British Beet BBRO Research Organisation Advisory Bulletin

Issue 10: 7th August 2025

IN BRIEF

- Decision time for cover crops. Think about what you want this crop to achieve and how to manage it
- Levels of virus yellows appear to be low. Other yellowing currently seen in crop are due to other causes, including red and/or two-spotted spider mite
- Check with the BBRO plant clinic if you are unsure what is causing your yellowing
- Foliar diseases: powdery mildew is the most prevalent disease at present, however, rust and cercospora leaf spot have been seen (Cercospora Monitoring and Forecasting for 2025 - BBRO)
- BCN is now evident on roots. Check wilted patches in your crops and contact Plant clinic if you need help to confirm infestation.
- Beet Moth: Recent rain is expected to suppress beet moth activity
- Many beneficial insects in crops at the moment too
- BeetCast August – the crop that keeps on giving!

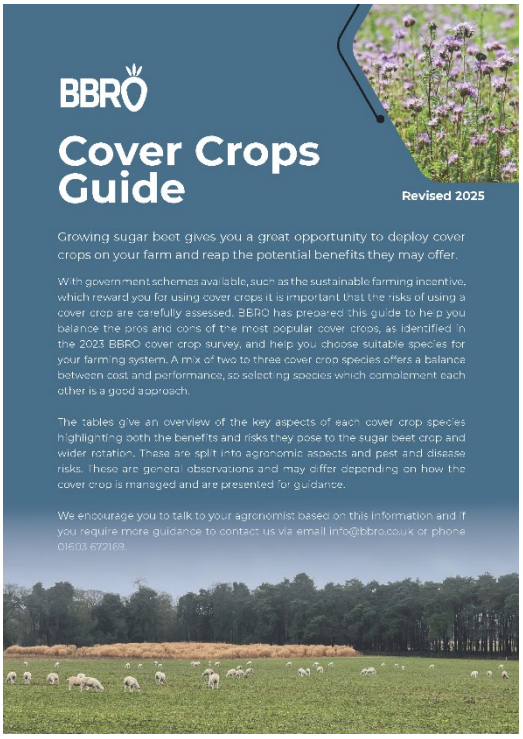
ADVISORY

Cover Crop

Cover crops are a great option ahead of sugar beet, but they can also pose a challenge. To help ensure cover crops are a success it is important to decide what you want your cover crop to achieve.

A mix of 2-3 species will be easier to manage and could help cover a number of areas:

- Increased nutrition
- Improved soil structure
- BCN trap-crop
- Grazing
- Ease of destruction



Use the BBRO Cover Crop guide to help with selecting your cover crop mix. It is also important to buy seed from a reputable source. There are reports of contaminated cover crop seed being used which introduces unwanted species that can become problem weeds.

Drill as soon as possible to maximise cover crop growth in the warmer autumn months and provide good ground cover over the winter. Many cover crop species can be hosts of virus yellows, this does not mean they should be avoided but that timely destruction is essential to avoid green-bridging. To reduce the risk of pests and diseases carryover, ensure the crop is destroyed at least 6 weeks before the next crop, being mindful of stewardship restrictions (e.g. SFI). Early planted cover crops and those with fibrous roots may be harder to destroy and glyphosate can be slower to work in the cooler winter months.

Virus Yellows

Virus yellows infections appear to be at a low level in 2025 but do be diligent and check your crops. Let your British Sugar Agriculture Manager or BBRO Plant Clinic know if you see anything of concern.

As mentioned in issue 9 of the Advisory Bulletin there are a number of other factors that could also cause yellowing and would be worth investigation such as wilting, nutrient deficiency or other pests like spider mite.

Foliar Diseases

Given the weather conditions to date, powdery mildew is currently the most prominent foliar disease in crops. Shifts to warmer and wetter weather will go on to favour Cercospora leaf spot or warm dry weather will see rust appear instead.

Most crops have now received their first application of fungicide which will offer up to 28 days protection. Pay attention to diseases as they continue to develop in your crops and be prepared to respond at the first sign of rust or Cercospora infection especially as activity of fungicides will start to deplete after two-three weeks.

Product Example	Powdery Mildew	Rust	Ramularia	Cercospora *
Angle/ Priori Gold	✓	✓	✓	✓
Caligula	✓	✓	✓	✓
Revystar XE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sulphur (e.g. Kumulus, Microthiol, Thiopron)	✓	✗	✗	✗
Twist	✗	✓	✗	✗

Note: Check with the manufacturer before mixing with other actives and pay attention to stewardship guidelines to protect manual workers. It is best practice to restrict entry into the field for 48 hours after application. For entry into the crop 48 hours – 6 weeks after application suitable PPE should be worn (boots, suitable protective gloves and long trousers).

