PestFacts WA

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Strategies for disease management in 2026

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

Growers are encouraged to consider the potential for disease carryover into the 2026 growing season, especially if wet conditions occur during summer and autumn, resulting in weed and crop regrowth. This regrowth can act as a ‘green bridge’ for diseases and pests,

such as cereal rusts, powdery mildew, plant parasitic nematodes, root and crown diseases, and aphids which vector viruses.

If weeds and/or volunteers are present at the start of the new cropping season, particularly in or adjacent to cropping paddocks, there is a greater risk of early pest, virus and disease spread or build-up, which can impact newly emerging crops. Early outbreaks often have the greatest impact on grain yield potential.

2025 disease observations

A range of diseases and viruses were reported across cereals, canola, lupins and pulses in 2025, with severity varying by region. Key issues included yellow spot, powdery mildew, sclerotinia stem rot, blackleg, rusts, blotches, root diseases, smuts, bacterial blight and virus infections.

The type of between-season management used will be influenced by the specific disease and pest threats anticipated for the 2026 season.

Disease management strategies for 2026

To minimise disease risk, growers are encouraged to take the following actions:

- Check the PestFacts WA map for disease reports by region in 2025. This includes above-ground foliar diseases and below-ground soilborne diseases and nematode pests. Identify the cause of any disease symptoms and/or poor patches observed in crops this season to put the right management plan in place for 2026. For more information on identifying and managing root diseases and nematodes, see the 2025 PestFacts WA issue 19 article Patchy crops: Diagnosing the cause for better 2026 management.
- Monitor any green bridge that is present in summer and autumn for foliar diseases and virus vectors (i.e aphids), so timely action can be taken to identify pathogens and limit the spread and build-up of inoculum. It is crucial that growers eradicate weeds and crop volunteers, including those along fence lines, before the cropping program begins. This will reduce the risk of pest and disease outbreaks, including foliar and root diseases and viruses.
- Create a break (a fallow period) of at least 2 weeks, free of vegetation capable of hosting disease and pests, before sowing. This could 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.
  - cultivating weeds and crop volunteers. 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.
- Sow cleaned and graded seed. This will 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.

- Select varieties to plant in 2026 that will have resistance to the key diseases that the next season's plants are likely to be exposed to. The DPIRD 2026 WA Crop Sowing Guide (available soon on the DPIRD website) details disease susceptibility for each variety.
- 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 and blackleg crown canker in canola. Fungicide seed dressings are an important tool for protection against cereal smut and bunt diseases. For more information see DPIRD's Fungicides page.
- Insecticide seed treatments can be effective at preventing 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. To read about turnip yellows virus infection this season, refer to the 2025 PestFacts WA Issue 17 article Turnip yellows virus infection levels vary across the grainbelt.
- Reduce exposure to stubble borne diseases 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 2024 season may still harbour disease inoculum in some cases.
- Avoid growing susceptible varieties where possible, especially early sowing of susceptible varieties in high-risk locations. Earlier sown crops are generally more vulnerable to foliar diseases such as powdery mildew, net blotches (barley), nodorum blotch and yellow spot (wheat) and septoria (oats). Consider later sowing for susceptible varieties and at-risk paddocks. At the least, plan to monitor earliest sown paddocks closely for disease.
- 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.

For more information on green bridge management, refer to DPIRD's Control the green bridge for pest and disease management and Grains Research and Development Corporation's (GRDC) Green Bridge factsheets.

Yellow spot in wheat

Yellow spot was the most frequently reported wheat disease to the PestFacts WA team this season. It is a stubble-borne disease, as is nodorum blotch which has very similar foliar symptoms. Growers can reduce disease risk by rotating crops away from wheat stubble and avoiding sowing wheat varieties rated as susceptible to these diseases.

For more information refer to DPIRD's Yellow spot and septoria nodorum blotch and their management in wheat factsheet.

