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OILSEEDS NEWS

CANOLA HAY GENERALLY BETTER QUALITY THIS YEAR



MAKE HAY: Wimmera farmers Kevin Schultz and his sons Grant and Steve intend to bale their canola crop tomorrow. Photo: Felicity Pritchard.

Latest results from Feedtest in Hamilton have clearly shown that this year's canola hay is generally better quality and less variable than last year, despite expectations from Dairy Australia

Most of the canola north of the divide has now been cut for hay following another disappointing finish to

the season. But growers have learnt from last year's experiences by cutting their failed canola earlier and conditioning the hay to produce an end product with slightly higher protein, digestibility and energy.

“People are deciding to cut earlier this time. That’s why we expected it to be better quality,” said Suzanne Dalton, Feedtest Manager with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries in Hamilton.

Generally, the later the crop’s growth stage when cut, the poorer the hay quality.

The Feedtest results are in contrast to the predictions of Dairy Australia who stated in their hay and grain report last week that this year’s canola hay from droughted crops was expected to be of poorer quality and less value to dairy farmers than last year. This was put down to the fact that most canola hay cut in 2006 was due to frost rather than drought.

Ron Storey of Australian Crop Forecasters provides the information to Dairy Australia and said that canola and cereal hay quality is variable and urged farmers to have it tested.

“Some grain crops have completely failed and hay quality may be poor, but there also have been some good crops cut to optimise hay quality. If in doubt, get a feed test done. There will be some very good quality hay around, depending on the time it was cut,” he said.

Around 40 per cent of Victoria’s canola crop and more than 85 per cent of the New South Wales canola crop are estimated to have been cut for hay. The southern Wimmera and the Western District are still holding up for grain, with around 145,000 hectares of canola with very good yield potential mostly at the mid to late flowering stage.

Wimmera graingrowers Steven and Grant Schultz, along with their father Kevin cut and conditioned their May-sown 30 hectare canola crop for hay last fortnight on their property at Kalkee, 20 kilometres north of Horsham. But their crop at Laharum, a further 40 kilometres to the south in the southern Wimmera has been spared and is expected to yield around 1.2 tonnes per hectare of grain.

“There’s only 40 kilometres difference, but there’s a big difference in rainfall and temperature,” said Kevin.

“The Laharum crop flowered over a longer period. This (Kalkee) crop just hit the wall and ran out of moisture,” he said.

He expects the Kalkee crop to produce around two tonnes per hectare of hay.

He said historically, canola grown on his northern Wimmera property would yield at least 2.5 tonnes per hectare while his Laharum farm was too wet for crops. But in recent years, the southern Wimmera property was producing excellent crops while the Kalkee property suffered from drought.

Canola hay quality for 2006 and 2007 (source: Feedtest)

Baled canola hay		Crude protein (%)	Dry matter digestibility (%)	Metabolisable energy (MJ per kg dry matter)
2007 (at 16 Oct)	Average	16.6	69.1	10.3
	Range	10-22	47-82	6.4-12.4
2006	Average	15.9	66.4	9.8
	Range	4-27	33-85	4-13

NEW CANOLA HAY FACTSHEET

Nigel Phillips of the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries has produced two new information sheets for canola growers and graziers on the quality of canola hay and silage, and how it is affected by cutting time.

The sheet explains how dry matter and quality of canola hay diminishes the later the crop is cut and also discusses animal health issues related to feed canola hay.

To obtain a copy, contact Nigel Phillips on 0427 102 707 or your agronomist.



CONSUMERS WARM TO GM

Climate change, drought and fuels shortages have changed the way that people think about genetically modified (GM) crops, according to Tess McDonald, General Manager for Biotechnology Australia, speaking at the Australian Oilseeds Federation Forum in Sydney last week.

Ms McDonald presented some results from the latest survey on public attitudes to biotechnology - including attitudes to GM crops.

The survey of over 1,000 people from around Australia has been conducted every two years since 1999 by Biotechnology Australia and revealed that the general public now sees biotechnology as a solution rather than a problem.

“It’s a huge change,” said Ms McDonald.

Since 2005, there have been major increases in awareness and positive perceptions of GM food crops – with an increase in the acceptability of such crops from 48 per cent of people in 2005 to 73 per cent now.

However, Ms McDonald said that many members of the public still showed a lack of awareness of GM crops, both in rural and urban areas.

A startling 18 per cent of those surveyed thought that GM wheat was grown in their home state and around three to five per cent believed different GM fruit and vegetables were grown in their state. Yet the only GM crop grown commercially in Australia at present is cotton.

And 28 per cent of those surveyed believed GM canola was grown commercially in their state. No commercial crops of canola are currently grown in Australia due to state-based moratoria, although canola is grown in research trials across four states.

Ms McDonald said negativity about GM crops – particularly from young people - was more due to a lack of knowledge than direct opposition for GM.

To view Ms McDonald’s presentation, see http://www.australianoilseeds.com/about_aof/aof_forum/presentations_by_year/aof_forum_2007.



BETTER CANOLA HAY TRIALS FIELD DAY ON FRIDAY



FROM CANADA: Canadian farmer Stew Gilroy will talk about canola at the Birchip Cropping Group's Wimmera Field Day on Friday. Photo: Felicity Pritchard.

Birchip Cropping Group's Wimmera Field Day on Friday will feature Canadian grower Stew Gilroy and showcase a canola hay trial, which is coordinated by the Better Canola project.

The trial will compare cutting times and varieties to find out how to make the best quality and highest yielding canola hay. It will also compare the profit between grain and hay.

The trial is timely as a huge number of canola crops have been cut for hay this season in New South Wales and Victoria following the disappointing end

to a season that started with great promise.

Canola growers are learning from experience and feedback from the dairy industry about how to better manage their crops – and the trial will add some hard data to back up these experiences.

Rosemary Richards, Executive Officer for the Australian Oilseeds Federation will provide an overview of the project and Kate McCormick of John Stuchbery and Associates will present preliminary results from the trial.

Felicity Pritchard, Oilseeds Industry Development Officer, will also speak about new technologies for canola and Stew Gilroy will answer queries about his experiences with growing genetically modified canola in Canada.

The Better Canola project is a national project on oilseed agronomy, funded by the Grains Research and Development Corporation and the Australian Oilseeds Federation.

The field day starts at 1:30 pm at Longerenong College, and is free for BCG members or \$20 for non-members. Prior registration is not required. For more details, contact BCG on (03) 5492 2787.

MONITOR NOW FOR DIAMONDBACK MOTH

Canola growers with standing crops are being urged to monitor for diamondback moth and native budworm larvae following sightings in northern Victoria and southern New South Wales.

Diamondback moth, also known as “Plutella” has been found in low numbers in Wimmera crops, well below economic spray thresholds, so growers need to keep an eye on their activity over the coming weeks. However, native budworm – or “heliopsis” – is being reported at high levels in many crops this season and will need to be monitored closely.

Diamondback moth has been a serious problem in canola in South Australia and Western Australia this year, but agronomists feel it is less likely to cause major problems to northern Victorian crops at this late stage of the season. However, Western District crops are still flowering and will need to be checked very carefully for the grubs.

For further information on thresholds and identification, contact your agronomist, and to report sightings, contact Paul Umina on at CESAR on (03) 8344 2522 or pumina@unimelb.edu.au .
