



# Macquarie bale up

## APRIL 2023

### 2023 SEASON WRAP

The Macquarie valley has experienced some climatic extremes in the last few months, but above average temperatures have provided very good boll filling conditions for our crops. The crops are later this season across the board, so a mild warm March was welcomed to provide enough season for the plants to mature.

There has been off target spray events throughout the season across most areas of the valley at some stages. This has not helped the later cotton in many cases and has influenced the bolls formed where the leaf area was affected.

Pest pressure in general was low and populations of white fly sampled have been predominantly greenhouse whitefly which was similar last season. The populations have been low in most areas with a few hot spots popping up isolated patches on some early December planted cotton. The northern end of the valley has a large feral pig population that is requiring control in many areas throughout the middle and end of the season. We are also starting to see some mice pressure in and around the outskirts of the crops with open bolls, perimeter baiting is an

option for some growers who are using it to prevent an infestation.

Given the high number of back-to-back fields in this season it was not surprising to see Verticillium has started to express in low to severe incidence in known fields. Fusarium species are also present however not in high incidence like the Verticillium.

The 2022-2023 crop has generally had lower water use than previous seasons, given most rainfall has been associated with storm activity and very isolated on average its used about 6-8 megalitres per hectare.

Things look set for a big cotton area next season and there has been some good weather conditions that have been conducive to land preparation over the last two months. Defoliation is well underway and is getting good results with warmer weather and high winds prevalent over the window. For latest information on defoliation and end of season management head to the [CottonInfo](https://www.cottoninfo.com.au) website

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, the Macquarie Cotton Growers Association was thrilled to team up with Quigley farms to host what was undoubtedly one of the biggest field days in the last 10 years of production. The head



count was around 200 and those who attended were given an “open house” showcase of the Bayer Grower of the Year (2021 season). For many it was a chance to get off farm after a very long summer and a hot few weeks. The MCGA committee was very pleased with the support from sponsors and the Quigley family that came together for a great day.

With good allocation prospects for next season its set to be another big cotton year and fingers crossed for a good picking and processing season.



Fig 1 Quigley Farms team: Source Alex Quigley.

## Richard Williams Initiative (RWI) – Disease Action Groups Updates

The first steps of the project are well underway, our aim is to work with a group of growers who are keen to develop on farm management systems that will help them better manage disease. The project will run for at least three seasons – each region had some priority setting meetings to determine what the growers wanted to work towards – in the Macquarie the top three were.

- Establishing some baselines for soil inoculum levels by getting Crown Analytical in to measure fields with disease – it’s hard to work out if what your doing will have an impact if we only measure things like yield, which

can be impacted by so many environmental factors.

- Measuring the impact of rotations – Crown will do the base lines and then come back twice a year and see what impact they are having on inoculum levels. (See below for an example of a heat map that Crown Analytical provide) Other data will be overlaid once the heat maps are developed and precision ag will play a part in seeing the overall impact of the disease.
- Using data from the first year in the project the DAG will flag some management practices they want to further investigate, this might be the use of Monosilicic Acid at planting or other products that we want to ground truth and validate results.

Fig 2: Heat maps of inoculum levels Source: Rob Long Macquarie valley disease workshop 2021 Gus Hogan Delta Ag.

The initial round inoculum testing was for Soil Black Root Rot (0.00 - 10.00cm), Soil Verticillium Dahliae (0.00 - 10.00cm) and soil Verticillium Dahliae Defoliating Strain (0.00 - 10.00cm).

The results from the last meeting had some great outcomes and the group has raised some research gaps as well as discussed what they plan on doing on their farms over the next three seasons and we will closely monitor these results.

During the meeting we discussed some projects we would like to see get done as well as some priorities to feed back to CRDC see below

- FoV (Fusarium) DNA testing – we see it as big priority to get this project fast tracked and prioritised.
- More rotation trials with Corn – If these exist in farm scale trials can we get some information extended or bring some research to the valley to discuss.
- Life Cycle of Verticillium – like to monitor spores throughout the farming stages – what does burning residue do in this cycle? Is there work on it?
- NPK management and monitoring and disease interaction – has CSD done this work if not is this something that can be done on research farms in conjunction with nutrition projects?
- Gypsum application rates and BRR incidence – by improving drainage can we see a reduction in the impact of BRR? what has been done and how can we best trial this?

