

Wednesday, August 19, 2015

Australia-wide rust reports highlight importance of crop monitoring

All three types of rust – stem rust, stripe rust and leaf rust– have been found in crops of wheat, highlighting the importance of crop monitoring and early management. Leaf rust has also been found in barley crops, and stem rust and crown rust in oat crops.

The Australian Rust Survey at the Plant Breeding Institute has received samples of wheat leaf rust from all grain-producing states in Australia. It also recently received samples of wheat stripe rust from southern Queensland and southern New South Wales and South Australia.

Oat stem rust samples have also been received from Queensland and Victoria, while oat crown rust samples have been received from Queensland.

Reports of rust have been received as early as the beginning of July, when Western Australian agronomists reported finding leaf rust in southern zones and rust on regrowth of barley.

Director of the Australian Cereal Rust Control Program (ACRCP), Professor Robert Park, said the discovery of rust provided a reminder to growers to ensure they are monitoring crops regularly and sending samples for pathotype testing.

“We know that many wheat varieties this year were given higher susceptibility ratings based on their responses to leaf rust pathotypes found last year and we need further data before we can confirm those ratings, so receiving samples is critical to this research,” he said.

“Individual farmers will need to talk with their agronomists to determine their particular management strategy in the short-term, but longer-term, they might need to revise which varieties they are selecting to grow based on the impact of the rust pathotypes.”

In South Australia, barley leaf rust has been found in many crops on the Yorke Peninsula and more significantly it has also been detected on the Fleurieu Peninsula in a Scope barley crop which was also infested with the Star of Bethlehem. This weed is an alternate host for barley leaf rust and allows the rust to undergo sexual recombination creating new rust pathotypes. It was previously thought the Star of Bethlehem occurred only in crops on the Yorke Peninsula.

SARDI pathologist and ACRCP Consultative Committee member Dr Hugh Wallwork said the transfer of barley leaf rust via the weed is not uncommon on the Lower Yorke Peninsula. The problem arises when barley is grown in close rotation in paddocks infested with the weed so that infected barley stubbles occur in close proximity to both the weed and barley seedlings.

Dr Wallwork said he had also recently visited a property at Bool Lagoon in the state’s South East that has a wheat leaf rust infection.

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“This is the new rust pathotype with increased virulence on varieties such as Mace, Wyalkatchem, Corack, Scout, Wallup and Revenue. We first observed this pathotype last year and it is capable of causing considerable losses this year unless it is kept under good control.”

Full details of wheat varieties susceptible to current rust pathotypes are available in the Plant Breeding Institute’s Cereal Rust Reports. These, along with other reports of rust, are available on the Rust Bust website at www.rustbust.com.au/news-information/reports, at the University of Sydney website at http://sydney.edu.au/agriculture/plant_breeding_institute/cereal_rust/index.shtml, or via Twitter @the_rustbust. All current Cereal Variety Disease Guides are also available online through the Rust Bust website: <http://rustbust.com.au/tips-for-busting-rust/variety-selection-2/>

Rusted plant samples can be mailed in paper envelopes; do not use plastic wrapping or plastic lined packages. If possible, include GPS recordings of latitude and longitude of the sample location. Direct samples to: University of Sydney Australian Rust Survey Reply Paid 88076 Narellan NSW 2567.

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The Rust Bust campaign is an initiative of The Australian Cereal Rust Control Program (ACRCP) Consultative Committee. The ACRCP, established in 1973, monitors cereal rust pathogens throughout Australia, finds and characterises new sources of rust resistance, and assists Australian cereal breeding groups to incorporate rust resistance in new cultivars. The ACRCP Consultative Committee includes representatives from state pathology and breeding groups and provides a key link between industry and the ACRCP. The ACRCP is funded largely by the grains industry, through the Grains Research & Development Corporation (GRDC).