

BCG TECHNICAL BULLETIN

No. 4

10 June 2021



© BCG Technical Bulletin may not be copied or reproduced in any form. It is for the benefit of BCG members only.

Disclosing, copying or distributing is strictly prohibited.

What's happening: Establishment is variable, with heavier soils struggling to get going on low rainfall. Stubble cover has allowed moisture in the seed bed to be retained, allowing germination of seed on less rainfall. Weeds are starting to appear in patches. Some urea has been applied where soil nitrogen is low. In areas that have had earlier germinating rains, pests and diseases are being monitored but not managed yet.

Table 1. Rainfall (mm) across the Wimmera and Mallee, number in brackets denotes decile for the period.

Duration (mm)	Ouyen	Manang'g'	Swan Hill	Sea Lake	Birchip	H'toun	St. Arnaud	Kerang	W'beal	Longy	Nhill	Kaniva	Boort	M'ville
Nov-Mar	46 (1)	24 (1)	64 (2)	62(2)	62 (1)	52 (1)	164 (5)	136 (5)	112 (5)	84 (2)	113 (5)	81 (1)	86 (2)	48 (1)
April-May	17(1)	11(1)	14(1)	13(1)	17(1)	14(1)	42(1)	19(1)	26(1)	30(1)	19(1)	38(1)	23(1)	15(1)
June 1-9	7	12	7	15	11	7	11	9	7	10	9	19	5	10

Climate: Not a lot has changed in the past fortnight. The Southern Annular Mode (SAM) looks to be moving from a neutral position to positive position. What is SAM and what does this mean? SAM is an index used to monitor the position of a belt of westerly winds that flow from west to east between Australia and Antarctica. When SAM is in the negative phases, these winds, and the cold frosts and low-pressure systems they carry, are located further north than usual for that time of year, when positive, the same events are located further south, which generally means that the cold fronts passing over will do so a little further south than usual. Given this prediction for the next couple of weeks this can mean drier conditions for NW Victoria.

Proactive decision making: Recent times have seen us spoilt with early breaks which creates some uncertainty with this later break. This is not new territory. Similar November-June rainfall was experienced in Birchip in 1981, 1982, 1990, 1997, 2002, 2004 and 2015. It is important to remember two things – the outlook at this stage is neutral-optimistic and secondly there are significant advancements from many of these past seasons to the modern farming systems we now use including varieties, agronomic practices, decision making and farm business resilience. Focus now should be on the things you can control, managing inputs/costs to match how the season plays out.

Crop Growth Rates: A general rule of thumb for cereals is 100-day degrees is required for each leaf to develop. Using 2020 temperature data, a crop establishing on 1 June took 12 days/leaf. It is expected that most crops in our region will reach the youngest growth stage for many herbicides (3-5 leaf) in mid-July. If crops have established earlier, this will occur sooner.

Establishment Pests: Extended time between surface applied insecticide at sowing and potentially limited uptake of imidacloprid seed dressing under dry conditions will mean monitoring pests will be important, particularly under slow growing conditions. It should be noted that neonicotinoids like imidacloprid break down very slowly and are relatively immobile - adhering to soil organic matter, so they will remain in the soil near the plant roots. Efficacy is driven by presence in the soil moisture that can then be taken up by the plant.

How low can you go: With canola establishing late and looking patchy, how few plants can you have to maintain a profitable crop? From late April establishment, research has seen successful yields at 20 plants/m², even at times from 10 plants/m². From a late start a lot will depend on the spring however results from 2018 where canola was sown the third week of May onto a fallow displayed yields ranging from 0.6t/ha – 1.05t/ha for densities ranging from 8-35 established plants/m², [results](#) are available in the 2018 BCG Research Results Compendium This trial suffered a very tough spring in a +ve IOD season. When making decisions consider the alternative crop you may sow. At this time of year, switching to barley, if herbicides allow, may yield 1.5t/ha. Which one is more valuable 0.6t/ha of Canola @ \$780/t or 1.5t/ha of Barley @ \$260/t?

