

Week 3 – grasses and FMDs

13 July

Risk management is important in any business and farming is no different. The Farm Management Deposits scheme was developed as a tool to minimise financial risk. Cropping intensity and chemical use have both increased over time, resulting in increased production risks and potentially higher costs. Inadequate weed control can result in lower grain yield and quality. Delaying the onset of herbicide resistance has become a priority.

This week, BCG asked Wimmera and Mallee farmers the following questions:

- 1. How are you going to manage grasses and other problem weeds in cereals this year?**
- 2. Farm Management Deposits have been promoted as being a beneficial risk management tool for farmers. Do you agree?**



Kevin Munro – Beulah

Kevin and Merradith Munro crop 4200ha of clay loam soil south of Beulah with their sons, Steve and Peter. Wheat and barley are sown on 20 and 30 percent of their property respectively, lentils on 35 percent, and canola and peas cover the remaining area.

1: “We will be managing grasses and other problem weeds in cereals with a pre-emergent application of trifluralin.”

2: “I do agree. FMDs are a very good income equalisation and tax

management tool.”



Richard Miles – Kaniva

Richard Miles farms with his wife Jayne, son Ben and his parents, 24km northwest of Kaniva. Their 1600ha cropping and grazing property consists of mixed soils from heavy black through to light loams. Sixty percent is sown to cereals, 20 percent to legumes and ten percent to canola.

1: “The only paddocks of wheat that we sowed dry were ones that we know have low grass weed problems. This was due to managing the weeds in the previous canola crop. The cereals sown since the rain have had a good germination of grass weeds. These have been controlled using Roundup Xtra along with Kamba for any broadleaf weeds.

On some paddocks where there has been a later germination of grasses just prior to sowing, we have gone out and sprayed SpraySeed, Treflan and Avadex BW and sown the crop using narrow points. We believe this will give us control of grasses. Any broadleaf weeds will be controlled in the crop when they emerge.

On the bean crops that were sown dry we have already sprayed the grasses and self-sown cereals with SpraySeed before the beans emerged.”

2: “Yes, I do agree. They are a good management tool for farmers to use to even out their incomes. You gain a tax saving when the FMD is deposited plus interest. A greater incentive could be gained if the interest rate was more attractive and maybe some tax concession on withdrawal of the deposit.

As we all know, farming is very unpredictable and we need all the management tools available to us to be able to manage our risks.”



Keith Plant – Manangatang

Kevin and his wife, Chris, own property spread over an area 7-18km west to southwest of Manangatang. The soil type ranges from heavy to sandy loam. Because Chris feels more comfortable in front of a VCE maths class at the local P-12 College than driving a tractor, despite the auto-steer, Kevin works on his own. Keith is “currently enjoying an extended holiday from sheep”. The Plants sow only cereals (this year it is 90 percent wheat and ten percent barley), cropping half the farm each year.

1: “Up until 2000, I operated on a three-year rotation, spray topping anything that was not in crop or fallow to keep grass weed populations low.

This year, 70 percent of the cropped area was sown into a reduced tillage regime, starting with chemical fallow and then breeding it up either before, during or after harvest depending on weeds and rain. This area had either Triflur X alone or with 10-12 grams of Logran for broadleaf control, incorporating the spray with a prickle chain.

Over the last three years, I have sown everything with knifepoints and press wheels so it is necessary to use a knockdown before sowing if needed. I am also direct-drilling some (30 percent this year); this area will probably be increased in the future.

Paddocks that potentially may have brome grass get sown later to allow a knockdown spray first. This is difficult in a late start, as I don’t want to wait for a germination of grass. The crop is still coming up at this stage so it is too early to tell how much brome grass there will be, but I’m not expecting too much. I will be spraying Atlantis on some hot spots. Maybe down the track I will need to slot in Clearfield wheat somewhere, but so far so good.”

2: “FMDs are useful to average out income to enable us as farmers to become financially self-sufficient in downturns such as drought or poor cereal prices. It helps to relieve the stress knowing there is a nest egg there if the need arises.”



Eric & Vaughan Toose – Boort

Vaughan farms with his wife Tanya and parents, Eric and Leah Toose. The farm is 20km west of Boort where the soil type varies from red brown earth to some duplex soils. Most of the farm is broadacre dryland farming with a small amount of irrigated production. One third of the farm is sown to wheat, 35 percent to barley, 20 percent to peas, 10 percent to canola and 2 percent to irrigated clover. The farm also runs first-cross ewes.

1: “Dry sown crops were sown only on clean paddocks with Trifluralin and Logran used for added protection.

During the early sowing window before good weed control could be achieved with glyphosate, we used sweeps on the air-seeder to control small weeds.

Post emergent control for grasses will involve limited group A usage, only in places where it is really required and Hussar in the wheat. Broadleaf control will involve whatever is required to get the job done cheaply and efficiently.”

2. “Yes, FMD’s are user-friendly and should be used to minimise income tax, spreading income into the next lean year, whenever that may be! Look for accounts that offer good interest rates paid to depositors.”