

# TILLAGE

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## Monitor crops for slug damage

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Slug damage is evident in many crops this autumn. Wet weather is the primary factor, but crops following oilseed rape and fields with a history of slug damage have fared worse. The fact that field conditions weren't suitable for rolling only increased the pressure on crops.

Slug grazing in oilseed rape is common but the main concern from now on will be winter wheat.

Slugs often do most damage to winter wheat at the early stage by eating the endosperm, resulting in the characteristic seed hollowing.

Barley and oats are less susceptible at this stage due to their extra seed coat. Chopped straw may also be an additional factor, as this will provide slugs with a source of food and land can take longer to dry out in a season like this year's.

Where you suspect slugs may be a problem, lay down traps using a plastic bag or slate with muesli underneath to attract them. Monitor the traps daily to quantify the populations. If you see five or more slugs per trap on average, treatment is warranted on emerging or struggling crops.



*Slug grazing on winter barley.*

Slugs are most active at night so the best time to check slug traps is early in the morning. If the threshold of five or more slugs per trap on average across the field is reached then consider control options.

The only cultural control option is rolling if crop and ground conditions are suitable. Chemical control will be based on products containing metaldehyde or ferric phosphate. It is important to use the recommended rate on the label.

Applying reduced rates reduces the number of baiting points, resulting in poorer control. Better to apply one full label rate rather than a reduced rate twice.

## Weed control

It has been a very difficult season to apply pre-emergence herbicides. Therefore, there will be a reliance on post-emergence herbicide application. Delaying application will reduce weed control, especially of grass weeds in winter barley.

Popular weed control options for wheat and barley include: Flight 4.0L; Defy 2.0L plus DFF 0.1L; and, Firebird 0.3L/Firebird Met 0.5L+. (There are many combinations of these active ingredients available on the market, which can offer flexibility and savings to growers.) For wheat only, Alister Flex is a good contact grass weed option and Broadway Star (soil temperatures  $>8^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) is a strong sterile brome option. It is important to reassess weeds four weeks after application and when spring



*Target small annual meadow grass (AMG) for best control. Targeting growth commences, as many treatments will require a follow-up herbicide.*

Beware of herbicide resistance and take steps to minimise the risk on your farm. Most cases of weed resistance occur in situations where herbicides with the same mode of action have been used repeatedly in the same field. Always use full label rates.

## BYDV

Barley yellow dwarf virus (BYDV) risk depends on time of sowing, location, weather pattern and type of virus present. Aphid flight is inhibited by rain and wind; therefore, the risk of BYDV infection could be lower this season. Another important factor when assessing risk is whether a 'green bridge' is present or not, as volunteer cereals and grasses are host species for the grain aphid. Insecticide application should be targeted. Cereal crops emerging in November are at a much lower risk of BYDV than crops that emerged in October. Check if aphids are present in the crop. Look at the headlands because aphids are three times more likely to land near headlands than further out in the field. If aphids are present, apply an insecticide at the



*Inspect crops for aphids before applying an insecticide.*

2-3 leaf stage of the crop (**Table 1**). While resistance (partial) has been detected among the grain aphid population, pyrethroids (Karate, etc.) will still be effective for the majority of growers. Multiple applications of pyrethroids should be avoided to prevent the development of full resistance.

**Table 1: BYDV risk and control.**

Sowing	BYDV risk	Control action
Early sown (not recommended)	High	Pyrethroid at 2-3 leaf stage and early November if aphids are present.
October sown	Medium to high	Pyrethroid early November.
Emerging after November	Low	Control needed in mild winters, if aphids are plentiful or in high-risk areas

## Winter oilseed rape

The wet weather has increased disease pressure in oilseed rape. Phoma is common this autumn and once the threshold of 10% of plants affected is reached, the crop should be treated. Light leaf spot is the main disease of rape in Ireland but identifying it in the autumn is difficult. To prevent disease, all rape crops should get a fungicide for light leaf spot in November. This will also cover phoma.

Proline or Prosaro were rated the best for light leaf spot control in Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) trials but other products containing metconazole or tebuconazole can also be used. Metconazole and tebuconazole products have some growth regulatory activity but their impact will be reduced as temperatures drop in November.

## Fertiliser planning

The fertiliser register is in place so it is important to get a nutrient management plan together for 2024. The first step is to ensure that you have enough soil samples for the land that you are farming.

### Soil sampling:

- no phosphorus (P) soil test report, no P allocation – in the absence of a soil test report P index 4 is assumed;
- take soil samples every 2-4ha (maximum 5ha) to a depth of 10cm and take a minimum of 20 soil cores per sampling area; and,
- soil samples are required every four years.

### Lime

Soil test results show that over the last five years a



*No P soil test report, no P allocation.*

large percentage of tillage soils have a lime requirement:

- now is a good time to identify fields that have a lime requirement and plan lime applications over the coming months; and,
- only apply lime based on a recent soil test report and don't exceed 7.5t/ha in a single application.

## HEALTH & SAFETY

# Be winter ready

Preparation is key to minimise disruption to farming activities during severe weather events. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment has developed a practical checklist for farms, which outlines key issues when planning for, and in response to, severe weather events this winter. The more significant issues involve planning for:

- provision of feed and water to livestock;
- delivery of feed to farms and the transport of products from farms;
- freezing of water pipes to sheds and outdoor water troughs;
- freezing of milking machines and other equipment in milking parlours;
- freezing of coolant and diesel in tractors;
- damage to forage crops being grazed in-situ or stored in farmyards; and,
- personal risks of working and driving during severe weather conditions, e.g., ice.

For more information visit:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/9e1358-preparing-your-business-for-severe-weather-stay-winter-ready/>.



### Chainsaw safety



Chainsaw injuries involve cuts and lacerations to the limbs, neck, head and trunk. The major cause of timber-related fatal accidents is being struck by falling trees or branches while they are being felled. Appropriate training in chainsaw use and the wearing of suitable protective clothing to protect against these injuries is essential.

Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (DAFM), Martin Heydon TD, recently launched a video focused on safety with chainsaws, which was produced by Teagasc in association with FBD and the Farm Safety Partnership. View the video at the following link: <https://youtu.be/9W4znRL6o-w>.

## Teagasc tillage podcast

For all the latest tillage news, the Teagasc tillage podcast is available on the Teagasc website, Apple Podcasts, Spotify or through the QR code here.

