

## The Cooney Furlong Grain Co. Technical Newsletter

### Winter Crops Update Autumn 2020



As October draws to a close we again find ourselves battling the weather to try and complete the Autumn drilling campaign. Conditions since the first week of October have been difficult to say the least with heavy rainfall and very tight weather windows providing limited opportunities for sowing. The dry spell we were promised never really materialised but tillage farmers are a resilient bunch and in spite of the circumstances a significant amount of winter plantings has been completed. We have had to adapt with a lot of the later crops being drilled with power harrow combination drills directly behind the plough.

#### Winter Oilseed Rape

Winter Oilseed Rape crops are looking good in general. Due to the late harvest acres sowed aren't massive but anyone that did risk the later plantings is pleasantly surprised. Many crops weren't sowed till the 10<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> of September which would traditionally have been seen as too late but there was plenty of moisture and warmth in the ground this year and crops have established very well. The use of hybrid varieties has worked well in the later planting slots and have proven their worth. Volunteer cereals have been an issue due to the difficult harvest conditions and most have been treated with a graminicide to tidy up volunteers. Pre emerge herbicide has worked well also with good chemical up take in the target weeds. Crops will need to be treated with a fungicide for light leaf spot and some foliar boron when at the 4-6 true leaf stage

probably around mid-November. Crops that weren't treated with pre emerge herbicide or that have grass weed issues will need to be sprayed with Kerb Flo or Astrokerb when temperatures drop below 12 degrees Celsius.

#### Winter Wheat

Plantings of winter wheat have increased significantly on last year with a mixture of early and later sown crops. The two main varieties sown are Graham and Costello. Many growers especially on more difficult soils took advantage of favourable conditions in late September. These crops have established excellently with almost 100% germination. Crops sowed in late sept will be at risk of BYDV and will need an aphicide when at the 3 leaf stage and possibly a follow up treatment approximately a month later. Aphid counts are variable and we are still slightly in the dark as to the relative proportion of resistant aphids in the local population. The advice must be to err on the side of caution and avoid spraying with a pyrethroid insecticide until at least 3 true leaves on crops to minimise damage to beneficial insects that feed on aphids in the target population. Later sown crops were sowed in some marginal conditions and they will be at risk of slug damage so growers will need to keep an eye on the emergence of these crops. There is still time to sow wheat if conditions allow but be mindful to increase seeding rates as the season moves on. It is also prudent to ensure seeding depth is deeper than a crow's beak at this time of year.

#### Winter Barley

Winter Barley plantings are also up on the whole and many crops have been sowed into good quality seedbeds. There is a vast choice of winter barley varieties on the market this year with LG Casting, Valerie and Cassia two rows proving popular with the hybrid six row Belfry and 6 row conventional KWS Kosmos popular in more difficult fields. There was a limited supply of the new BYDV tolerant variety KWS Joyau to the market this year and we will wait with eager anticipation to see how this variety performs. Plant breeding and not chemistry may be our best weapons against plant pathogens in the future. As with the wheat similar advice applies for aphicide applications. Most crops were treated pre emerge with a combination of Flufenacet and DFF and this was very important for grass weed control. Any crops not treated will need to get a post emerge treatment of Tower and DFF before annual meadow grass tillers to control it. It is essential to treat winter barley for grass as soon as possible in Autumn as there is no spring treatment available anymore.



## Winter Oats

Winter oat plantings are holding steady with the two main varieties of Isabel and Husky going in. Oats aren't generally sowed till after the 10<sup>th</sup> of Oct so there is still plenty of time to plant Oats if conditions allow. They are both spring varieties planted in the winter so earlier sowing will present more problems than solutions with disease and growth regulation. Aim to plant oats at 12 stone 200 kg per ha at this stage of the season to insure a strong plant stand. Isabel is more suited to coastal areas as it has a very good rust resistance profile while husky is a hardier variety so will prove more suitable more inland where winter frost is a higher risk. Winter oats generally don't require an Autumn herbicide but crops who may be in fields with annual meadow grass issues can be sprayed pre emerge with DFF @0.25L/Ha.

