



the cotton wrap

March 31st-2017

SEASON SUMMARY

Wal Friend at Walgett sums up this year perfectly, "I only had one irrigation this season, it started in October and finished in March".

Patchy is the word of the week with some very heavy falls of 180mm in 5 hours for Rob Davies near Blackville causing plenty of damage and over 100mm around Goran Lake and Breeza through to Ruvigne near Gunnedah where Rod had some good falls. Further down at Pine Ridge Ian Carter missed out though with more like 30mm and this extended across to Rod Grant and down to "Berwicks" on the hills.

West of Gunnedah was a little light with James Barlow and Mark Hamblin not getting much at all and back past Boggabri and Maules Creek was maybe a little better but nothing significant. Narrabri continues to get most of the rain through the airport where Jon Welsh and the Wheat Research are in the purple patch and it turns off as we head west.

Some parts of Burren Junction Sam Powell tells me are a dust bowl with Merah North not too bad with some useful storms following a track, and a little hail out to Rowena. East of Walgett at Wal and Jane Friend's ended up with 40-80mm and this went as far as Cryon but west of Walgett at Dave Fleming they missed out and Jack Harris tells me that Bourke got some handy falls of up to 80mm.

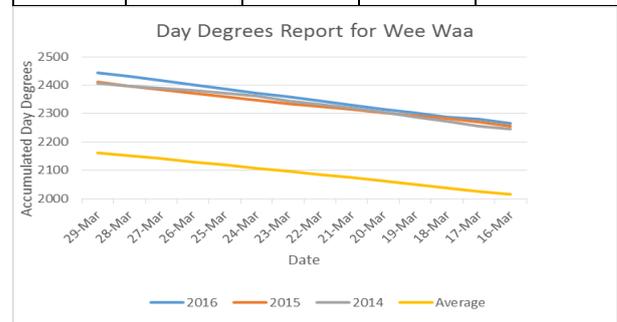
Defoliation has begun for a few growers all through the valley with picking started at Bourke and water limited and Dryland crops at Walgett. Still plenty of crops a little way from the 1st defoliation so picking will take some time.

Congratulations to Rod Smith for taking out the Upper Namoi irrigated crop comp in a Gala dinner last night. Neil and Geoff Barwick took out the Dryland award with Mark Hamblin crowned the Innovator of the Year.

DAY DEGREE REPORT

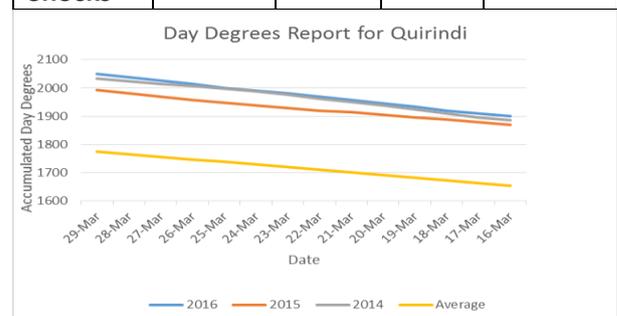
Wee Waa Research Station

Date	2016	2015	2014	Average
Hot Days	63	49	53	31.7
Cold Shocks	25	0	11	15.4



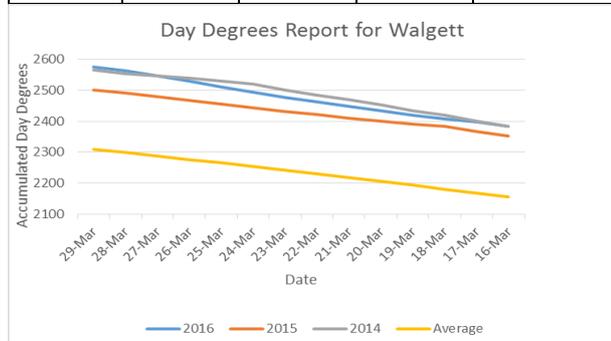
Quirindi Post Office

Date	2016	2015	2014	Average
Hot Days	43	29	21	14.6
Cold Shocks	39	16	28	36.4



Walgett Airport

Date	2016	2015	2014	Average
Hot Days	86	58	71	47.3
Cold Shocks	29	4	15	13.9



INSECTS

Silver Leaf Whitefly are still causing plenty of headaches with some early defoliation strategies being implemented. I spoke to Simone Heimoana and Richard Sequeira about some possible strategies given we are 2-3 weeks away from defoliating some crops. The questions I posed are in Italics.

I applied an IGR 14 days ago and I still seem to have high numbers of SLW so should I apply a knockdown now, given I am at least 14 days from 1st defoliation? Simone and Richard both concur that an IGR will work in most circumstances but may not be evident in the adult populations for at least 3-4 weeks, in fact populations have been known to increase before crashing and cooler weather will help as it slows down the life cycle. It may be just a case of 'holding your nerve'. Consider stapling some clean plastic sheets to lower and middle leaves and check after 24 hrs to ascertain how much honeydew is being distributed to get a better idea on whether it is getting worse. It is also important to remember the IGR works well in part because the beneficial insects help to control the SLW and so 'soft' early season management is vital. If the cost of an IGR is an issue and the strategy is to rely on a knockdown bear in mind that one use of a Bifenthrin for example will leave around 50% survivors, another spray will leave 75% and so you will see little impact after 2 or 3 sprays. A better

knockdown option like Pegasus® will also see challenges in control as it is predominantly a contact spray and coverage is difficult with a thick crop. It also requires sunlight to activate which means that it will not work well in cloudy or drizzly weather and so expect a high number of survivors with high populations.

