PestFacts WA

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Contents

Green bridge, pest and disease management to protect emerging crops

Volunteer cereal plants forming a green bridge. Photo courtesy of DPIRD.

Recent late-March rainfall across much of the grainbelt has resulted in widespread weed and crop volunteer regrowth. This ‘green bridge’ increases the risk of plant diseases and insect and nematode pests carrying over into this season’s emerging crops, particularly for diseases that rely on living hosts such as powdery mildew, rusts, and viruses and their vectors.

As sowing has begun, early management decisions will influence disease pressure and crop yield potential.

Assess and manage the green bridge

Growers are urged to monitor and eradicate weeds and crop volunteers, including those along fencelines, before sowing to reduce potential pest and disease outbreaks.

Aim for a minimum 2-week vegetation free break before sowing. This can be achieved by:

- spraying weeds and volunteer crops plants with herbicide at least 4 to 6 weeks before sowing to ensure they are completely dead at planting.
- heavily grazing.
- cultivation. It’s important to note that cultivating in high crown rot risk paddocks could be detrimental, as it may spread infected material, grass weeds and volunteers further. It is also important to retain at least 50% ground cover to reduce the risk of soil erosion during crop establishment.

Review last season’s disease issues

Growers can refer to the PestFacts WA map for 2025 disease reports in their region. This includes foliar and soilborne diseases, and nematode pests.

Key disease issues last season included: yellow spot and nodorum blotch, powdery mildew, sclerotinia stem rot, blackleg, rusts, net blotches, scald, root diseases, smuts, bacterial blight and viruses.

Sow clean and graded seed

Cleaning and grading seed helps remove disease agents such as sclerotia or ryegrass ergot, preventing their spread and improving the efficacy of seed dressing applications by reducing dust levels.

DPIRD offers a range of seed testing services (fungal, bacterial and virus) through DPIRD’s Diagnostic Laboratory Services (DDLS) – Plant pathology services. For all testing enquiries, email DDLS@dpird.wa.gov.au or phone +61 8 9368 3351.

Varieties and disease resistance

Select varieties with resistance to expected diseases or plant parasitic nematodes. The DPIRD 2026 WA Crop Sowing Guide details disease susceptibility for each variety.

Avoid growing susceptible varieties where possible; specifically avoid early sowing of susceptible varieties in high-risk locations. Early crops are generally more vulnerable to foliar diseases such as powdery mildew, net blotches (barley), nodorum blotch and yellow

spot (wheat) and septoria (oats). If using susceptible varieties, consider later sowing and close monitoring for diseases.

Seed dressings, in-furrow and foliar fungicides

Consider applying registered in-furrow or seed dressing fungicides to reduce early infection risks from diseases such as cereal rusts, smuts, bunts, net blotches, scald, powdery mildew, rhizoctonia, crown rot, take-all, root lesion nematodes and blackleg crown canker in canola. Fungicide seed dressings are an important tool for protection against cereal smut and bunt diseases.

After crops have emerged, monitor plants for foliar diseases and consider applying foliar fungicides where disease severity warrants intervention. For more information see DPIRD's Fungicides page.

Insecticide seed treatments can reduce early aphid infestations and subsequent virus spread in some crops such as cereals. Seed treatments are less effective for controlling green peach aphid, the vector of turnip yellows virus in canola, and should not be used solely to control them. For more insecticide information, refer to DPIRD's 2026 autumn winter insecticide guide.

Manage stubble borne diseases and root lesion nematodes

Reduce stubble borne disease risk through crop rotation, careful paddock planning (avoid sowing on or downwind of infected stubble), or stubble management practices (grazing, windrowing, baling, incorporation or burning). Remnant stubble from the 2025 (but depending on disease, could be any remnant cereal stubble) season may still harbour disease inoculum.

Manage root lesion nematodes by rotating with more resistant crops or varieties. For paddocks infested with cereal cyst nematodes, rotate regularly with a weed free non-cereal or a resistant cereal variety.

Further information

For more information refer to:

- DPIRD's 2025 PestFacts WA Issue 22 article Strategies for disease management in 2026
- DPIRD's Control the green bridge for pest and disease management factsheet
- Grains Research and Development Corporation's (GRDC) Green Bridge factsheet.

For more information on crop foliar diseases, contact Principal Research Scientist Geoff Thomas in Perth on +61 428 947 287, Senior Research Scientist Ciara Beard in Geraldton on +61 8 9956 8504, Senior Research Scientist Andrea Hills in Esperance on +61 8 9083 1144, Senior Research Scientist Kithsiri Jayasena in Albany on +61 8 9892 8477, Senior Research Scientist Kylie Chambers in Northam on +61 8 9690 2151 or Research Scientists Jason Bradley on +61 447 864 707 and Zia Hoque on +61 8 9690 2141, both based in Perth.

For more information on crop viruses, contact Senior Research Scientist Benjamin Congdon in Perth via Benjamin.Congdon@dpird.wa.gov.au .

