

As the weather starts to hit record high levels for November, growers with green crops are starting to see the quality of their crops slowly disappear with every day over 30 degrees. It seems that spring rains have again been exchanged for hot 35 degree days and crops are losing quality and quantity at disturbing rates. Early sown crops have been the answer for growers as most of the early crops within the Wimmera had already flowered and almost filled prior to the heat wave. However, crops within the Western District have been made to flower and fill in less than ideal weather conditions.

Quality of grain is becoming an issue with growers as crops that were green during the heat wave have been tipped and therefore the grain that in that part of the head will become pinched. It is heartbreaking for growers who only three weeks ago were looking at massive yielding crops with good quality as they also had good soil moisture levels on their side. The past heat wave has changed this in a matter of days as extremely bulky crops are sucking vital soil moisture levels out to overcome the heat.

Protein levels have also become an issue in areas such as the Mallee and Northern Wimmera. Good rainfall late in the growing season has made the protein levels for both wheat and barley lower than most growers expected. Where in the past growers were missing out on malting grades in their barley as the protein was too high, this year they are missing out on malting grades due to the protein testing too low and screenings becoming too high. Wheat protein has also been testing lower than it has in past years with ASW1 and APW1 being grown in country that has shown H1 and H2 quality grades in recent years.

The use of high nitrogen based fertilisers either pre or post application or down the tube has had a large effect on protein levels of crops throughout Victoria. Crops that have had urea applied to them post growth stage 39 (emergence of the flag leaf) is the ideal time to apply nitrogen in order to improve protein levels within the crop. Growers have really tightened their purse strings after the past few tough seasons. A majority of growers have gone with the cheaper method and only applied Map/Dap at sowing which has this year shown to not be enough within continuous cropping enterprises.

For further information contact your local AGA Field Merchant
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