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AG NOTE

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Introduction

From everyone at Western AG, welcome to the Winter edition of our Ag Note newsletter. It has been a disappointingly dry start for many Wimmera and Mallee clients, with barely enough soil moisture to germinate crops. Southern areas have fared better, with most crops and pastures now out of the ground and growing, but not without some challenges.

We are pleased to finally announce that our new Willaura facility upgrade is taking shape and our Kaniva depot will be operational soon.



Jackie Elliott, who will be working from the Willaura office, has begun a three month study tour and will be travelling to various states of the US studying the beef industry and ways of engaging young people in agriculture. Her trip has been made possible through the Matthew George Young Stockman Award. We wish her well with the trip and look forward to her return and getting into her new role.

Fertiliser Shifter for Sale
(see back page)

In this edition of our newsletter we have attempted to provide information and raise awareness of a number of production critical topics, plus touch on some opportunities. For example, we will be working with Andrew Whitlock from Precision Ag in Ballarat to encourage clients to update farm maps where necessary, grid pH sample paddocks and generate yield maps at harvest to help improve productivity and profitability.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition and wish you all the best for the season ahead.

The Western AG team.....



Western AG is celebrating 10 years in business this year.

Our promise to you is to continue to provide the latest farm production technology and best possible service.

We thank you very much for your support.

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Less Slugs, More Earwigs, Slaters, Millipedes and Weevils (by Philip Hawker)

Last year's dry spring appears to have had the predicted effect on significantly reducing the level of build-up and carry over of slugs. The grey field slug can still be found, but they are in low numbers and the seasonal effect on the Black Keeled Slug (or Milax) that typically emerges later is expected to be the same. Something we will continue to monitor.

Earwigs, slaters, millipedes and weevils have been causing significant damage in canola this year, often affecting plants that have grown to the 4 leaf stage unscathed. Earwigs, in particular, can be found in most canola paddocks; however they do not always cause significant damage. Weevils are very hard to find, checking crops at night can help.

Crops that are growing slowly due to dry conditions and/or poor seed and soil contact are the most affected. When checking crops a thorough inspection is important, in that the problem can be patchy.



Pest Damage to 4 leaf Canola

More intensive monitoring say every 3-4 days of the affected areas is a good way to gauge if the crop is growing away from the damage or going backwards.

There have not been large rainfall events this season in the Western District, rather falls of 5-10mm. As a result early sown crops that have received rain post sowing, rather than pre have established much better due to the directing of moisture

into the furrow. These earlier sown crops have generally stood up better to insect attack which represents another benefit of sowing crops early.



Rainfall harvest in Canola furrows

Fortunately a high rate of Chlorpyrifos has been proving very effective in controlling this combination of pests.

Kicking Goals with Winter Canola (by Gerard O'Brien)

The recent high cattle prices and continued strong lamb and cull sheep prices means there are strong arguments for improving the productivity of pastures and fodder crops. Summer fodder crops have primarily been the tool to transform less productive paddocks to more productive crops or pastures. With winter canola, it is now possible to sow canola in spring and use it as a forage crop over summer and autumn and then continue the crop through the following winter and spring and harvest it.

A winter type canola is like true red wheat and requires a vernalisation (period of cold conditions) to stimulate the reproductive process within the plant. Experience on several farms in the Western District has shown that winter canola can be sown from AFL Grand Final day onwards. Naturally, as with a traditional summer crop, it requires a bit of luck with some late spring rains to get it established, but traditionally even if spring rains are light, there is normally a thunderstorm event in early summer to get crops established.

Sowing winter canola is similar to a conventional fodder crop such as Winfred rape. The seed cost is significantly higher, but if equipment allows, a lower seeding rate can be used. The extra cost of the seed can be justified (\$28/kg v \$12/kg for Winfred) as there is no sowing cost the

following autumn. For example, an Autumn sown cereal after a traditional fodder crop would incur a fertiliser cost of \$60-\$70/ha plus additional seed costs of maybe \$35/ha. Then there is the actual sowing cost, which is approximately \$50-60/ha bringing the total establishment cost to over \$150/ha. If the extra cost of the winter canola is around \$40-50/ha, this puts it ahead by approx. \$110/ha.

Other advantages that Spring sown Winter canola offers include reduced slug problems and the ability to handle winter water logging better. There is an argument that if the canola is allowed to grow over summer, it runs the risk of drying down the soil profile and yielding less. Our experience last year, in a dry season, found winter canola producing comparable or better yields than autumn sown spring varieties.