For more information on nematodes and soilborne fungal diseases of grain crops, contact Senior Research Scientist Sarah Collins in Perth on +61 404 488 113 and Principal Research Scientist Daniel Hüberli in Perth on +61 8 9368 3836 or Research Scientists Carla Wilkinson in Perth on +61 8 9368 3862 and Ahmed Saad in Perth on +61 8 9368 3632.

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Free seed testing for virus infections in pulses

Narrow-leafed lupin plant on the left displaying seed-borne Cucumber mosaic virus infection compared to the healthy plant on the right. The infected plant is stunted with bunched, down curled and mottled leaves. Photo: DPIRD.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) is pleased to offer free pulse seed testing for virus infections again this season. This testing is part of a national Grains Research and Development Corporation funded project. This project focuses on detecting cucumber mosaic virus (CMV) in lupins and lentils, as well as pea seedborne mosaic virus (PSbMV) in field peas.

Sowing pulse seed infected with CMV or PSbMV can result in infected seedlings being scattered randomly within the crop. Aphids can pick up the virus from the infected plants and spread it to nearby healthy plants. These viruses reduce plant health and yield and can also be carried through to the next generation of seed.

The best strategy to minimise virus infection is to sow certified virus-free seeds. This free seed testing initiative aims to empower growers to make informed decisions about their seed lot choices, ensuring healthy and thriving crops.

Growers are invited to submit a 500g seed sample from their lupin and pulse seedlots, accompanied by some basic information. The DPIRD team will conduct thorough testing and will endeavour to get results back to growers as soon as possible.

Growers who are interested in using this free-of-charge service need to email DPIRD Research scientist Dr Nazanin Nazeri and request the seed testing form. Each grower can submit a maximum of two different seed samples.

Please note that testing is limited to 40 seed samples from across Western Australia. To ensure your samples are included, please send them in promptly.

Please note that this testing service is separate from DPIRD's Diagnostic Laboratory Services (DDLS) seed testing service.

For more information, refer to DPIRD's Cucumber mosaic virus and its management in narrow-leafed lupins factsheet.

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Now is the time to manage snails

Small conical snails hiding under a weed. Photo courtesy of DPIRD.

With recent rainfall, growers are encouraged to keep an eye out for snails in their paddocks, especially in paddocks that have been sown to canola. The timing of baiting is important and should coincide with when snails are actively moving and feeding. Before baiting entire paddocks, patch bait to make sure snails are actively feeding. Baiting before egg lay occurs will reduce the risk to this year's crop and help reduce the population in the following season.

Identify snail species

There are 3 snail species that are pests of WA broadacre crops: small pointed snails and the round snails: white Italian and vineyard.

Small conical (or small pointed) snails (left), vineyard snail (middle) and while Italian snails (right). Photos courtesy of DPIRD.

The small pointed snail has a conical shell with brown bands of varying width. It is usually less than 10mm in length or diameter and occurs on all soil types in high rainfall areas. The white Italian snail is up to 30mm across and is white with broken brown bands. The

vineyard snail is up to 20mm across with almost continuous brown bands. The vineyard snail and the white Italian snail prefer alkaline sandy soils.

It is important to know what snail species are in paddocks so the best management can be applied at the right time.

Monitor

Round snails are usually found on stumps and fence posts, whereas the small conical snails are usually found under stubble. Camera monitoring of snail movement has shown that the best time to check for snails in your paddock is early in the morning, from 6am to 8am, when there is moisture on plants and stubble and snails are more likely to be actively moving.

A good way to estimate snail numbers on open ground is to use a 32x32cm square quadrant and count all of the live snails in it. This size quadrant is an area of 10% of a square metre, so multiplying the count by 10 will give an estimate of snails per square metre.

Consider management options now if snail numbers are at or exceed DPIRD's suggested threshold numbers. Note that, germinating canola is most at risk if there are 20 or more small pointed snails per square metre.

Manage

Trials conducted by Stirlings to Coast farmers has shown that techniques such as cabling, speed tilling and stubble crunching that control round snails (white Italian and vineyard snails) are not effective on small conical snails. For more information, refer to the Stirlings to Coast Farmers report Impact of stubble management on small conical snail mortality.

After sowing, baiting is the only control method for snails. Baiting before the crop emerges is more effective as snails randomly encounter baits. The less green plant material that is present in the paddock, the more likely it is that snails will encounter a bait.

Correct timing of baiting is important and should coincide with periods when snails are actively moving and feeding.

Baiting before snails lay eggs is the best way to stop populations from increasing.

Snails can become active after a rain event of 5mm or more. They can also be actively moving without daytime rainfall if humidity is above 75%.

It is advised that growers patch bait sections of paddocks to confirm that snails are actively feeding before baiting entire paddocks. An even spread of baits across paddocks increases the chance that snails will feed on them and reduces the need for re-baiting.

It is also recommended that growers budget for more than one bait application. As a single application may not be sufficient to control small conical snails. For more baiting information, refer to the Stirlings to Coast Farmers Effective baiting options for the control of conical snails in the Albany port zone final technical report.

Research has also found that applying granular lime to a paddock infested with small conical snails can increase shell strength and fertility. Growers need to budget for baiting paddocks after liming has occurred. For more information see the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) Update Paper Determining the effect of lime on small pointed (conical) snail fecundity and shell strength.

