Spring crops

Complete sowing of wheat, oats and beans as soon as possible and remember the yield for April-sown crops will be significantly lower than those sown in March. They will also ripen later in September and can be more difficult to harvest. Therefore, for most growers, barley will be the only option from now on. Increase barley seed rate as you drill into April. Aim to sow approximately 350 seeds to establish 300 plants.

Fertiliser key points for spring cereals:
- select a suitable fertiliser to deliver sufficient seedbed N for early establishment and sufficient phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) for crop yield;
- P trials in spring barley indicate the benefits of placing P fertiliser on P Index 1 soils in terms of rapid root and tiller development;
- recent work in spring barley has also shown the higher rates of K, 80-100kg/ha, can also help to reduce brackling in barley;
- reduce the chemical fertiliser rates where organic manures have been applied;
- apply ~30% of the crop’s N requirements at sowing;
- apply remaining N at mid tillering or alternatively split the remaining crop N as follows; two-thirds at early tillering and the final third by GS31/32 to reduce the risk of N loss in feeding barley. For malting, apply N top dressing as soon as tramlines are visible;
- watch crops closely for signs of manganese deficiency and treat as soon as symptoms appear – tillers can be lost very quickly and the crops will not have time to recover.

Aphids

Any March-sown crops do not need an aphicide, except in areas with a history of barley yellow dwarf virus (BYDV) or near the coast. April-sown crops should receive an aphicide at the 3-4 leaf stage for optimum effect. Use full label rates to
get best control but monitor after spraying to assess for resistant aphids.

**Weed control:**
- early application (4-5 leaf stage of crop) using reduced rates will save money;
- best results achieved when the weed and crop are growing actively;
- the weather before spraying will influence how well the weed takes up the chemical; and,
- Table 1 shows available options.

**Wild oats**
Pinoxaden (Axial Pro/Avena Nova 0.6L/ha) or fenoxaprop (Foxtrot/Farmco Wild Oats) can be applied with certain herbicides on different crops, so check each label for restrictions. Where野 oat sprays are applied separately, obey intervals to maximise the efficacy of the spray.

**Note:** all old formulations of Axial and the generics (Avena/Axis) must be used up before the end of June.

**Winter barley**
April is a critical month for winter barley crops with a number of jobs needing to be completed. Barley yield will be determined in the next few weeks so prioritise crops for inputs.

**Nutrition:** complete the main split of nitrogen (N), if not already done, total N at Index 1 = 180kg/ha (144u/ac).
If you plan to go higher than this, consider a third split before GS32, as barley does not use late N efficiently and needs it working before you see the flag leaf. Manganese deficiency is common and needs attention.

**Fungicide:** Teagasc suggests a three-spray programme where disease levels are moderate or high. However, crops in the northern half of the country may be able to get away with two applications:

| first spray | GS30; |
| second spray | GS30-33; and, |
| third spray | GS39-49. |

**Options include:** Siltra 0.6L/ha; Ceriax 1.8L/ha; Elatus Era 0.8L/ha; or, Proline 0.4L/ha plus SDHI (Imtrex, Zulu, etc.)/strob. Where mildew is evident, include a mildewicide. Add chlorothalonil to last spray for the control of ramularia.

**PGR:** aim to apply a plant growth regulator (PGR) on two-row varieties between GS32 and GS37 for effective shortening, e.g., Terpal 1.2-1.5L/ha, Cerone 0.5-0.7L/ha or Meddax Max 0.3-0.5kg/ha. For six-row varieties or two-row varieties on very fertile sites, two applications are generally required, consider Moddus 0.2L/ha plus CCC 1.0L/ha at GS30/31, followed by the normal timing at GS32-37. Watch the weather when applying PGRs, as frost will lessen the effect of the products, while also increasing the possibility of scorching.

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**Table 1: Weed control options for spring cereal crops.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested rates and products</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sulfonylurea, e.g., Ally Max or Cameo Max or Harmony Max at a half to two-thirds rate plus</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMPP 1.5L/ha or Fluroxypyr 0.75L/ha or Galaxy 0.75L/ha or Pixxaro 0.375L/ha</td>
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<td>or</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zypar 0.75-1.0L/ha can be considered almost as a one-can solution for most spring-germinating weeds. Check weed spectrum.</td>
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Winter wheat

The winter wheat crop also needs careful minding in April as we try to build a big and disease-free canopy in the crop to catch as much light as possible. Approximately 80% of the yield comes from the top half of the canopy so having a good clean base is important.