*Author: George Blackburn*



## Wildflowers Margins on Farm



Wildflower Margin and Spring Barley

Areas rich with wildflowers can provide valuable habitat within farmed landscapes for insects and those which feed on them. They also have numerous benefits from a farming perspective, including integrated pest management and crop pollination.

It is estimated that if at least 2-3% of arable farmland can be managed to support flowering plants, this will help to boost populations of pollinators, crop pest predators and the diverse wildlife that are dependent upon them. Permanent wildflower-

rich areas will also provide valuable shelter, nesting and foraging areas for a wide range of insects, birds and bats.

Wide margins, corners and plots generally provide better habitat for wildlife than thinner or smaller areas. To provide the greatest benefit for wildlife they should be placed close to other important habitats, which already provide nesting sites and shelter such as hedges and ditches. It can also be beneficial to locate them so they connect areas of grassland and other habitats, helping wildlife move around the landscape. Choose a warm, sunny area (for example sheltered, south-facing slopes) where insect activity will be greatest.

Seed should be broadcast onto a fine seed bed created by cultivation. On existing grassland, prepare the sward by removing any pernicious weeds, tightly mowing and discing or harrowing the area to break up the surface vegetation and expose patches of bare ground.

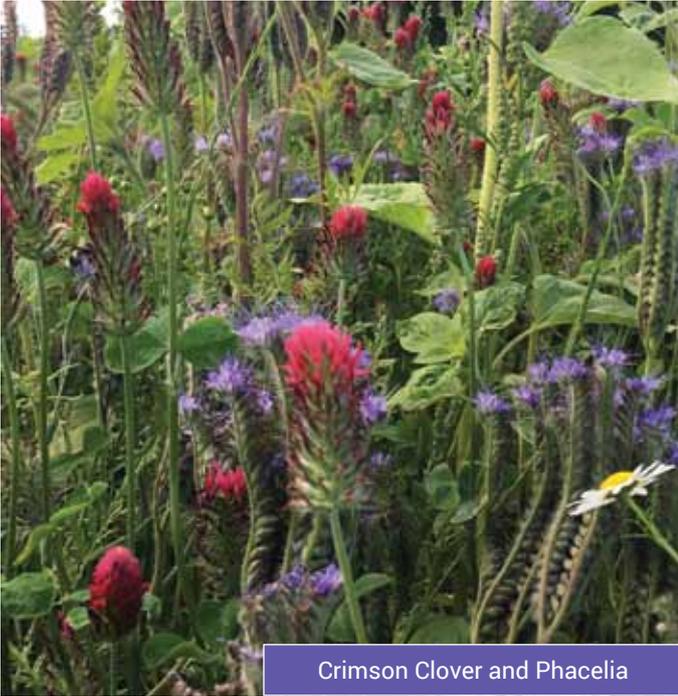
The inclusion of a legume such as crimson clover will help to provide nectar to insects early in the season as wildflowers are slower to bloom. Buckwheat is a useful addition as it will flower in 6-8 weeks from planting bridging the gap until wildflowers appear.



