

Week 15 – dry sowing

26 October

While dry sowing can be risky, sowing crops before the break can be a viable option with good preparation, planning and management. The decision on whether or not to dry sow was made months ago. In hindsight, was it a good idea? This week, BCG asked Wimmera and Mallee farmers the following question:

How are early dry sown crops performing? Do you think it will pay off?



Richard Reilly – Corack

Richard and Cherie Reilly farm with Richard's parents, Linton and Barbara, and brother, Neville. Their home property is at Corack, north of Donald, but the family also farms at Swan Hill, Yeungroon and Karnak. The farm is mixed, with crops, sheep and cattle. Soil types are varied due to the naturally occurring lunettes found on the eastern side of Lake Buloke. This year, half of the property is grazed, 20 percent has been sown to each of wheat and barley, and ten percent is chemical fallow.

Dry sown crops: “There is no doubt, again, that the early sown crops will out yield the later sown crops. The longer the growing season the greater the yield. Sowing cereals after mid-June tends to be simply for the exercise of covering your costs.

To me, those plants which are more developed when entering the critical spring period seem to have enough vegetative growth to feed the head and get them through to harvest, even if some haying off occurs prior to maturity.

However, the right paddock has to be selected when dry sowing. Frost prone paddocks tend to be sown last, although frosts seem to be occurring more often and at any time so this is becoming hard to manage. Also, the genetic pool of brome is thriving at Corack, making weed management an issue.

Dry sowing a high percentage of the program in 2005 would have been easy to do in hindsight – it took a brave person to sow by the calendar this season. Our family had the “batten down the hatches” talk and paddocks were going off the list wholesale until the magical three inches arrived.”



Cameron Barber – Birchip

Cameron Barber farms with his wife, Deb, and parents, Angus and Mary, between Birchip and Beulah. They crop 70-80 percent of their clay loam and sandy loam soil and run sheep on the remaining area.

Dry sown crops: “At present, the early sown crops are looking good. Spraying was hectic as they were all ready to spray at the same time, but once that was done, there have been no other problems.

In general, I think dry sown crops should pay off this year. One of the risks with a lot of dry sown crops is frost, as they are all at the same maturity, but we seem to be mostly past that risky time. The amount they pay off will depend on how cool and

wet the rest of spring is.

Sowing crops dry is also a lot easier as you are not trying to keep tractors going most of the night. It takes the madness out of cropping and the stress out of organising.”