Please ensure that you rotate actives in order to restrict the formation of resistant isolates of the diseases. This is particularly important for infections of cercospora as it rapidly develops resistance to fungicides. It is essential to apply products at their full label rate, rotate the chemical actives used and apply onto crops which are growing well and have recovered from drought/leaf loss to ensure good uptake by the plants.

Available fungicides which are effective against cercospora are:

- Angle or Priori Gold (azoxystrobin and difenoconazole) – provides control of isolates of cercospora which are sensitive to strobilurins (up to two applications). Each year, BBRO spore monitoring consistently observes sharp increases in the presence of resistant isolates following application of strobilurins and it is therefore vital to use a different product as your second spray if you have already used Angle or Priori Gold.

- Revystar (mefentrifluconazole and fluxapyroxad) - offers good control of cercospora isolates and has label approval for two applications. Do not use these products back-to-back as this will encourage resistant isolates to develop.

- Caligula (fluopyram and prothioconazole) offers good control of cercospora isolates and has label approval for one application. It can only be applied **after** the 1st September.

Figure 2: Cercospora leaf spot

Second and third fungicide considerations:

It may be tempting to forego subsequent applications of fungicide in late August and September to limit spray costs. However, for Crops being lifted from mid-November onwards it is usually economically rewarding to apply a three-spray programme. This will maximise yield accumulation into autumn, whilst helping protect the crowns of the beet in the event of winter frosts. Ultimately, this benefit will vary depending on both varietal susceptibility to the various diseases and their abundance throughout August. Previous BBRO data have shown up to a seven tonne uplift in yield when a second spray is used, and nearly the same again when using a third.

Beet moth

Wet weather does not favour Beet moth, so it is hoped that recent rainfall will have helped to suppress their progression. BBRO is continuing to monitor adult beet moth activity, via pheromone traps, at our Crop Watch sites. We have limited data regarding the efficacy of insecticide treatments for beet moth. Once the larvae enter the heart leaves and crown they become difficult to target. This is why high water rates are required to ensure penetration into the heart-leaves. Before spraying, it is important to consider beneficials already in your crops. Lacewing larvae and ladybirds (both understood to predate beet moth) may already be present and will be at risk if using an insecticide, especially any pyrethroids. Chemical treatments available can be found in our beet moth info sheet here.

If you intend to spray to control beet moth, we recommend you leave a small area untreated as a comparison in order to assess the efficacy of the active used.
Help identifying beet moth is available through the BBRO Plant Clinic. Please use this service as this pest is an emerging problem issue and we are keen to gather information on its spread and impact.

BCN – Beet cyst nematode

Check fields for any wilted patches and lift a couple of roots to inspect for white cysts. If you suspect BCN you can check roots yourself for the characteristic white cysts, which are the immature bodies of developing female nematodes. Inspect them with a hand-lens or magnifier and squeeze them between your finger nails to be sure (and distinguish them from sand particles). If unsure, send a sample to plant clinic where we can also direct you to relevant services for soil sampling fields coming into sugar beet in 2026 and help you make sure BCN tolerant varieties are grown where they are needed.

If sowing cover crops on BCN infested fields/farms be sure to avoid BCN host species. Planting a BCN susceptible species, e.g. a brassica, will increase nematode populations and cause problems further down the line, even if you plan on using BCN tolerant varieties.

However, BCN-resistant cover crop types are available and can help to reduce populations of nematodes. Try to source 'class-1' types or mustard or radish which will offer the best control. See our Cover Crop Guide for more info BBRO Cover Crop Guide. If you have planted a cover crop which may cause a problem with BCN, inspect it regularly for signs of cysts. When any appear the cover crop must be destroyed which will stop the nematodes developing, thus helping to manage populations.

Figure 4: BCN clearly visible on roots

Root rots

A case has been reported to the BBRO plant clinic already, much earlier than expected (rots usually being an autumnal problem). It appears this case is due to pre-existing compaction, which favoured the development of a wet rot. Ahead of harvest, inspect crops for signs of root rots (e.g. Aphanomyces, violet root rot, crown rots) and aim to harvest infected fields first as they will not put on yield or store in clamp and should be delivered to your nearest factory as soon as possible. If you have any concerns, do not hesitate to contact the BBRO Plant clinic. Further information on root rots will be in a future bulletin.

EVENTS

Autumn BeetField events will be held on 27th – 29th August. Please see details and links to book below:

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BASIS POINTS

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