

Simple approach pays off



Tim Hinchley favours older chemistry and prefers to take a blanket approach with wheat fungicides.

Notts wheat grower, Tim Hinchley, considers yield to be the big driver for profit — especially at current grain prices.

However, he prefers to keep his agronomy simple, growing varieties he knows to be well-suited to the farm, and coupling them with a straight-forward, preventive approach to disease control — standardised across all varieties.

Last year, he used robust rates of older chemistry at all four spray timings, rather than trying to react to different disease pressures. Oakley and Alchemy were his two wheats grown for harvest 2010.

This season, Alchemy has been replaced by Viscount and Gallant — with a seed crop of the latter achieving 9.5t/ha on some previously-rented light land near Sleaford.

Just over 240ha of land is farmed by Hinchley Agriculture in total, from a base at Park Farm, Epperstone.

“I’m not one for trying new varieties quickly,” explains Tim Hinchley. “I like to see them proven elsewhere first.

“We’re on red kuyper marl

clay soil, so our crops tend to keep growing. The wind really whips around so if we’re not careful, it can end up causing lodging.” As a result, he tends to go for short, stiff varieties.

“I’ve got on fairly well with Oakley but I accept that yellow rust is becoming a problem with the variety. Having said, that I think it does respond well to treatment.”

When it comes to disease control, he believes his pre-planned strategy of Cherokee (cyproconazole+ propiconazole+ chlorothalonil) at T0 and T1, followed by Amistar Opti (azoxystrobin+ chlorothalonil) plus a triazole at T2 and T3 across all of his wheat, has helped him achieve season-long control of both septoria and yellow rust — contributing to yields of up to 11t/ha last year.

“We’ve been using this approach for the past three years — a proper belt-and-braces programme. It’s fairly broad-spectrum and we try to get on in good time with the sprayer.” He can get around all his wheat with the sprayer in just three days.

“*Septoria tritici* is an issue for pretty much every wheat grower and I think our spray programme does as good a job as any.” He adds that using Cherokee and Amistar Opti is “a cheap way of buying Bravo”.

Historically, the farm’s yield has been around 8.6-9.9t/ha for first wheat, but in the past two years, it’s increased to 9.9-11.1t/ha. “Whether that’s because of the fungicide treatments we’re using or the varieties themselves, I’m not sure — but I’d like to think it was both.

“We’ve got a whole host of active ingredients within this fungicide mix and if they’re each doing a good job, it makes life a lot simpler. That’s my guiding principle.”