Winter canola produced up to 4t/ha dry matter last summer, which is equivalent to a traditional rape crop and should generate lamb growth rates of 200-300g/day. A 30ha Hyola 971CL crop sown 20th of December 2014 at Miners Rest near Ballarat (see picture) grew out 700 lambs, over 70 days with the top 400 lambs achieving \$190 per head. At a DSE rating of 1.2 per lamb, the DSE grazing days per hectare achieved were 1960.



**December 2014 sown Hyola 971CL
(Photo: March 1, 2015)**

Research by Pacific Seeds has found that winter canola produces between 1500 and 2500 DSE grazing days.

Winter canola grazing should be complete by the end of May and crops should be top dressed with 150-200kgs of urea. Further N application may be required just prior to stem elongation. Post Em grass and broadleaf spraying is usually done at the same time.

The main two varieties commercially available to growers this year are Hyola 970CL and Edimax CL. Both are Clearfield and no TT options are available as yet. Both varieties exhibit good yield, blackleg tolerance and high oil characteristics.

Should I be using a Disc Seeder? (by Matt Witney)

So far this season we haven't had our true "break" in a lot of the Wimmera, but rather a series of small 2-4mm rainfall events. Dry sowing with zero till disc seeders has been standing out under these conditions, enabling crops to get out of the ground on minimal rainfall. This has been due to superior seed soil contact, minimal soil disturbance and drying and retention of stubble.

As with all systems, there are advantages and disadvantages with disc seeders. When considering whether to buy a disc seeder, the pros and cons in your area with your soil type and cropping system need to be well understood.

Advantages:

- Minimal soil disturbance and therefore maximum water harvesting and water use efficiency.
- Leave paddocks flatter, which helps the harvesting of low crops such as Lentils. Also usually removes the need to roll paddocks after sowing representing an operational saving.
- Best seed/soil contact possible and quicker and more uniform crop germination and emergence.
- Crops can be sown into stubbles.
- Faster sowing and less fuel used - not uncommon to save 40% on fuel.

Disadvantages:

- Poor performance in wet black ground - installing scrapers can help.
- Increased disease pressure - seed treatments, such as Vibrance, helps.
- Chemical incorporation can be poor unless the machine is modified to throw soil.
- Penetration into hard ground can be difficult.
- Risk of chemical damage if heavy rain is received after sowing, washing the chemical into the crop row.
- Increased risk of fertiliser crop burn. The machine needs to separate the nitrogen fertiliser away from the crop if high rates are used.
- Increased maintenance and higher operator skill required.

Two clients have kindly allowed us to share their experiences with using disk sowing systems and below is a summary.

Hage Family Partnership, Nurcoung.

Brian Hage and his sons Dale and Clinton purchased a Serafin disc seeder in 2014, predominately to sow Clover and Faba Beans. Their bar has been set up on 8 inch spacings, and they also still run a Horwood Bagshaw tyned bar with finger tyne harrows on 7 ¾ inch spacings. They have no doubt about the benefits of sowing legumes with discs.

Last year, they conducted various trials sowing cereals with some excellent results. Brian assessed that extra yields from their Barley and Faba Bean crops would have paid approximately 40% of the machine in the first season.

Belmont Estate, Gymbowen.

Tim, Nick and Matt Gabbe, converted their Borgault bar on 12 inch spacings to removable discs in 2011. After Summer floods and weed pressure in waterlogged paddocks, they found the discs great to cut through the trash, but reliability and penetration in tight soils were their biggest issues. They used their tyne machine to sow when penetration or wet soils were an issue.

They converted to a full disc system in 2012 after purchasing a Serafin machine on 13 inch spacings. The Serafin discs can hydraulically apply pressure and the weight of the machine allowed better penetration. They sowed approximately 2km/hr faster and saved 40% in fuel usage compared to a tyne machine.

The biggest issue last year was mud building up on discs in black ground when conditions are wet. They have helped overcome this by installing "Boss" Scrapers, although the system is still being refined.



Scraper installed - very little mud build up on discs.



Scraper not installed - quite significant mud build up on discs.



Bean Crop - May 22nd, 2015 at Gymbowen after only 24mm GSR in 10 rainfall events.

