE 3.1

Seasonal Update:

Many regions have had significant rainfall over the last week, but is it the break? If the rains continue we'll know it is, but how do you manage an early break? Have you ordered your seed yet? Sprayed the weeds out? Got your paddocks prepped? If you haven't, these are things to be focussing on, especially if the rains continue.

Plant Back Intervals when Spraying:

Ensure you are aware of any plant back restrictions that may exist for herbicides used for summer weed control. As an example, the commonly used herbicide, metsulfuron, has a plant back period of 12 weeks, or a 150mm of rainfall where soil pH is below 4.8 (CaCl₂) for clovers, and longer if the pH is above 4.8 (CaCl₂). Atrazine, Triclopyr and 2,4 D all have various plant back restrictions and product labels should be consulted for recommended intervals.

Soil Moisture Sensors

At the recent irrigation workshop we had a look at the soil moisture sensors Mick Giumelli has had under the pivot growing his maize this summer. Using the sensor Mick could more accurately decide when to irrigate, with the sensors at a depth of 10cm and 30cm in locations selected through the use of EM38 surveying. Mick could better define when the soil was reaching its refill point, and the crop needed water. Over the crops growth he was able to reduce the amount of water he would usually use for maize and the crop has grown very uniform throughout. He said it was a valuable monitoring tool that had led to changes in his management practises.

Maize Irrigation Scheduling

Irrigation scheduling should take into account many soil, crop and environmental factors. This ensures the soil contains the appropriate amount of water at all times. Focussing on adjusting the irrigation program to meet the crops requirements based on the stage of growth, can grow a better crop with the same amount, if not less, water. A flat rate irrigation schedule means that in the first 1-5 weeks, and last 14-18 weeks more water would be put on than necessary, and in weeks 6-13 less water would be put on than is required. This is likely to limit the growth of the crop, whereas adjusting your irrigation schedule to provide less water at the start, more in the middle and less at the end, like the graph to the right depicts, can grow a more uniform crop.

Automated Irrigation

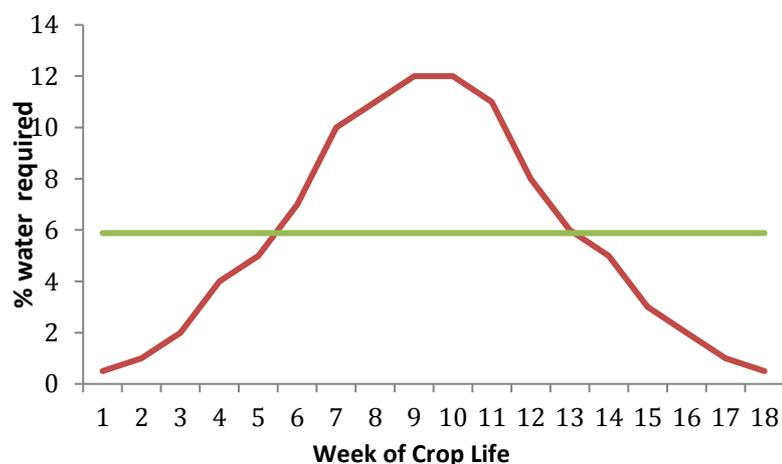
As an alternative to channel irrigation and the method of spending 3 days (and nights) checking, changing and opening slides on channels, the option of piping head ditches is becoming more popular. But why stop there? Stuart Maughan in Harvey has recently installed, under a Harvey Water demonstration project, automated valves on his piped irrigation system, which can open and close valves with the click on a button on his phone. The next step is "Get Wet" kits to go into the bays, about ¾ of the way down, so that he knows when the bays are ready to be switched off. As a backup, the system has timer function to switch the water off after a programmed amount of time. The system has yet to be trialled, but should be ready to go this coming summer.

Upcoming Events

Dairy Innovation Day at the Lammie's, Thursday the 4th of May 2017 – Program to be released shortly.

IRRIGATION MADE EASY

Maize Crop Water Requirements % per week (red line) vs Flat Rate Irrigation (green line)



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