Nitrogen: complete the main N application now (before GS32). This generally equates to half the total amount of N for the crop, if a three-split programme is being used and is typically in the range of 100-125kg/ha (80-100 units/ac). Apply the third split at flag leaf.

PGR: Apply PGR by the first node (GS31). Options include: CCC 75% 2.0L/ha plus or minus an adjuvant: K2 1.8L/ha, Meteor 2.5l/ha or CCC 1L/ha plus Moddus 0.2L/ha or Meddax Max 0.2kg/ha. Temperatures need to be >8°C for best effect.

Fungicide
Leaf 4 spray T0: a final leaf 4 (T0) gives a little insurance if disease pressure builds before the T1 (mid/late April). Long-term Teagasc trials have shown little or no yield response to the T0. Bravo is the best option if you are committed to applying a T0. Do not apply triazoles or SDHIs as it will reduce your septoria control at the later, more important timings. Treat mildew and rust (if present) at T0.

Leaf 3 spray (T1): apply when third last leaf is fully emerged. Crops are advanced this year with the added complication that an extra leaf may be produced, similar to 2012. Growth stage may not be an accurate indicator of the actual leaves present in the crop, so dissecting plants and identifying the correct leaf to apply the first fungicide is critical for optimum septoria control. In many crops, this could still be very late April or early May before the timing is correct even after the mild spring.

Options
Bravo plus 80-100% of SDHI mixes (Adexar, Librax, Elatus Era, Ascra, Treoris plus triazole, etc.). Add a morpholine where mildew is present (check variety ratings). For detailed fungicide programmes, talk to your adviser. See the video at this QR code, which shows how to identify leaf 3 in wheat.
Winter oilseed rape

Many crops started flowering in March this year, which is at least two weeks earlier than last year. **Fungicide:** most crops are gone past timing for light leaf spot but for the few that aren’t, Proline 0.5L/ha will also control it without any PGR effect.

Sclerotinia is best treated preventively in fields at risk (where rape was grown previously or nearby). Apply Filan, Proline plus strob, etc., at the start of petal fall (this is the most effective time for sclerotinia control as later infection only affects lesser-yielding side branches).

**Pests:** pollen beetle is rarely a problem in crops, but it can cause damage at green bud stage, when the beetle burrows into the buds. Once the crop has flowered it actually helps pollination so no treatment is necessary.

**Nitrogen:** apply 40-60kg N/ha as near as practically possible to flowering. This is to prolong green-leaf area during pod-fill.

Winter oats

Winter oats have progressed nicely through the spring, with most crops around GS31 by the first of April.

**Nitrogen:** all crops should receive their full N by the first node. Do not apply more than 150kg/ha as this will increase lodging pressure and trials from Oak Park also indicate that it will reduce yield and quality.

**PGR:** best growth regulation is achieved when crop is at second node (GS32-33) – options include CCC 75% 2.0L/ha or Ceraide 1.4L/ha or CCC 1L/ha plus Moddus 0.2L/ha or Meddax Max 0.2kg/ha, etc.

**Fungicides:** disease control should start early with the first signs of mildew and the first two applications generally coincide with PGR applications – Talius 0.2L/ha plus or minus Epoxiconazole 0.5L/ha or Tocata 1.0L/ha, Folicur 0.5L/ha plus Corbel 0.3L/ha, etc.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Be careful with tractors and ATVs

Farming moves fully outdoors during April as the busy grass and crop growing season gets into top gear. Farm accidents spike during busy periods so heightened safety vigilance is needed. Fatal accidents at this time of year are mainly associated with farm vehicles particularly tractors and ATVs. With tractors it is vital to watch out for bystanders and be conscious of parking vehicles correctly. With ATVs it is vital to keep in control by controlling throttle speed and shifting one’s weight as counterbalance. Wear a certified helmet.

*Operate ATVs safely.*