Disclaimer

The information contained in this AG Note is to be used as a guide only and specific information needs to be sought from the authors regarding individual situations. Western AG Supplies takes all care in compiling this information. However Western AG Supplies accepts no liability for any loss or damage suffered by any person who relies on this information.

Pasture & Lucerne winter cleaning strategies that work (by Michaela Alexander)

Managing Broadleaf weeds in legume pastures:

Different species of clover can vary in sensitivity to broadleaf herbicides, as can different varieties within the species. The growth stage of the clover is also critical in terms of what options are available. Generally speaking, product labels recommend between 3 and 8 trifoliolate leaf growth stage. Common broadleaf weeds such as capeweed, scotch thistles, wild radish, deadnettle and storksbill (*Erodium*), which infest pastures can all usually be well controlled.

Agritone 750 is commonly used in conjunction with grazing to control broadleaf weeds. This practice is referred to as spray-grazing. Agritone 750 is often preferred over Amicide or Ester, as it is softer on clovers. Thistles and capeweed respond well to such treatment.

Products, such as Tigrex and Broadstrike, have a wide spectrum of weeds they control, including some hard-to-kill weeds such as wild radish, wireweed, dock and marshmallow. Broadstrike does work better on warm sunny days, so is not recommended to be used during the middle of winter. Tigrex has useful activity on water weeds, such as crassula and toadrush and does provide a degree of residual control depending on use rates. Igran is particularly effective on weeds, such as capeweed and *Erodium*, and can be mixed with Agritone for enhanced weed control, whilst still being safe on clover.

Buttress, although slow to show visible symptoms, is a great option for thistles in Lucerne. Clovers can be slightly more susceptible with an initial reduction in vigour. However, if Buttress is applied earlier in the clover's growth, production in spring should not be limited.

Grass weed control:

Annual grass weeds such as barley grass, brome grass and silver grass can be effectively controlled using grass selective herbicides such as simazine, Verdict and Shogun in legume pastures. Simazine, is primarily taken up by plant roots, so needs to be applied when it can come in contact with moist soil.

Shogun needs to be applied, before barley grass or brome grass begins to develop a seed head, ideally before the end of August. Shogun works well in perennial ryegrass pasture and phalaris pasture, but may have an adverse effect on annual ryegrass based pasture, where losses could be up to as much as 50% plant death. Applications later in the season are likely to be less severe and may be acceptable.

Winter Cleaning Lucerne:

Small weed seedlings in established (one year or older) Lucerne stands are commonly controlled with a 'winter clean' spray mix of Diuron and Spray Seed. Like simazine, Diuron is taken up by plant roots so is best applied where the chemical can come into contact with

the soil (Lucerne that has been grazed), the soil is moist and spraying is followed by rain. Spray Seed, being a contact herbicide relies solely on good spray coverage, needing direct contact with the weeds.

The technique of winter cleaning uses non-selective herbicides to control weeds, so should only be applied to Lucerne stands, which have a degree of winter dormancy. Timing of spraying is dependent on the germination and density of weeds and is generally done in early winter. The addition of Valor or Hammer is essential to control Marshmallow.

Weed control in pastures and Lucerne is not always straight forward and specific advice from your Agronomist is often required in each situation.



Lucerne Crop

Broadleaf Control Strategies in Cereals update (by Tim Hofmaier)

Many Wimmera and Mallee cereal crops have been sown into dry soil, without a knockdown herbicide, resulting in increased weed pressure. With moisture extremely limiting, early and effective grass and broadleaf weed control is very important.

Populations of wild radish particularly in WA have developed resistance to Group B, F, C and I herbicides. Even resistance to group M (glyphosate) has now been found. The problem is that at an earlier stage of development in Victoria, to maximise weed control and delay further resistance development, it is important that a "multi group" broadleaf herbicide treatments and products that contain group H are considered for the control of radish.

Velocity (Group H and C) is the only broadleaf herbicide that is safe to use in 2 leaf wheat and barley crops. This option is fairly expensive at \$20/ha+, and, if the weed pressure is not too high, it is possible to let the crop advance to the 3 - 4 leaf stage, where there are a greater range of less expensive herbicide options.

A number of excellent options include Triathlon by Adama (Group C+F+I), which have been extremely effective on harder to kill weeds, like White Iron Weed and large (6 to 8 leaf) Wild Radish. Triathlon costs around \$14/ha @ 750ml/ha. For around \$10/ha, another combination of Group C, F & I is achieved by adding 100g/ha of 750g/kg Metribuzin (Mentor) to 750ml/ha of Tigrex or Legacy MA.

