

PR551: Cabbage stem flea beetle live incidence and severity monitoring 2015

Notes to the reader

It is important that the results of this survey are perceived in context and that external factors are taken into consideration alongside the results:

- Robust conclusions cannot be made from one or two years' data, as damage levels can vary considerably from year to year.
- In this particular survey, only crops which had not been seed-treated with neonicotinoids were assessed and, therefore, approx. 5% of the national winter oilseed rape (occurring in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Suffolk) is excluded from the survey.
- A total of 62,000 ha of winter oilseed rape was assessed in this survey, which equates to about 11% of the total UK winter oilseed rape area being represented.
- No statistical analysis was completed on the data; the results presented are, therefore, observational conclusions.
- In counties where a large area of winter oilseed rape is grown, e.g. Lincolnshire, multiple agronomists were required to report. In regions where only a small area of oilseed rape is grown, one agronomist covered multiple counties, e.g. the North West and Scotland.
- Damage levels were based on individual judgement. There could have been variation between counties in how each agronomist perceived % damage. This could result in potential over or under estimation of damage.
- If an agronomist's crops were concentrated in an area of a county that happened to have a low or high population of cabbage stem flea beetle, this could have led to some distortion of results. To lower this risk, counties with large areas of oilseed rape had multiple agronomists reporting.
- Regional and national level figures are more reliable, due to the increased number of data points included.

- Although the survey was designed to distinguish between cabbage stem flea beetle and other causes of crop damage, it was not always easy to determine the main cause when multiple pests were present in a crop, e.g. cabbage stem flea beetle and slugs. Agronomists had to make an informed judgement of the main cause of damage in each particular field.
- The assessments were completed up to 3–4 true leaves; therefore, any crop losses that occurred at later growth stages that could be attributed to cabbage stem flea beetle activity are not captured by this survey.
- Damage levels can vary considerably from year to year and, to achieve control in bad years, a range of insecticide options is required. This is not just to ensure adequate control, but also to ensure effective resistance management strategies can be put in place that minimise the use of all types of insecticides.