I was going to defoliate in about 10 days however I do seem to have SLW present in reasonable numbers and some sooty mould appearing, what advice could you provide?

Dense cotton appear to be the enemy in getting good coverage with a knockdown chemical and so early defoliation is a good option. Research suggests defoliation at 50% open will not affect yield or quality. **Ensure to cut bolls when checking maturity and ensure this assessment is done well and consistently through the field as defoliating too early will compromise quality and could bring discounts.** A knockdown may be required but refer to the SLW factsheet for threshold numbers and options. Sooty mould appears due to Fungi breaking down the honey dew sugars and if >20mm of rainfall has fallen then 80% of the sugars have been washed off and so there may be little that can be done about the sooty mould.

The SLW pressure this season has been steady and has required 3 sprays in places. Is this a trend or is it mainly due to this season and could you offer some advice for next season? Area wide management is by far the best strategy. In terms of control options it begins at first cracked boll approximately 6 weeks from defoliation. An application of an IGR should give control for 4 weeks then hopefully a maximum of only one knockdown would be required. Simone adds "think that this season has been extraordinary in many respects. We saw early infestations of mirids and Rutherglen bugs and very high numbers of *Helicoverpa* eggs. The weather was extreme and atypical. This forced decisions that we have not had to make previously and led to much doubt and heavy spraying early in the season. IPM was essentially minimised and we anticipated issues with mites and whitefly. I think most people dealt quite well with the mites and we are now trying to deal with

the whiteflies. I don't think that Rutherglen bugs will be an issue for most growers in the future unless they are dealing with nymphs migrating from other crops. Like the other early pests, they followed a very wet winter which we do not get every year. With regards to boll damage by Rutherglen bugs, we have caged up to 50 Rutherglen bugs onto 5 day old bolls for a week and have not seen any boll losses or internal damage to the boll. We did see brown feeding spots on the outside, however, they did not extend through to the inner boll wall. For next season, I believe it is very important not to back down on IPM principles, make decisions based on thresholds and be more in touch with our beneficial's, perhaps be a little less nervous about RGB or other occasional pests and have more realistic expectations on retention. I am planning on doing more damage compensation work so we can be more confident in what the crop can do".

DRYLAND

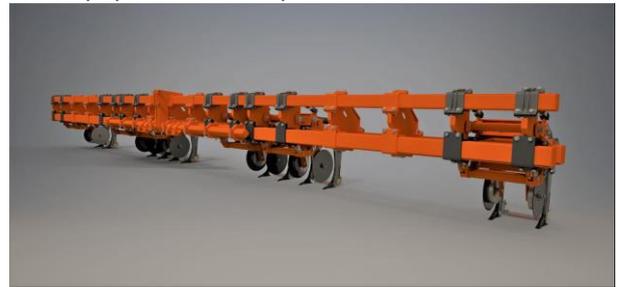
A little more on the picker vs stripper debate last week where Angus Vickery spoke at a field day about his experience. In the 2014/15 season Angus picked 2 crops side by side with the stripped cotton yielding 4.5 bales per hectare and the picked cotton 3.8 bales per hectare. There were no penalties for quality from either crops and it all went base grade.

Angus grows cotton just west of Bellata and year on year he believes he grows stripper cotton, ie lower yielding and a little difficult to pick and so that is why he sold the picker and bought a round bale stripper. The stripper seems to get those few bolls which are not quite open but are close and this is where the increase in yield comes from, he does concede that if the stripper is not set up correctly there will be quality issues and talk to your gin so they know it is stripped cotton which may have a higher trash content.

The other useful comment was in regards to the use of Paraquat® to control regrowth. Don't spray too much ahead of picking and only do as much as you can pick or strip in the next few days.

Also from the meeting came this new design for crop destruction which is under construction for Phil Christie at Bellata. It features downforce pressure and adjustable high breakout pressure and can be modified to handle pupae destruction

if required. There was talk that we might have a trial this season to look at some different methods and equipment for crop destruction.



Currently under construction for use this year.

What's on.

3rd April- Dryland cotton Field Day at "Kurrajong Park", Coolah, Contact Paul Brady 0409 935 513

5th April- Canopy Sensor's "Where did it start and how far can we take it"? James Mahan from the US in Wee Waa. Ph Geoff on 0458 142 777.

WELSHY'S WEATHER

All eyes on the developing El Niño this year although scientists admit accuracy is low until the end of Autumn. The models are showing a neutral Indian Ocean through winter and spring the possibility of a positive (dry) IOD. A report coming out of the US today puts 2008 as a good analogue for 2017 - which was dry enough without being a proper drought. For those picking the next 6-8 weeks looks clear and dry with temperatures on the cooler side. Keep an eye on Monday's moisture manager for updates.

Until Next time

Geoff Hunter

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