Where weed populations include Bifora, bedstraw, fumitory, radish and marshmallow, a new herbicide Aptitude, which is a combination of Metribuzin (Group C) and Carfentrazone, which is the active ingredient in Affinity (Group G) has an excellent fit. Treatment cost for this option is approx. \$20/ha.



Fine Tuning Post Em Strategies in Canola & Break Crops (by Trudy McCann)

Canola provides one of the best opportunities in the crop rotation for the control of annual ryegrass (ARG). Maximising the level of weed control in the canola phase is important for the profitability of the following crops.

Regardless of the canola option used, be it conventional, Triazine Tolerant (TT), Clearfield (CL), Roundup Ready (RR) or Triazine with Roundup Ready (RT), the key is to apply herbicide control when the weeds are small. If ARG has reached tillering, it needs to be controlled. The Clethodim and Factor mix cannot be used after the canola has formed buds (approximately 8 leaf stage onwards), otherwise significant yield loss can occur.

Clethodim and Factor performance is reduced by cold weather and conditions, where there has been a frost 3 days prior and expected 3 days after the planned application time, spraying should be avoided. Clethodim and Factor performance is also reduced by the bicarbonates in hard water. Low level hardness can be corrected with ammonium sulphate. Buying water is another option.

RT – the new “kid on the block”. In all likelihood, this canola option will have been chosen for a paddock with Trifluralin and Clethodim herbicide resistance concerns. A lot of trial work has been undertaken on RT herbicide strategies. Most successful has been a three spray strategy, with early application of TT chemistry an important key.

Apply Atrazine 1.1-2.2kg PSPE, then from emergence to 8 leaf canola, apply up to 2 applications of Roundup Ready, at least 2 weeks apart. Top up Atrazine (up to a total of 2.2kg/ha can be used in the crop in a single year) is probably best mixed with the last Roundup Ready spray.

RR – In most cases it is best to apply 2 in crop Roundup Ready treatments. The first application is usually early, 1-2 leaf. Experience has found that crops can tolerate applications past the 6 leaf stage out to the 7-8 leaf stage, if not under stress to catch late germinating ARG.

TT – A too wet or too dry start inhibits the efficacy of Trifluralin and PSPE herbicides and large numbers of ARG can emerge with the crop. Atrazine @ 1.1kg + oil will control emerging to 1 leaf ARG, add Clethodim @ 500ml, if weeds have more than one leaf. In high pressure paddocks, a second application will be needed.

Apply Clethodim @ 500mL + Atrazine @ 1.1kg + oil for canola from 2-8 leaf. Once canola is 4 leaf and not >8 leaf, Factor (Butoxydim) can be used for improved ARG control, apply Factor @ 80g + Clethodim @ 350-450mL + Atrazine @ 1.1kg + Supercharge Elite oil. Experience has been that Factor may cause canola leaf distortion and slow crop growth. Care needs to be taken if there are other factors affecting crop growth.



ARG in Canola

CL Canola - In most instances, this option would be sown into a paddock that would have low to medium ARG pressure and possible wild radish present. Historically, we expected some added ARG control by increased rates of Intervix, however, this is no longer the case due to resistance. For early ARG pressure, apply Clethodim @ 500ml at emergence to 2 leaf, when canola is 2-8 leaf apply Clethodim @ 500mL + Intervix @ 500mL + Hasten.

factor

Clethodim and Factor can be used safely over pulse crops, at maximum rates on their own or in combination with each other. In situations where there is low to medium Clethodim resistance in the ryegrass populations, a mixture of Clethodim and Factor often achieves superior ARG control over straight Factor.

End of Financial Year Tax Planning (by Paul Barker)

Among other things, June is tax planning time for us all, and I am sure that many have been meeting with Accountants working out a plan to help reduce tax. Some of the methods your Accountant may discuss with you:

Instant Asset Write-Off (new)

Small businesses will now be able to claim an immediate tax deduction for each asset that costs less than \$20k (net of GST credits), to the extent the asset is used for tax-deductible purposes. This new threshold of \$20k applies for a limited time only for depreciating assets acquired and installed ready for use between 13 May 2015 and 30 June 2017.

Topping Up Superannuation

Consider taking advantage of the \$35k concessional contributions cap for individuals aged 49 years or over at June 30 2014. For individuals under the age of 59, the concessional contributions cap is \$30k for the 2014-15 financial year.

