PURSEHOUSE RURAL
agbusiness services
IHD LEADING IN AGRIBUSINESS

Kickin Clods

Winter cropping Update

Winter crop planting has now been completed on the Eastern Downs with an increase in planting than in previous years. Wheat and Barley were again the growers first choice, but we also saw an increase in Chickpea sales with growers sighting the high cost of fertilizer as one reason for growing Chickpeas as they require less fertilizer inputs. Other growers saw them as a good return for their money. The weather since planting has also been kind with small falls of rain occurring about every 2 weeks which has brought a smile to the growers which is something that has not happened here for a while. Local PHR winter crop trials are progressing well and starting to find their feet again after some early frost damage. Trial inspections are planned for later in the season, when PHR are keen to present up to date information to our valued customers.

This month has also seen an new employee start at our Allora branch. Simon Potter commenced work on Monday 19th bringing with him a wide range of knowledge which will be very beneficial not only to the Allora branch but PHR in general. The long awaited NEW Facilities at Allora are finally under way with the first round of plans being submitted to the Warwick Council this week. Hopefully we will see some earthworks happening in the not so distant future. The new facility will improve the running of the business and provide the customers with a first class rural facility not seen in the Allora area before. It also shows PHR's committment to the area and to their loyal customers. Shop with the strength ,shop with PHR.

Monitoring Chickpea Crops in 2010

It can be a real mixed bag in farming as we are very well aware. The starting soil moisture in a lot of our coverage area has been the best we have seen leading into and half way through a winter period for a long time. It has created some headaches in relation to getting seed into the ground at the optimal planting time and with the right soil tilth, but in general follow up showers have created a satisfactory seed bed and crop establishment. It will be old hat to some growers and new territory for others with the larger than average area planted to chickpeas this year. Disease and insect management practices for chickpeas are still of paramount importance when striving for optimal yields, even with the advent of varieties that have a much higher disease profile. The major and one of the most devastating vegetative disease's of chickpeas is *ascochyta blight* (photo top left). An outbreak of *ascochyta* can rapidly disperse throughout the crop from an early growth stage passing from leaf to stem to pods in quick succession and bringing with it high plant mortality within a paddock. Symptoms of *ascochyta* may be easily confused with other problems such as physiological spotting (environmental), frost ghosting on leaf margins, some viral disease's and possible herbicide damage. Chickpea paddocks irrespective of variety or climatic conditions should be monitored regularly for any sign of disease outbreaks so that control methods can be implemented immediately. If a regular preventative fungicide spray program has been set in place and is being followed do not assume that an outbreak of this disease won't occur and that some form of curative fungicide may be required. Although other insect species can at times require control, *Helicoverpa armigera* (Heliothis), (photo top middle) remains the biggest threat to chickpeas. Crops require inspection at least twice a week from the commencement of flowering through to grain fill and at times through to maturity. Excellent choices in chemical and biological control methods are available to the grower but early detection and timing are critical to the percentage control achieved when targeting this pest. The time constraints or staff shortages often placed on the modern farmer can determine the level of management that a particular crop may receive. Pursehouse Rural understand that this is often the case and as such offer the services of well trained and experienced agronomists to help the grower manage their crops and maximize production. *Chickpea paddock monitoring, crop reporting and pesticide recommendations can be carried out over a full crop season by PHR agronomists, please contact your local PHR representative to discuss this service.*

Cotton Needs Potassium

To gain the best yield possible for any given season the cotton plant requires many things; some environmental like sunlight and water, others that we can manage like soil nutrients and fertilisers. Of the essential nutrients required by the cotton plant, potassium is one of the major ones, with the plant requiring nearly as much potassium as nitrogen.
Potassium is immobile in heavy clay soils which are common to the cotton districts. It is generally more concentrated in the upper levels of the soil as well. Cotton is relatively less efficient in taking up potassium from the soil in comparison to other crops like barley. This means, that the placement and availability of this nutrient for the young cotton roots in this upper level is essential. Once inside the plant potassium is very mobile and is distributed to the leaves and stems. If a plant is suffering potassium deficiency, the symptoms (leaves becoming light yellow-green, a scorching around the edges or tips of the leaves) will appear in the lower older leaves.

Stage of maturity	**Nutrients**					
	Nitrogen		Phosphorus		Potassium	
	kg	%	kg	%	kg	%
Planting to seedling	9	8	1	3	2	6
Seedling to early square	18	14	2	8	25	25
Early square to early boll	50	42	10	38	38	38
Early boll to maturity	43	36	13	51	25	31
Total	120	100	26	100	90	100

As the table above shows, the plant starts to take up potassium quite rapidly early in its development; even more so than nitrogen, reaching the peak demand after flowering. During boll fill the demand by the plant for potassium is still high with much of the potassium previously stored in the leaves and stems being moved to fill the outer green capsule of the bolls – also called “burs”. It is here that one of the functions of potassium is to help determine the length of the cotton fibre.

A cotton crop yielding about 10 bales/ha will need somewhere in order of 200 kg of potassium /ha to grow the crop with about 50 to 75 kg/ha being removed off farm in the lint and seed. Soil testing is the best way to detect if the soil is low in available potassium. If the soil is low, potassium fertilisers are best applied pre plant in an incorporated band approximately 5cm below and away from the plant line, as seedlings are sensitive to too much potassium applied with the seed.
Petiole testing for low potassium in the plant is also an option as long as the procedure is started early (around squaring). If the plant is low in potassium at this stage foliar potassium sprays applied in a programmed approach – applying between 3 to 4 kg potassium per application. This may alleviate the situation as potassium is quite rapidly absorbed across and through the leaf. If a foliar program is being used then for crop safety reasons (leaf burn) it will be safer to avoid the use of potassium chlorides as foliar sprays.

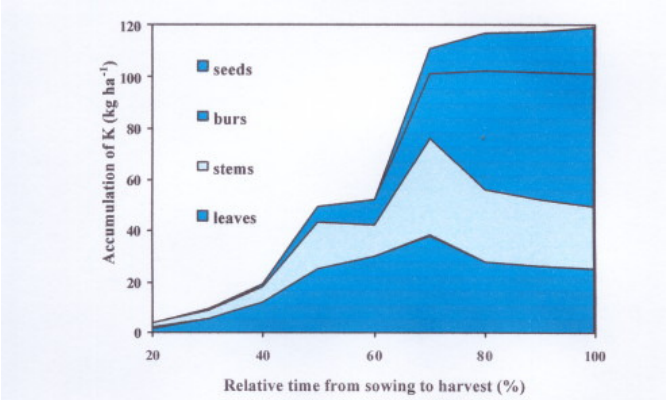

Fig. 3.3. Total quantity and distribution of potassium during the growing season of cotton (Source: Kerby and Adams, 1985).

56

For further information contact David Hall,
PathwayAg- a division of Pursehouse Rural.