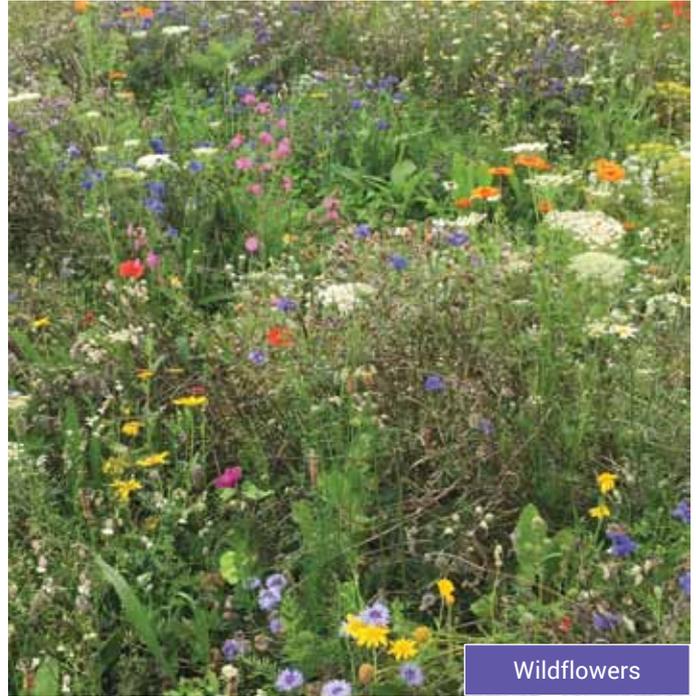
Crimson Clover



Phacelia



Crimson Clover and Phacelia



Wildflowers

Wildflower margins are ideal alongside lanes and driveways where crows are inclined to attack the crop edge preventing the need for deterrents and fencing. Wildflower margins also provide a public service and the greater community will appreciate the floral display that will begin in April and last through until December.

The Cooney Furlong Grain Co. Ltd has prepared a Farmscape wildflower mix (1Kg) containing perennial wildflowers + crimson clover + buckwheat + phacelia. This is available for sale in our branches. Sowing period Oct/Nov and March/April.

*Author: Philip Reck*

## DRYING OFF COWS



The time for drying off cows is fast approaching. Over the next few weeks a number of issues must be looked at.

- The length of the dry period for the herd in general and individual cows in particular. First lactation cows and thin

cows should be given 10 to 12 weeks dry, whereas about 8 weeks should be sufficient for the rest of the herd.

- Body Condition Score (BCS) is an extremely important consideration. Ideally BCS should be 2.75 – 3.0 at drying off and 3.0 – 3.25 at calving. It may require supplementary feeding in late lactation and throughout the dry period to achieve these targets.
- Test the quality of the forage available and, also, calculate the quantity available. This will have a major influence on what, and how much, is fed during the dry period. 68 to 70 DMD silage is adequate to maintain cows at the desired BCS.
- The appropriate dry cow therapy used will be determined by the SCC (Somatic Cell Count) readings during the lactation. If the SCC is high, then an antibiotic treatment will be required by some or all of the herd. If it is low, a teat sealer only, or no treatment at all, may be necessary.
- Well ventilated housing with enough cubicles and feed space to accommodate all of the cows must be ensured. Inadequate accommodation will have a negative effect on BCS and the cow's wellbeing. Fresh clean water must be available at all times.

*Auhor: Jack Scannlon*

## Managing weanling replacement heifers this winter



The future of your dairy herd relies on having quality replacement heifers entering the system every year. Careful management must be put in place to get these animals to their target weights.

Live weight gain achieved during the first winter should be between 0.5 – 0.7kg/day per day in order to achieve 330kg live weight at 13 months old. Heifers should be at least 220kg live weight by November 1<sup>st</sup>. To achieve these target weights and a final target of 550kg pre-calving weight at 24 months old we must put the following plan in place.

- Treat all heifers for parasites at or shortly after housing.
- Segregate light heifers from on target weight heifers and feed accordingly.
- Feed heifers according to silage quality and liveweight. Silage of 67 DMD plus 1.5 – 2 kg concentrate per day. As it takes 1kg concentrate to supplement every 5 DMD raise or drop in DMD the level of concentrate fed can be adjusted to allow for good or poor DMD silage.
- Ensure heifers have enough feed space at least 0.3m

- Aim to turn out lighter heifers early as possible as they should gain 1kg per day on grass and supplement with concentrates if grass is scarce.

- Heifers will only put on 0.3 kg LW per day on 67 DMD grass silage alone.

Silage should be tested in order to determine feed rate and protein requirement. Lower protein silage will require a higher protein concentrate to balance it to encourage better growth. A low protein concentrate with high levels maize should be avoided as this can lead to fatty deposits in the udder of the young heifer which can effect milk yield potential in the future. Small levels of chopped straw can be included to aid rumen digestion and formation.

Some paddocks should be closed off in autumn to allow for early turn out. Growth rates on good quality spring grass will be higher than during the housed period and target per breeding weights will be achieved earlier in this system.

*Author: Philip Kennedy*