Farm Management Deposits

Farm Management Deposits (FMD) are a risk-management tool to help farmers deal with uneven income. If you are a primary producer, this scheme allows you to claim a tax deduction for FMD's you make in the income year you made them provided the FMD is not withdrawn within 12 months.

Maximising Allowable Deductions

Expenses that are incurred before year's end can reduce taxable income. Consider future liabilities and value in incurring them before the year end. Allowable deductions can include:

- Minor repairs on property / machinery
- Pooling depreciating assets
- Scrapping of depreciating assets
- Prepayments

Western AG can facilitate prepayments by billing you in June for some of your 2nd half of the year purchases of chem or fert. If this is of interest, please contact myself directly, or your Branch Manager.

Remember, before undertaking any tax-minimisation strategy, always check with your own Accountant first.

Foliar Disease Control Reminders in Cereals and Pulses

(by Braydn Robertson and Tim Hofmaier)

High Rainfall Cereals:

High crop yields can be achieved in the higher rainfall areas of SW Victoria. The downside is that the environment does favour the build-up of foliar diseases, that can have a large impact on grain yield.

Main diseases of concern are:

- Wheat; Septoria tritici blotch (STB), stripe rust, leaf rust, stem rust
- Barley; scald and spot form of net blotch
- Faba beans; Ascochyta blight and chocolate spot

In cereals, the objective is simply to keep the top 3 leaves free of disease to maximise the crops leaf area and ability to photosynthesise and fill grain. A reminder of the three critical timings for spraying fungicides to protect leaf area;

- GS31-33, when the first to third node becomes detectable on the main stem,
- GS37-39, when the flag leaf becomes visible to fully unrolled and,
- GS 55-59, half head emergence to complete head emergence.

In recent seasons, STB has proven to be the disease that has had the greatest impact on yield in wheat. All the varieties we grow are S, MS to S or MS in disease rating. The disease is stubble borne and disperses widely with wind and a green bridge is not required for transfer from one year to another.



Advanced Septoria Tritici Blotch in GS 31 Wheat

Early sowing favours increased disease pressure, due to increased Autumn infection going into winter. The disease has longer latent period (time between infection and when lesions form), is harder to control than rust and is complicated further by the development of early stages of reduced fungicide susceptibility.

Full blown resistance to fungicides is common in Europe and that's why we are concerned about these diseases.

Opus/Soprano (Epoconazole) and Prosaro (Prothioconazole/Tebuconazole) are the preferred products for the most critical first spraying timing GS31. Under wet spring conditions, crops may be required to be sprayed at flag leaf timing. The Strobilurin/Triazole combinations, such as Radial or Amistar Extra, have a good fit at this timing.

Scald is the main disease for barley in the high rainfall area and like STB in wheat it will be worse in wetter years as pressure from both is correlated to length of time of leaf wetness. Again the earlier GS31 timing is the most critical and preferred products are Prosaro and Amistar Extra.



Medium & Lower Rainfall Cereals:

Rain over summer has resulted in germinations of volunteer cereals that may lead to stripe rust pressure in wheat this year. The significance of this disease is going to be dependent on late winter and spring rainfall.

Spot form of net blotch has been found in barley in the Mallee already, and yellow leaf spot in wheat is expected to be present also. Both these diseases require early treatment for effective control. The effect of these diseases on yield will be dependent on winter

rainfall. Propiconazole is widely used for the control of both.

Pulses:

The area of faba beans grown in the Western District in particular has increased over the past three seasons, mainly on the back of high prices and their rotation and stubble grazing benefits. There are three critical periods during crop development for disease, the first being early vegetative or pre flowering, the second is early flowering and the third is late flowering and when pods are filling.



The key diseases of Faba beans are Cercospora Leaf Spot, Ascochyta Blight and Chocolate Spot. Cercospora and Chocolate Spot is best controlled with a Tebuconazole spray early. Ascochyta Blight is best controlled with either Chlorothalonil or Mancozeb.

Chlorothalonil is the preferred product for control of Ascochyta in lentils. Carbendazim is considered the preferred product for controlling established Chocolate Spot in Faba beans and Ascochyta in lentils. A common mix in lentils and vetch for Ascochyta and grey mould is Chlorothalonil and Carbendazim.

