

Experts assess rust outlook for 2014

More than 50 rust research specialists gathered at CSIRO Black Mountain in Canberra on March 19 as part of the Australian Cereal Rust Control Program's (ACRCP) annual Consultative Committee's meeting to discuss rust genetics, breeding strategies, variety selection and research outputs for 2014.

Among the range of outcomes presented, all researchers gave the same, simple message - growing resistant varieties remains the front line of defence to reduce the risks of rust infection.

ACRCP Consultative Committee Chairman Dr Grant Hollaway said while the chance of a severe rust outbreak in 2014 was low, growers should not be complacent.

"The cool, dry autumn of 2013 helped suppress rust development and, combined with a hot and dry summer in 2014, minimised the green bridge and subsequent inoculum load," he said.

"Despite this prediction, all researchers agreed that growers should always sow resistant varieties. For growers who choose to plant S and VS varieties, it is essential to develop a rust management plan, which outlines immediate actions that should be taken if there is an outbreak.

"Each rust management plan should consider variety selection (at a minimum avoiding S and VS varieties), managing the green bridge (volunteer plants) that can serve as a sanctuary for rust development, fungicide control, crop monitoring and community communication."

Recent research conducted by cereal pathologist Greg Platz, on behalf of the Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, demonstrated the value of selecting appropriate varieties.

Mr Platz found that for VS barley in Queensland last year, there were yield penalties of up to \$400 per hectare because of leaf rust. In comparison, there was no yield loss in the resistant varieties grown.

"This clearly demonstrates the need for growers to make careful variety selections," Mr Platz said.

"If growers plant S and VS varieties, crops should be monitored every 10 to 14 days after growth stage 32. Growers must be prepared to spray immediately, noting appropriate maximum residue levels and withholding periods, should you find rust."

The ACRCP meeting elected a new consultative committee chairman Dr Daniel Mullan, based with Intergrain in Western Australia, and secretary Dr Andrew Milgate, New South Wales Department of Primary Industries, Wagga Wagga, NSW.

Dr Hollaway retired after three years as Chairman and two years as secretary.

“I look forward to seeing the direction that Dr Mullan and Dr Milgate will steer the ACRCP,” he said. “We are extremely lucky to have a system like the ACRCP in Australia and I am proud to have worked for a program which provides one of the world’s best delivery of rust resistance genes and resistant varieties all to the benefit of Australian growers.”

Dr Hollaway believed his greatest achievement through the ACRCP was establishing a standardised variety disease rating system of cereals and the implementation of the Rust Bust campaign, which has served as a community rust awareness program.

“I was thrilled to work on the standardisation of wheat disease ratings because it provides independent disease ratings of new varieties and enables farmers to select the most resistant varieties for their farm. The system has been well supported by plant breeders,” Dr Hollaway said.

The Australian Cereal Rust Control Program was established in 1973 and is mostly funded by grain growers through the [Grains Research & Development Corporation](#) (GRDC). It has a national mandate and has nodes at the University of Sydney, CSIRO Plant Industry, University of Adelaide, NSW Department of Primary Industries, and the International Wheat and Maize Improvement Centre.

Media enquiries and more information:

Grant Hollaway
Phone: 03 5362 2111
Email: grant.hollaway@depi.vic.gov.au
Web: www.rustbust.com.au

ACRCP Consultative Committee Contacts:

ACRCP Chairman
Dr Dan Mullan
Wheat Breeder, Intergrain
Email: dmullan@intergrain.com
Phone: 08 9419 8021

ACRCP Secretary
Dr Andrew Milgate
Research Scientist - Plant Pathology, NSW DPI
Email: andrew.milgate@dpi.nsw.gov.au
Phone: 02 6938 1990