



# Kickin Clods

## Feathertop Rhodes Grass

It has become quite apparent in the last 12 months that Feather Top Rhodes Grass (FTR), pictured, is beginning to encroach on fallows all around the Downs. In the photo below there are extensive areas spreading in the background of this field and the commercial glyphosate rates used have not provided adequate control.

The Central QLD (CQ) area has been dealing with the problem for several years and they have some experience of what is going to work and what is not going to work. It is going to be similar to fleabane in that it explodes from these single innocuous plants sitting in the fallow and is tolerant (not resistant) to heavy rates of glyphosate when tillered. Like fleabane there is no magic solution with eradication difficult, but it can be managed effectively with well thought out use of herbicides. There are situations however, when cultivating becomes the only tool to control feathertop Rhodes grass. Otherwise send the cattle in and it becomes a grazing block.

Research undertaken by Vicki Osten,

DPI Principal Research Scientist (Weeds) Emerald, demonstrated that the FTR seed bank is relatively short lived when left on the surface. This is why it tends to explode (large flushes) but also can be bought under control by running down the FTR seed bank quickly if seed set is eliminated. FTR needs a reasonable rainfall event of more than 50mm for germination and once the plants have tillered the efficacy of glyphosate reduces sharply. In CQ this summer, there has been a lack of opportune spraying days. It has also stayed wet resulting in more fields that do not resemble a fallow.

Coming into summer crop the most effective chemical strategies in Vicki's work have included Gramoxone® (double knock), Dual Gold® and robust rates of atrazine. Commercially results have been improved by incorporating the Dual Gold®. Please become alert to this grass and stop set seed and escapes now to stop its explosion. The parallel to FTR becoming like fleabane cannot be understated.

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## IHD Northernlink agronomy

The IHD member Northernlink Agronomy conference was held in Tamworth from the 15th to 17th March. Pursehouse Rural agronomists from New South Wales and Queensland were out in force and keen to learn new industry information, updates for the year ahead and network with over 45 agronomists. The agronomists present were based from the Atherton Tablelands to the central west New South Wales.

Keeping farmers updated was the primary goal of the conference, with a strong focus on the challenging years experienced across Australia and the future for agriculture. The program included speakers from across Australia to discuss topics including precision agriculture, quality assurance, dryland rice, pastures for animal production and spray drift management. Time was also set aside for group discussion which benefited the junior agronomists in allowing them to learn from those who have been in the industry a long time.

## Chickpeas and their benefits

With the current winter season approaching it is time to think what cropping options may suit your farming operation. With nitrogen prices still high pulse crops are again being closely looked at as a double crop option into this seasons summer crop ground and with reasonable moisture, chickpeas can be a good option. Pulse crops in particular like low nitrogen situations because this allows them to maximise their nodulation benefits and not become lazy and rely on residual nitrogen. From current research conducted by NSW DPI chickpeas have shown in a zero till situations to fix 30 to 40 kg/ha of N. In their studies they also found a close relationship between cultivated and zero till ground, that zero till operations fix up to 40% more N than conventional farming systems.

However, for a chickpea crop to fix this amount of N good nodulation must occur. This is generally dictated on how well the chickpeas are inoculated. Chickpeas can be inoculated by a couple of ways: by either furrow injection of the inoculant or the inoculant being sprayed directly on to the seed as it is transferred into the seed cart. Either way is acceptable however, seed treated before planting must be planted within 24hrs.

If chickpeas are being considered for your farming operation please be mindful of Ascochyta blight and its management strategy. Due to Chlorothalonil's permit expiring and may not be renewed this season regular mancozeb application is the only option. It is imperative that seed is treated with thiram and a mancozeb application is made four to five weeks after emergence, from then on timed applications of mancozeb around rainfall should be made. However, this season it is being indicated that mancozeb supply could be tight so please talk to your local Pursehouse Rural Agronomist for further advice on this matter and other burning questions related to winter pulse crops.



## This month's wrap up

Another couple of weeks in turmoil; North Queensland finally dries out, fires are replaced by earthquakes, and Cyclone Hamish wanders up and down the coast creating anything but positive outcomes. No beneficial inland rain and an ecological disaster in Moreton Bay. On the global stage, a tragedy in Stuttgart, President Obama throws the worlds largest economy into a deficit deeper than the Marianas pacific ocean trench and Ponting's Aussies have knocked the Proteas off the ICC number 1 world ranking by going two up in the series. The ashes tour looks promising so you can imagine that Mitchell Johnson and Phil Hughes would have already purchased a plane ticket to Lords.

Soil testing has arrived with the autumn change and we look to nutritional requirements for the coming winter crop. As we speak, wheat varieties are being recom-

mended pending planting windows. Strezelecki, Gregory, Wylie. Baxter, Bounty, Sunco, Kennedy, Livingstone, Hartog and Crusader are on the cards. Some are APH, some AH. Some resistant to crown rot, others not so. In consideration of all the factors that are entered into the equation (or crystal ball) consider good disease resistance, straw strength and yield over premium.

Chickpeas are a viable option in areas known for bad crown rot. Direct drilling into standing stubble, generally requires less nutrition as a rule, therefore have the deep sowing advantage over cereals for optimum planting times. When selecting varieties, Kyabra and Jimbour are strong selections, however consider yield potential, height, lowest pod to the ground and of course, disease. Where Phytopthera root rot has been seen in the past, consider Flipper and Yorker and seed dressing with P-Pickel T or

Thiram. A strict fungicide management plan must also be put into effect. The options for pre-emergent herbicides in chickpeas are restricted and highly dependent on the seed bank and future management plan, so consult your Pursehouse agronomist for further information.

In situations where a shorter season and shallow soil moisture profiles occur, consider Barley. In feed varieties, Grount and Mackay are options. In malting varieties, consider Commander, Tallon and Grimmer. Dividend plus emerge, is the ideal seed dressing for wheat and barley. In regards to diseases of wheat and barley, be prepared and start treatment early. It will be money well spent and you've started in front of the eight ball.

For more information on any of your winter cropping needs, please contact any Pursehouse Rural agronomists.

## PHR on show

The Pittsworth show was held on 6th-7th March this year with Pursehouse Rural proudly sponsoring a number of key events. The ever popular equestrian events was one such sponsorship with the rain grown and irrigated cotton competition for the Pittsworth Shire another. Pursehouse Rural also sponsored the infamous ute competition where needed and put together a very impressive exhibitor display.

The Pursehouse Rural marquee stood out amongst the oppositions and housed a great range of merchandise with everything from children's mud boots to water troughs. The meter max equipment was also on display allowing growers to witness it in precision working mode. A number of sponsors were in attendance including Nufarm, Syngenta, Better Blend and Virbac.

Attendance at the site was strong this year and it was great to see many growers taking time out for a cool drink. The strategic placement next to the Pacific Seeds grain bridge also assisted a great opportunity to catch up with our valued clients. Thankyou to those who helped man the tent, hand out the hats, drink holders and cold drinks and also for setting up.



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