It is important to be aware of harvest and export slaughter intervals with each fungicide used. Unite 720 is the only Chlorothalonil formulation that is registered for use in crops where the stubbles are going to be grazed.

Chlorothalonil and Mancozeb supplies are limited this year and we will be talking to you soon about your requirements.

Unlocking Yield Potential using Precision Ag Technology

(by Guest Contributor Andrew Whitlock)

Success from an investment in Precision Agriculture requires a considered approach, which begins with a plan to address the key yield limiting factors for each specific paddock. Variability within many paddocks can be explained by the natural variations in soil type and characterisations (water holding capacity, waterlogging risk, acidity and hostile subsoils).



Utilising yield data to identify a consistently poor performing area is an important step in unlocking yield potential. A combination of local paddock knowledge, yield maps and crop biomass maps can be integrated with strategic (GPS-referenced) soil tests to develop a site-specific management program. Soil electrical conductivity (EM38) and elevation mapping are other data layers, which can assist with identifying soil management zones and drainage plans.

In our experience big \$\$\$ gains can be achieved, via strategic soil conditioning (lime, gypsum and manures) and drainage designs. Once fundamental soil health indicators have been managed, then further variable rate applications (seeding and fertiliser rates) may be considered.

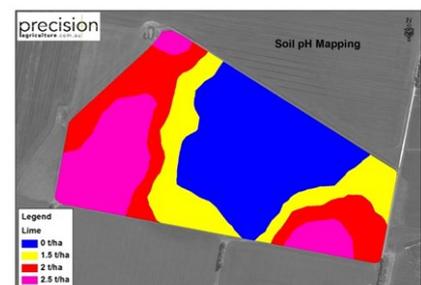
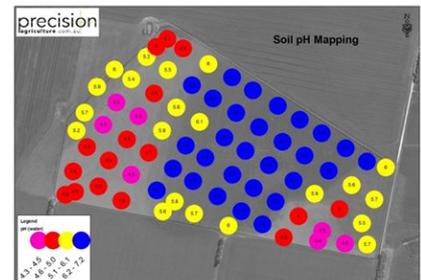
We introduced the first rapid soil pH mapping system in 2010 and have since mapped in excess of 50,000ha across Victoria, southern NSW and South Eastern SA. We estimate that 90% of paddocks we have mapped have warranted variable rate lime with immediate lime savings of 30-80%.

The pH mapping process involves the use of a Veris™ pH detector mounted on an ATV. The machine measures soil pH (H₂O) at a depth of 7cm which we collect on a 1ha grid.



Most paddocks are divided into two or three pH zones (i.e. low, medium and high pH zones) and calibration soil tests (pH CaCl₂, Al & CEC) are collected from within each zone.

The final output from this process is a lime prescription map for a variable rate controller or a physical map for manual variable rate spreading.



In summary, we recommend to keep Precision Agriculture simple, focus on **your** issues/questions, not the technology and start with managing soil productivity!

Andrew can be contacted on mobile 0458 312589 or via email on andrew@precisionagriculture.com.au

Research Update - Being Ahead of the Technology Game

Western AG either directly initiates or has input into trial work each year to generate data to support our advice.

Current trial work we are involved in;

Canola Variety Comparison:

A replicated small plot trial has been established West of Lake Bolac to compare the yield of the leading canola varieties under a high production management regime. The site has a low weed pressure and varieties are being managed under a conventional program with the object to compare straight yield and performance.

Pacific Seeds IWM Trial:

A trial investigating the effect of different canola herbicide systems on weed populations in the canola and then in the following wheat crop has been established in the Sipton area. Adelaide and Charles Sturt Universities are collaborating with this work. Part of this research will be comparing no herbicide vs low input herbicide vs high input herbicide strategies on weed populations.

Incitec Nitrogen Utilisation Trial:

An ongoing assessment of Nitrogen use rates and yield effects conducted at Willaura.

Systiva Comparison:

Systiva is a new mode of action seed treatment fungicide that is initially being registered for us in barley. The product has the potential to provide season long foliar disease control in cereals as seed dressing. Two large scale evaluation plots have been established to compare this treatment with existing foliar fungicide disease control strategies.

These are just some of the projects we are currently undertaking. If you would like more information, please **ask your Agronomist for an update.**

FOR SALE

Fertiliser Shifter

- \$15,000 + GST
- 60 foot
- Good Condition

Available for inspection at the Willaura Branch

Contact: Brad Everett 0419 801583