A biocontrol program has commenced on the South Coast, where Australian-bred parasitoid flies (*Sarcophaga villeneuveana*) have been released to help control snail pests

and protect crop yields, quality and growers' profitability. The fly re-release was augmented in February of this year at two sites in the Albany and one site in the Esperance port zones. For more information on this parasitoid fly, refer to the DPIRD Fly biocontrol released to control farm snail pests media release

Further information

For more information on slug and snail control visit:

- DPIRD's Pests slugs and snails and their management in broadacre crops factsheet
- DPIRD's Managing snails in broadacre crops podcast
- DPIRD's Managing snails in WA webinar recording
- GRDC's Nail the Snails publication
- GRDC's Snail baiting as part of an integrated pest management strategy video
- Stirling to Coast Farmers Snails R&D webpage.

For more information, contact Research Scientist Svetlana Micic, Albany on +61 (0)8 9892 8591.

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European and native earwigs

Growers are encouraged to keep an eye out for earwigs as we head into the growing season and to recognise the difference between pest species and native earwigs.

European earwigs are an introduced species and recurring pest on properties. They can damage cereal, legume and oilseed crops. Crops are most at risk at the seedling stage. At this time of year, European earwigs are readily found under harvest trash.

European earwigs: left is a male, right is a female. Photo courtesy of DPIRD.

Adult European earwigs range from 12-24mm in length. They have uniform brown bodies that are smooth and shiny with light brown to yellow legs, pincers (also called forceps) and 'shoulders'.

A native earwig (Carcinophora occidentalis). Photo courtesy of: DPIRD.

European earwigs and native earwigs can be found in the same paddock. European earwigs tend to be found communally, whereas native earwigs are usually solitary.

Native earwigs feed mainly on leaf litter and other organic material and are not known to damage crops. There are two native earwig species commonly confused with European earwigs: *Carcinophora occidentalis* (no common name) and *Labidura truncata* (common brown earwig). The common brown earwig has been observed attacking caterpillars. These native species can be distinguished from European earwigs by a red triangle on their backs.

A common brown earwig (Labidura truncata). Photo courtesy of DPIRD.

Crop residues on the soil surface increase European earwig survival and breeding, allowing large populations to build up during autumn and early winter and damage crops sown into the stubble.

Earwigs have two breeding cycles per year. One breeding cycle occurs in late winter to early spring, and a second in summer.

When checking crops, look for shredded leaf tips or jagged holes in the leaves, as this is typical of earwig damage. In severe situations European earwigs can completely defoliate young seedlings, leaving only stems or bare ground in patches. This pest is hard to find during the day and it is best to look for European earwigs at night using a torch or by placing pitfall traps into the ground.

European earwigs can be difficult to control as they hide under stubbles. Sprays applied at night have worked better than sprays applied during the day as earwigs are more active at night. Baiting has provided better control for this pest than spraying, especially in paddocks with heavy stubble loads. For more insecticide information, refer to DPIRD's 2026 Autumn Winter Insecticide Spray Guide.

Further information

For more information on European earwigs, refer to the Grains Research and Development Corporation's European earwigs factsheet.

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2026 autumn winter insecticide guide: key updates and registration changes

A self-propelled sprayer. Photo courtesy of DPIRD.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) 2026 autumn winter insecticide guide is now available for free download.

Updated annually, this spray guide lists the chemicals and application rates registered by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinarian Medicines Authority (APVMA) for use on canola, cereal, lupin, and other grain legume crops to control common invertebrate pests of seedlings. It includes foliar sprays, seed dressings and baits.

A major change in the 2026 guide is the removal of chlorpyrifos products, which are no longer registered for use on canola, cereal and legume crops in Australia. It is an offence to possess, supply, or use the cancelled active constituents.

Spinetoram has been added for the control of lucerne flea in canola. Additional active ingredient concentrations of bifenthrin for early establishment pests have been listed. Iron powder and additional concentrations of metaldehyde for snail and slug control have also been added to the guide.

A further notable addition is diafenthurion 500g/L for the control of redlegged earth mites on cereal crops and pulse crops under APVMA permit PER95087, valid until 31 August 2027.

The APVMA sets Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) to ensure food safety and compliance with domestic and international standards. With the phase-out of chlorpyrifos, exporters must adhere to the MRLs of importing countries, which may differ from Australian standards. To ensure compliance, growers should consult their grain marketer and stay updated on any changes to MRLs in key export markets.

For more insecticide information

The 2026 Autumn Winter Insecticide Spray Guide is intended as a reference only. Always read chemical labels before applying insecticides. Not all insecticide trade names may be listed, so consult retailers for other registered insecticide options.

Visit the department's Insecticides page to learn more about insecticides, insect pest monitoring and beneficial insects.

A Beneficials chemical toxicity table has been developed to help growers and advisors make informed decisions about the insecticides and miticides they use in their crops. This information represents a collaboration between Cesar Australia and University of Melbourne, with investment from the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) as part of the Australian Grains Pest Innovation Program (AGPIP).

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