We will be bringing some researchers in to work with groups as well as running some info sessions for all growers to attend. If you have any priorities to add to these lists, please get in touch with Amanda.

## COVER CROPPING

*Seeking regional guidelines for cover crops through farmer led best practice.*

We are looking to help growers solve issues through cover cropping. We want to know what services cover crops can/are offering in different valleys. Currently we are looking for growers or agronomists who can answer the following,

1. Are you interested in cover crops? Why?
2. Have you incorporated cover cropping into your system?

3. Have you had or do you know of any cover cropping successes?

From the answers we will identify regional interests and experience. Invite interested growers to participate in on-farm trials and to guide future management through University of Sydney trials at Narrabri and Spring Ridge. A research program will then be built around quantifying performance in terms of emergence, yield, quality, disease, weeds, soil carbon, biodiversity, and water balance. All data collected will be passed on to growers raw and again following analysis.



*Fig 3 – strip tiller preparing the bed for planting into wheat stubble crop.*

*Please get in touch with myself or Tom if you are interested in this project as you will getting some performance evaluations of current cover cropping systems.*

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## IRRIGATION

### NSW DPI Climate Smart Pilots Farm Walk: *Water management for irrigated crops*

Hear from NSW DPI Climate Smart Pilots team about how agricultural technology (AgTech) can help improve your irrigation efficiency. Technology and data can help create a story of your farm water balance. Irrigation decisions on farms are made easier with the use of digital sensors that collect real-time data including potential water losses, application volume, soil moisture levels, crop stress and weather conditions.

Speakers on Ag Tech in irrigation:

Dr Jasim Uddin, Research & Development Officer  
Irrigation, NSW DPI  
Glenn Ormon, Farm Manager, Trangie Agricultural Research Centre (TRAC), NSW DPI  
Lou Gall, CottonInfo Irrigation Technical Lead and  
Tim Gainsford, Cotton Producer, Narromine.

**Where: Trangie  
Agricultural Research  
Centre, 7878 Mitchell  
Highway, Trangie  
When: Tuesday 23  
May 2023, 8:00am till  
1:30pm  
Bring: Closed Shoes, a  
hat and water  
Provided: Morning Tea  
and Lunch**

The link to RSVP is

<https://events.humanitix.com/farm-walk-water-management-for-irrigated-crops>



## FEATHERTOP RHODES GRASS

Just wanted to make you aware that NSW DPI is currently taking Feathertop rhodes grass (FTR) seed head samples for free herbicide resistance testing (glyphosate and haloxyfop).

Details contained below:

- Only seed samples from **cropping paddocks** will be tested at this stage. Any FTR survivors during the summer are setting mature seeds now.
- Growers are encouraged to collect 30 mature seed heads (with **tiny black seeds** present – image attached) ideally from 10 different plants in a paddock.
- Seedheads should be placed in an envelope labelled with date of collection, collector's name, mobile phone number, nearest town, and GPS location (if possible).
- Seed samples from different paddocks can also be collected, but please keep it in a separate envelop.
- Post the samples to:

Mr Adam Shephard  
Wagga Wagga Ag Institute  
Pine Gully Road, Wagga Wagga  
NSW 2650

- The testing results will be provided back to you as soon as they are available.



For the latest on how to deal with this spreading problem weed click on the link below

**<https://www.weedsmart.org.au/content/dealing-with-a-feathertop-rhodes-grass-problem/>**

**Amanda Thomas**

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NOTICE: This email and any attachments are confidential to Cotton Seed Distributors Ltd. If you are not the intended recipient, you are not authorised to use or disclose this email or the attachments or any information in them; please tell the sender immediately by return email that you have received the email in error, and delete the email and its attachments from your computer.

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