

InShort

Blackleg ratings: This year's canola blackleg ratings have been released and come with added information on fungicide effects. Blackleg is the worst disease of canola and each year Australian varieties are assessed and rated for their resistance to the disease. National blackleg ratings coordinator Steve Marcroft said it was crucial that growers check 2011 ratings before committing to a variety. "You should only use the current year's ratings, as last year's are outdated for some varieties," he said. "The new 2011 ratings are based on how varieties performed between 2006 and 2010. New this year is also an extensive list of varieties with and without the use of fungicide seed dressings." Dr Marcroft warned growers to ensure they observe blackleg ratings marked as 'provisional' as they are based on insufficient data to provide a definitive rating. "Also, some varieties come with a reduced resistance warning where the fungus may be slowly overcoming the resistance of the cultivars," he said.

• Details: www.grdc.com.au/GRDC-FC-BlacklegRiskAssessor, freecall 1800 11 00 44 or email ground-cover-direct@canprint.com.au.

Business management: Rural advisers and consultants will gather in Adelaide next month to develop their understanding of the farm business management issues confronting their graingrower clients. The GRDC is hosting a Farm Business Update on May 17, designed specifically for agronomists, bankers and accountants who work with growers. The update will be the first of its kind to be held in South Australia, and is only the second to be conducted in the southern cropping region, following a pilot event last year in Bendigo, Victoria. GRDC southern regional panel chairman David Shannon said the GRDC had initiated the update concept to address the growing complexity of grain enterprise management issues. "Topics that will be covered by expert speakers include grain business challenges and trends that are likely to impact on growers over the next three years, machinery investment decisions, land tenure, grain pricing and marketing, and farm family communications."

• Details: www.orm.com.au or by phoning 03 5441 6176.

Grains conference: The Australian Grains Industry Conference, Australia's premier grains conference will be held from Monday July 25 – Wednesday July 27 at Melbourne's Crown Conference Centre. The theme of the conference is *Weathering Risks: Creating Opportunities*. The conference will gather leaders from industry, government and international markets to address global commodity and consumer trends, explore technological advances and identify opportunities for the grains industry. Registrations will open shortly.

• Details: www.ausgrainsconf.com

Margins for durum stack up long-term

By PAULA THOMPSON

RETURNS relative to bread wheat may see growers turn away from durum this season, but Mid North farmer Ben Crawford says a long-term outlook should be taken with the crop.

Mr Crawford was one of the guest speakers at the Durum Growers Association of SA pre-seeding forum, held at Blyth last week.

He outlined how gross margins of durum compared to bread wheat at his family's 'Janefield' property at Georgetown.

"We like to see how we're going over the long term, and three years data gives us the broader picture," he said.

In 2009, durum greatly outshone bread wheats in the profitability stakes. Bread wheat returned \$190/ha compared to durum at \$896/ha, a \$706/ha difference.

"If we made decisions based on just one year's data, we would have put the whole farm to durum," he said.

Over the three year period of 2008 to 2010 durum's gross margin was an average of \$822/ha, compared to bread wheat's \$425/ha, barley at just under \$400/ha and peas at \$370/ha.

But in 2010 the differ-

Key points

- Durum produces average gross margin of \$822/ha
- New varieties offer higher yields
- Cleanliness of equipment crucial

ence was greatly narrowed, with durum making \$987/ha, compared with bread wheat at \$874/ha.

The Georgetown property is suited to growing durum, with average rainfall of 450 millimetres. That figure climbed to a massive 535mm in 2010.

"We have clay, loam soils that hold moisture well and are conducive to growing high yielding crops," he said.

Main weed issues include ryegrass, wild oats, bedstraw and bifora.

"We run sheep on our stubbles over summer, and in winter there are not many sheep around, as they are put on our grazing property," he said.

Crops are put in using direct drill methods with knife points and presswheels.

"We always try to control summer growth, which has been a full-time job in itself this year," he said.

"All our nitrogen requirements for an average season are put out using a deep band up-front.

"Later, at flowering, we'll put extra on, if needed for protein."

Crop rotation is durum, bread wheat,

barley then peas, hay or vetch pasture, depending on weed pressure.

"Durum gets our best ground, while bread wheat usually gets a durum stubble," he said.

Hay or pasture is put in for a minimum of two years.

"With durum we have exposure to a different market," Mr Crawford said.

"We hope that if bread wheat prices are down, durum will be up and the other way around."

Mr Crawford has grown lentils and canola in the past, but found durum a better fit in the program.

"With bread wheat we've had concerns with sprouting, we've never been downgraded with durum, but we have with bread wheat," he said.

"And with its rust resistance growing, durum effectively gives us a wheat on wheat opportunity."

An outbreak of stem rust last season meant Mr Crawford had to run over his bread wheats with a rust spray.

"It was a nervous time, when three days later the aeroplane still hadn't arrived," he said.

The durums planted in the 2008 season were Tamaroi, Saintly, Hyperno and Tjilkuri. In the 2009 and 2010 seasons it was Saintly, Tjilkuri, WID803 and WID 802. With the bread wheats, Pugsley and Gladius are grown, with barley it is Sloop SA, Buloke, Keel and Flagship and Kaspas.

Durum is marketed at harvest,



GROSS MARGINS: Georgetown farmer Ben Crawford says while durum's gross margins may not have been impressive over bread wheat last season, they stack up in the long term.

with bread wheat marketed throughout the year.

Mr Crawford said the strong results he had been able to achieve with durum were in large part because of access to newer varieties over the past three years.

"The fact we grow seed for the association means we've had access to high yielding varieties," he said.

But he said growing durum was not without its challenges.

"There are extra headaches to achieve those higher gross margins," he said.

"You have to ensure the cleanliness of seed-ing and harvesting

equipment, because it's very easy to get bread wheat contamination.

"There are freight and delivery issues. In my area durum goes to smaller sites, which can take a lot of time to get through. This year we had four trucks in a line-up and it took two hours from the first truck to the fourth truck, and we were the only four trucks there."

Mr Crawford said he found getting the right level of vitreousness can be an issue with durum.

"I see it as more of a challenge than meeting the right protein levels, it's much harder to control than protein," he said.



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SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE GRAIN HANDLING INDUSTRY PUBLIC HEARINGS

You are invited to attend public hearings of the Select Committee on the Grain Handling Industry. The Committee will be visiting Wallaroo, Crystal Brook, Clare and Freeling to hear from interested people and organisations that wish to address the Committee on issues pertinent to its Terms of Reference (available at www.parliament.sa.gov.au, search under 'Committees' or by phoning the Secretary).

The Meetings are being held at:

Wallaroo Football Club
Oval, Cornish Tce, Wallaroo
Monday 18 April 7.00 – 9.00pm

Crystal Brook Institute Building
21 Bowman St, Crystal Brook
Tuesday 19 April 9.00 – 11.00am

Clare Country Club
White Hut Road, Clare
Tuesday 19 April 2.00 – 4.00pm

and

Freeling Football Club
Recreational Park, Cherry St, Freeling
Tuesday 19 April 7.00 – 9.00pm

Formal presentations are welcomed by the Committee. If time permits the Committee will call for statements of opinion and views from the public gallery.

For further information please contact Mr David Pegram (Secretary), ph: (08) 8237 9384, fax: (08) 8237 9213, email: david.pegram@parliament.sa.gov.au

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