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OILSEEDS NEWS

REVISED CANOLA DISEASE RATINGS



The scheme which ranks the resistance of different canola varieties against the disease blackleg has been modified to standardise disease rating systems across all crops.

The new national rating system comes following a decision from the Grains Research and Development Corporation and agreement from members of the canola industry to allow for consistency across all crops tested in the National Variety Trials.

Each resistance rating is linked to specific management strategies for growers. The new system is now in line with that used for diseases of other crops, such as wheat rusts, which have also been updated.

NEW SYSTEM: Steve Marcroft says the new blackleg rating system will be transparent between crops.

Photo: Felicity Pritchard



The new system includes a colour-coded ‘alpha’ label ranging from ‘R’ for resistant to ‘VS’ for very susceptible varieties. Growers will also be made aware of varieties where the resistance to the disease appears to be eroding, due to the build-up of more virulent populations of the blackleg fungus acting against resistance genes in certain canola varieties.

Robert Wilson, Canola Association of Australia Chair believes that changes will be positive for the entire canola industry.

“After a long and thorough discussion, the canola industry has agreed to the changed rating system.



“And I believe that, going forward, it will be an easier system for growers, agronomists and seed sellers,” he said.

IN THE NURSERY: Steve Marcroff’s ‘junior assistant’ Cameron helps Dad monitor a canola disease nursery in the southern Wimmera. The system for disease resistance ratings has changed. Photo: Steve Marcroff

Delegates from all private seed companies and both public and private breeding organisations in Australia came together last week and agreed on the new system.

The national blackleg resistance ratings coordinator, Steve Marcroff, said that a major benefit to growers is that they will only have to understand one type of rating system for all crops, be it stripe rust in wheat to blackleg in canola.

“It’s now transparent between all crops,” he said.

However, he said that growers need to ensure that they look at the specific management strategies linked to a particular blackleg resistance rating for canola, which will differ from other crop diseases.

“For example, the management of a variety of canola with moderate resistance (MR) to blackleg will be different from the management of a variety of wheat with an MR rating to stem rust.”

The previous national system for canola was a 1 to 9 system, going from very susceptible to highly resistant. For other crops, a wide range of systems were used in the past, and varied from state to state.

Media enquiries: Steve Marcroft, (03) 5381 2294 or 0409 978 941 or Robert Wilson, (02) 6931 7650 or 0407 509 727.

DAVE ROBSON RETIRES AFTER 32 YEARS’ SERVICE TO PLANT BREEDING

After 32 years of dedicated service, Horsham-based oilseeds breeding Technical Officer, Dave Robson, has hung up his boots with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries.

Dave’s contribution has seen the release of 46 crop varieties - including three oat, three triticale, two linseed, two industrial rapeseed, three mustard, one juncea canola and 29 canola varieties.

In his role, Dave managed trials right across Victoria with both a coordination role and the hands-on work of sowing, spraying and harvesting breeding trials which led to the release of higher yielding, better quality, disease-resistant crop varieties for growers to adopt.

His disease nursery trials were described by one research scientist as “the best I’ve seen in the world” at his farewell yesterday.

But Dave said it wasn't the trials, but his interaction with farmers and international scientists, as well as his fellow workmates that he loved so much about his job.

Fellow colleagues expressed their sadness at seeing Dave leave, but wished him well for his future life of leisure.

Dave has no special plans at this stage for his retirement, but will now have more time to spend with his children and wife, Inge at their family property south of Horsham after many years of long working hours and trips away in the name of lifting grain production and helping growers in Victoria.



FAREWELL TO HIS MATES: Dave Robson (left) celebrates his final day with the DPI Horsham after 32 years' service to plant breeding. He is pictured with fellow retiree Denis Ballinger and SARDI senior agronomist Trent Potter and DPI canola breeder Wayne Burton. Photo: Liz Dahlenburg, Vic. DPI

2007 CANOLA TRIALS NOW ON WEB

Reports of canola agronomy and variety trials undertaken in 2007 in New South Wales and Victoria are now on the web, under the Australian Oilseed Federation's site.



Oilseeds Industry Development Officer, Felicity Pritchard, has collated and edited 20 trial reports, ranging from row spacing, canola hay cutting time, fertiliser management to variety trials.

She said that the mid maturity National Variety Trials for Victoria and New South Wales are also on the site in an easy-to-interpret format, allowing agronomists and growers faster and easier access to the information.

Some of the research has been undertaken by farming groups, including Central West Farming Systems, Victorian Irrigated Cropping Council, Birchip Cropping Group and Southern Farming Systems. The Victorian and New South Wales Department of Primary Industries also undertook a number of successful trials in 2007.

Ms Pritchard said that many canola trials in New South Wales and northern Victoria failed last year due to drought, while other trials in three year projects will be reported on at the completion of the project.

To look at the reports, visit

www.australianoilseeds.com/agronomy_centre/variety_and_agronomy_trials.

For more information, contact Felicity Pritchard, 0427 600 288.

VIRTUAL CANOLA CROP IS BACK

The Virtual Canola Crop is back for 2008, and marketers, agronomists and growers from around the globe can check out the progress of this year's crop with the click of a mouse.

Photos of a Wimmera and Western District canola crop will be taken at weekly or fortnightly intervals with information of weather events, chemical applications and any disease or insect observations.





Oilseeds Industry Development Officer, Felicity Pritchard, said that canola growing at a number of other locations in Victoria and New South Wales may be added to the site soon.

To check out the Virtual Canola Crop, look at

http://www.australianoilseeds.com/agronomy_centre/the_virtual_canola_site.

VIRTUALLY THERE: Check out the progress of this Wimmera canola crop of the AOF website.

MANAGE RISK WITH INFORMED DECISIONS IN 2008

While the outlook for grain prices appears excellent from a grower's perspective, the chance of capitalising on them this year is a little bit more hit-and miss.

Grains industry development officer, Carl Sudholz, said that few farm businesses can afford to make another loss in 2008, and the skills of farmers to manage their business risk will make or break the year. And this hangs on growers closely monitoring their crops, doing some research, seeking objective advice when necessary and spending wisely.

Mr Sudholz, from the Victorian Department of Primary Industries said that from now on, the best management decisions will be on time, realistic and well-informed.

“There are no clear indications from climate science and it seems nobody can say with any kind of certainty how this season may turn,” he said.

“In the end, for all farms it is the financial successes that count. The best way to make decisions that are profitable has always been to research and consider the issue, prior to making the decision.

He said that the first rule of risk management in farming is to manage for profit is in not spending money.

“While it is true that you must spend money to make money, plenty of money has been spent already this season. The question is: will further expenses incurred generate income in return?”

“Monitor your expenses by monitoring the farm. Walk every paddock at least once a week, looking for both the expected and not expected. No input should be applied without a walk through the paddock.

“Make sure you can clearly identify the problems or issues; if you don’t know what it is or how to manage it, pay someone to identify and manage it for you.”

Mr Sudholz said the second relevant rule is to not spend money on that which you have no control, knowledge or experience.

“Seek advice on those decisions you are unfamiliar with. When the advice is free, consider the motivations of those providing it. In the end it is always better to pay for good advice from someone you trust, than to get poor advice for free.”

For more information, please contact Carl Sudholz is the Grains Industry Development Officer at Department of Primary Industries, Horsham on (03) 5362 2111.