Livestock: Pasture growth remains slow; flock management options need to be considered over the next month. If reducing stock numbers, look at performance using eIDs to quickly identify animals to cull or sell, such as repeat dry ewes or those with lower reproductive stats. Measure lamb weights each time they are in the yards to understand individual growth rates. If assessing the lambs as a whole flock, the slower growers will be concealed by the flock average. [Early weaning](#) could be a useful management option to separate ewes and lambs and enable more targeted feeding. It's also worth considering the opportunity cost of lot feeding lambs using stored grain and fodder vs selling

© BCG Technical Bulletin may not be copied or reproduced in any form. It is for the benefit of BCG members only.

Disclosing, copying or distributing is strictly prohibited.

it all. Using tools such as the [feedlot calculator](#), and understanding the c/kg [relativity](#) of the store lamb to the trade lamb to minimise risk and provide opportunity for profit.

Weed ID (All images sourced from “Crop Weeds” J.LWilding, A.G Barnett and R.L Amor):

Knowing what weeds look like at an early stage helps with devising plans for management best suited to the spectrum of unwanted species in the paddock.

Marshmallow (*Malva parviflora*)

Marshmallow is capable of growing in almost all soil types. Seedlings identified by two heart-shaped cotyledons. Leaves identified by their dull dark green leaves with scalloped lobes. Produces white to pink flowers and fruit in a capsule.



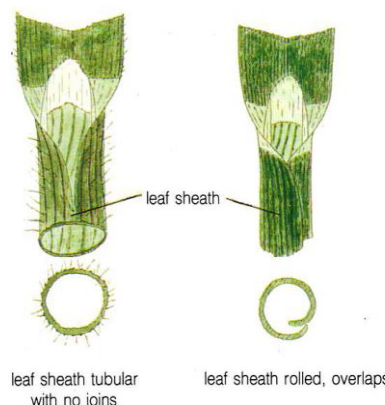
Capeweed (*Arctotheca calendula*)

Seedling has club shaped cotyledons that are rounded on the ends and hairless. Following leaves are deeply lobed in a backwards facing spear shape forming a rosette. Underside of leaves are white and felted. Produces daisy-like yellow flowers. Grazing of rapidly growing young plants can cause nitrate poisoning.



Brome/ Great brome (*Bromus diandrus*)

When emerging look for dull green leaf colour with reddish purple stripes towards the base following leaf venation. Leaves are covered in fine hairs. In the vegetative phase, great brome can easily be confused with wild oats. The key to distinguishing the two is to look at the leaf sheath (the part of the leaf that encircles the stem). Brome has a tubular leaf sheath whereas wild oats have a rolled leaf sheath.



Grain market snapshot: As the northern hemisphere moves into summer there is a mixed bag, some good crops but many regions are looking for good rains to push crops along. Canada and the northern plains of USA have seen high temperatures on Spring sown crops that are only just starting to get established, without more rainfall there could be some yield penalties. Overall, there is plenty of promise for good production levels, but we can expect world prices to jump around based on each weather event and/or forecast during the next few months. The below table shows new crop grain prices, based on Geelong port equivalent as at June 7th 2021. Across the past fortnight the major movement has been canola bouncing back from a dip in late May.

Table 1. Indicative wheat, barley and canola prices, Geelong port zone as at 7 June 2021.

Commodity	2021/22 season	Compared with a fortnight ago
APW wheat	\$315	Up \$7
CAN non-GM	\$780	Up \$47
BAR1 barley	\$260	No Change
Faba beans (del Wimmera)	\$340	No Change
Lentils (del Wimmera)	\$805	Up \$15

BCG Research Update: Nutrient removal from hay production differs from grain, particularly potassium (K). BCG has established several trials at Mitiamo this season investigating dryland hay production. Two of these investigate the impact nutrition management (N, P, K) has on vetch and oat hay yield and quality.

Compiled Kelly Angel with contributions from James Murray, Tim Rethus, Tom Batters, Peter Sidley, Kate Burke, Jonathan Dyer, Gen Clarke, Kate Finger, Ali Frischke, Tom Batters, Adam Campbell, Roy Daykin, Alan Bennett