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OILSEEDS NEWS

CONTAMINATION WARNING OF CROPS GRAZED OR CUT FOR HAY

Growers planning on grazing failing crops or cutting them for hay or silage must review their chemical treatment history and heed withholding periods (WHPs), according to Victorian DPI Chemical Standards Officer, Les Touhey.

The effects of the drought have been compounded by recent frosts and many crops have been or will be either cut for hay or grazed.

Mr Touhey said that some crops such as peas, may have had potential to yield reasonably well despite the dry season prior to last week's frosts, but will now be cut for hay.

“There is a risk to livestock consuming failed crops as the crop can remain contaminated with chemical residues where WHPs have not expired,” said Mr Touhey.

He said that the situation is even more critical where crops have been sprayed with chemical products that carry specific label warnings that treated crops are not to be grazed or fed to livestock.

“Failing to comply with a WHP can lead to unacceptable levels of chemical residues in livestock products such as milk, meat and eggs. This may result in serious impacts on the marketing of these products if declared unfit for consumption.”

It is an offence in Victoria to sell agricultural produce including hay that has come from a treated crop where a WHP has not expired, unless the seller notifies the buyer in writing. Claims for damages arising from the supply of contaminated feed are likely to follow.

Livestock producers who are considering the purchase of hay bailed from failed crops need to ensure that the feed is safe from residues by seeking a written declaration specifying all chemical treatments, rates of use, stage of use and dates of use.

Producers obtaining a declaration should then thoroughly examine a copy of the complete label for each chemical product stated to have been used on the feed source to ensure it is fit for purpose, Mr Touhey said.

He said that many fungicides, herbicides and insecticides that are used on crops have the WHP statement ‘do not graze or cut for stockfeed for ‘x’ days after application’ in addition to the normal harvest WHP.

While many of the WHPs extend only for two to three weeks, some such as the fungicide flutriafol (such as Impact, Force and others) extend for seven weeks on wheat and ten weeks on barley crops.

Some common grass selective herbicides also have long WHPs. Fluazifop-p (Fusilade) has WHPs for grazing or cutting for stockfeed of three weeks for lupins, seven weeks for field peas and 17 weeks for pigeon peas.

Most canola crops are now triazine tolerant varieties and are treated with atrazine. There is a 15 week WHP for grazing or cutting canola treated pre-emergent with atrazine and six weeks where the crop is treated post-emergent.

“Not all chemical product labels list WHPs for the grazing of livestock on every crop listed as approved for treatment. However, the label may have a section headed ‘Protection of livestock’ under which other warnings can be issued,” Mr Touhey said.

For example, the label for the fungicide triadimefon (such as Turret, Slingshot and others) has a warning that treated pea crops must not be used for animal feed.

A similar situation occurs for pea and bean crops treated with the fungicide chlorothalonil (such as Barrack, Bravo and others) where the product label states ‘Do not graze livestock on treated crops’ followed by a further warning under the protection of livestock section.

“While not stated, the warning implies that the crop must not be cut for hay and no portion of the treated crop should be fed to livestock”, he cautioned.

Mr Touhey said that written declarations should specify the treatments on adjoining crops so that spray drift residue can be considered. Meat and Livestock Australia through its ‘safemeat’ program has designed a Commodity Vendor Declaration form for the use of vendors of stock feed and these can be printed from their website at www.mla.com.au/lpa

Members of the Australian Fodder Industry Association Inc (AFIA) also provide vendor declarations to their clients that specify the history and status of their stock feed. Further information on the AFIA quality assurance program can be found at www.afia.org.au

Labels can be examined by searching on the Agricultural Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines web site at www.apvma.gov.au and then going to the index and using ‘Search PUBCRIS for a product’. Label information can also be obtained from chemical manufacturer by telephoning their hotlines or searching their websites.

For further information, contact Les Touhey on (03) 5573 0715 or 0419 324 439.
