

Malmesbury Monitor Farm meeting report

Meeting 6: Summer meeting

Date: 26 June 2018

Location: Lower Odd Farm, Crudwell, SN16 9SN

For more information, visit: cereals.ahdb.org.uk/malmesbury



Malmesbury Monitor Farm annual meeting review

Precision farming – does it pay?

1. Measure your accuracy – you may not need to invest
2. Walk with a spade to identify variation within field
3. Identify aims and objectives at the outset before investing and achieve them in steps
4. Compare what you're actually doing in an area with its potential – spend money where there are gaps

Grass weed management

1. There is no silver bullet for black-grass control
2. Consider multiple strategies over a long period of time
3. Plan drill dates in accordance to your variety
4. Cover crops and livestock in the rotation can help control weeds

Soil management

1. Aim for prevention of soil structure problems and question whether cultivations are necessary
2. Soil structure target: a structure that roots and worms can readily penetrate
3. Organic matter and roots are a good benchmark of progress
4. Check your vehicle axle weights and tyre pressures to reduce the problem

Succession planning

1. People and businesses that progress have vision, communicate and collaborate
2. Succession is an often avoided subject
3. Many people discuss succession but don't always put a plan in place
4. Start planning early & take small steps

Farm walk

Roger Wilson, Malmesbury Monitor Farmer, reflected on the past year: "It has been a frustrating year, especially on the heavy land. We admit that we drilled too late but we did get it drilled. With harvest looming we are both looking back and looking forward at our crop management decisions. We have a 'semi-fixed rotation', but we do need to have a Plan A, a Plan B, a Plan C and so on...".

With his son, Will, returning home and concerns over timeliness of combining on an expanded area, the decision has been made to invest in a combine rather than use contractors.

Hybrid barley

Libra, a six-row feed hybrid barley, was grown to be competitive against black-grass. It received fertiliser on 7 April 2018 which was too late. Roger would grow Libra again in the future, but not on heavy land where the black-grass survived in the spring and relished. With hybrids it's essential to get nitrogen applications on early. "Winter barley spreads the harvest, and allows you to get the oilseed rape in. But we need to manage the black-grass."

Group recommendations:

- Consider direct drilling oilseed rape this autumn
- Consider a break crop – make sure you consider soil type, on lighter land this is more appropriate. On heavy land, you don't get a second chance
- Scratch the surface directly behind the combine to get a flush of black-grass
- Should we be moving soil – is it the right thing to be doing for black-grass control?
- Consider putting the field down to a red clover ley for 3 years
- Cover crops for black-grass – concerns over how to manage them in the spring; when to desiccate and potentially increased pest pressures

Dealing with black-grass

1. Minimise seed return
2. Both cultural and chemical control methods are needed
3. No two farms are the same
4. Look at costs and benefits across the whole rotation

For more information visit:
cereals.ahdb.org.uk/blackgrass

Spring barley

Spring barley was power harrowed and drilled on 10 May 2018 following autumn cultivations.

Group recommendations:

- Move less soil in the spring
- Less traffic and less diesel will help save costs and protect gross margin
- Trial drills in good and bad fields
- A range of cultivation systems is your toolbox, and a plough has a place in the rotation
- Consider lower input strategies in conjunction with Stewardship options. Details [here](#)

Yield Enhancement Network (YEN)

The YEN exists to help growers to innovate and close the gap between current yields and potential yields. The benefits of being part of the YEN include benchmarking your yields, comparison with potential yields, ranking against all other entrants, awards and full report on your resources, crop growth and yield constraints.

Visit the ADAS YEN website to find out more:

yen.adas.co.uk

Malmesbury Monitor Farm YEN entry 2018

- Graham, with vibrance seed dressing, was drilled on 17 October 2017 at 400 seeds/m².
- Higher seed rates were used to overcome poor soil bed condition
- Tissue analysis indicated that the crop was low in potash but the field has an Index 3.
- Total nitrogen = 220kg

Find out more – Links to AHDB information sheets or research

[Yield Enhancement Network](#)
[AHDB soils research](#)
[GREAT Soils](#)

[Managing weeds in arable rotations – a guide \(winter 2017\)](#)
[The encyclopaedia of arable weeds](#)
[Dealing with black-grass](#)

[Succession success video](#)
[Planning succession on a family farm](#)

[Precision farming glossary](#)
[Precision farming case studies](#)
[RR71: An up-to-date cost:benefit analysis of precision farming techniques to guide growers of cereals and oilseeds](#)



Next meeting

Winter meetings will take place at 12:00–15:00 at The Rectory, Crudwell, SN16 9SN

- 5 November 2018
- 3 December 2018
- 5 February 2019
- 4 March 2019

For more information contact: Philip Dolbear

E: Philip.Dolbear@ahdb.org.uk M:07964 255614 [@Cereals_SW](https://twitter.com/Cereals_SW)

To find out more about Farmbench, AHDB's benchmarking tool, contact: David Pett

E: david.pett@ahdb.org.uk M: 07813 454537

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