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DRAFT PRESS RELEASE #4

18 APRIL 2007

BARLEY GROWERS BEWARE OF LEAF SCALD IN PREVIOUSLY RESISTANT VARIETIES.

Leaf scald in barley is a disease that affects crop yields to a greater or lesser degree most years. Until recent years, growers have managed the disease using a number of management strategies, including growing resistant varieties. What is extremely important to note is that the previously resistant variety, Gairdner, is now susceptible to a new strain of scald.

This new strain of leaf scald was identified in Gairdner crops growing near Hamilton in Victoria in 2000, and after a severe outbreak in 2001, has since been spreading north and east from Hamilton.

Dr Grant Holloway, Senior Research Scientist at Department of Primary Industry at Horsham, warned that it's quite an aggressive strain that can take yield and quality. He said, "This new strain is now well established in the Western District, with smaller outbreaks in the Wimmera. It's been virulent on Gairdner, as well as other susceptible varieties including Barque and Baudin.

Grant Holloway stated that variety choice is important. He said, "Gairdner is still a good variety in many areas. Growers simply need to be aware, and protect accordingly."

Geoff Robertson, Market Manager Seed Treatments at Bayer CropScience, said that growers can stay ahead with the implementation of a multi-faceted management plan, plus use seed treatments to effectively control the disease. He said, "Destroying infected stubble is vitally important, as is the use of clean seed when heads have become severely infected. Growing barley over barley and planting susceptible varieties should be avoided too. Importantly, the use of seed treatments is extremely effective at controlling leaf scald in barley."

Fungicidal seed treatment, Jockey[®] by Bayer CropScience is proven to suppress early scald infection. Geoff Roberston added, "Jockey[®] is a specially formulated systemic seed treatment fungicide that when used at the new cost effective 3 L/tonne rate offers growers a distinct advantage against leaf scald and powdery mildew infection."

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Geoff Robertson also pointed out that Baytan[®] by Bayer CropScience is another cost effective option, especially coming off drought. He said, "Baytan[®] also provides excellent suppression and is a cheaper alternative that will suit some growers better in a tight year."

As previously resistant varieties are now known to be susceptible to leaf scald, and yield loss can significantly undermine profit margins, growers need to remain vigilant to the disease and ensure their management practices help control it.

Yield losses due to leaf scald have been reported to be as high as 35 to 40 per cent, and are often between 1 and 10 percent. Geoff Robertson concluded, "It's such a common disease, and very costly to growers in some years. That's why it's so important to treat seed and minimise its effects."

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