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Australia - Bayer's upgraded online tool easy to use for canola diseases

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Further refinements to a web-based tool helping growers and advisors forecast the risk of blackleg or sclerotinia infection in canola and the related tactical use of a foliar fungicide have been welcomed by the industry.

CropAlert™ uses disease prediction models developed by Western Australia's Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), with support from the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC), together with local daily weather data to estimate the risk of infection from the diseases.

The online program has been simplified, allowing easy input of information from growers and advisors before providing a graphical disease risk outlook and recommended actions.

Matt Willis, a Customer Advisory Representative with Bayer in WA, said CropAlert offered growers and advisors an easy check of the predicted blackleg spore release timing or the risk of sclerotinia disease infection conditions in canola crops.

"With blackleg, you enter your crop stage and the postcode of your location and it generates a timing prediction of possible blackleg spore release and infection risk to your canola crops for the next few days," Matt said.

"For sclerotinia, it's even simpler. You put in your postcode and it will let you know the likelihood of a sclerotinia infection developing and whether or not you should be looking at applying a protective fungicide."

Growers and advisors can also gain a mitigated per cent risk of blackleg disease infection occurring by including some additional information in the CropAlert model. The use of an effective seed dressing, an in-furrow fungicide application and/or a resistant variety, among other factors, can mitigate the risk of a blackleg infection.

WA grower Ben Creek, who also works part-time as an agronomist with about 20 growers in the Boyup Brook, Bridgetown and Manjimup mixed farming area, said he liked the look of the updated CropAlert program.

"There are lots of tools available to assist decisions and this looks really good. It's very easy to add information and it's a lot easier to understand," Ben said.

"The graph is easy to understand and now I can save them, print them out and fax them to growers who have no internet access. I can save the whole thing, which is good."

He said several grower clients used the online tool last season, particularly following their final Flexi-N® liquid fertiliser applications.

Ben and his wife, Esther, farm the 1100-hectare 'Tintara' property just south of Boyup Brook, while his parents, Richard and Caroline, farm their 700ha home property. About 40% of the farm is cropped and the remainder is grazed by cattle and sheep.

He said when they first used the original CropAlert program, they made a conscious decision to apply protective fungicides.

"Blackleg is generally always here and Aviator® Xpro® or Prosaro® (fungicides), together with manganese, have played a good role in disease control, leading to green leaf retention later in the season and resulting in increased pod development and nutrient uptake."

"We haven't seen much sclerotinia in this region yet. A lot of paddocks are in long cropping rotations, but due to this region being so stock oriented, we have the ability to pull paddocks back into pasture if required."

Meanwhile, the risk of blackleg disease infection changes as the season progresses, so growers have been urged to regularly check CropAlert to monitor changes in the disease infection status.

The background data supporting the sclerotinia infection prediction model in the program is updated on an hourly basis, and, as conditions for sclerotinia petal infection can develop rapidly, it is worth checking the program regularly to evaluate the risk of infections of this disease developing.

Source: [Bayer CropScience Australia](#)

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