Powdery mildew in barley and wheat

Powdery mildew was reported in barley and wheat crops across the WA grainbelt this season. For more information refer to the 2025 PestFacts WA Issue 13 article Powdery mildew in barley and wheat update.

If a green bridge is present leading into next season to carry the disease over, growers should consider selecting barley and wheat varieties that are more resistant to powdery

mildew. For more information refer to the soon to be published DPIRD 2026 WA Crop Sowing Guide.

Barley loose smut and wheat flag smut

Barley loose smut was observed throughout many areas of the grainbelt. A proportion of this season's harvested seed will be infected, which is important as infected seed is the source of next season's infection.

Flag smut in wheat re-emerged in 2025 and in some areas is a concern for 2026 due to its persistence in both the soil and on infected seed.

In 2026, to minimise the expression of these smuts in cereals, replace highly contaminated seed with certified (clean and uninfected) seed and treat seed with a registered seed dressing. Wheat varieties with resistance to flag smut are available. For more information refer to DPIRD's Smut and bunt diseases of cereals and their management factsheet and the 2025 PestFacts WA Issue 13 article Barley loose smut – unusual symptoms observed.

Sclerotinia in lupin and canola

Sclerotinia stem rot in lupins, canola and other grain legumes is caused by the same fungus (*Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*) and continues to pose a risk for 2026 crops.

Even in areas where incidence in canola and lupin was lower than previous seasons, the risk for 2026 remains high due to the disease inoculum (sclerotia) surviving in paddocks from previous high disease years. Sclerotia have been found to survive for at least 6 years in soil and stubble so careful consideration should be given to paddock rotations. Cereals are not hosts and can be used as break crop.

To read about earlier sclerotinia activity this season, refer to the 2025 PestFacts WA Issue 8 article Sclerotinia apothecia found.

Blackleg in Canola

Blackleg is stubble-borne. Avoid sowing canola into last year's canola stubble. Evaluate different blackleg canker management strategies pre-sowing by using the recently updated DPIRD BlacklegCM tool.

For more information on blackleg, refer to DPIRD's upcoming 2026 WA Crop Sowing Guide and GRDC's Blackleg Management Guide.

Further information

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, 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 Scientists Sarah Collins in Perth on +61 404 488 113 and 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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PREDICTA®B: 2025 Soilborne disease workshop in Perth

New and experienced agronomists are invited to attend the PREDICTA®B 2025 Soilborne disease workshop in Perth to build their skills in identifying and managing soilborne diseases.

- Date: Tuesday, 9 December 2025.
- Time: 9.00 am to 3.30 pm.
- Venue: Bentley Technology Park, 2 Bordie-Hall Drive, Bentley WA.
- Fees: $533.50 (including GST) – excluding training manual.
  $588.50 (including GST) – including training manual.

Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) Research Scientists Dr Daniel Huberli, Dr Sarah Collins, and Dr Ahmed Saad will present on rhizoctonia, crown rot, and root lesion nematodes. South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) Research Officer Blake Gontar and Subprogram Leader – Soil Biology, Dr Liz Farquharson, will present on additional root diseases, as well as PREDICTA®B sampling and interpreting results.

This one-day course provides participants with accreditation to deliver PREDICTA®B soilborne disease testing services to growers.

This workshop is also being delivered in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

Registration and further information

For more information and to register, visit the PREDICTA®B: Soilborne disease accreditation workshops registration page.

Article author: Cindy Webster (DPIRD Narrogin).

Final PestFacts WA newsletter for 2025!

Harvesting wheat. Photo courtesy of DPIRD.

This is the 22nd and final issue of the PestFacts WA newsletter for the 2025 growing season. Extra editions may be circulated if extraordinary circumstances occur.

All PestFacts WA newsletters from this season can be found in the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's (DPIRD's) PestFacts WA newsletter archive.

2025 PestFacts WA statistics

This year the PestFacts WA team received more than 2,000 insect and plant disease reports (current to 4 November 2025).

What were the top 5 reported invertebrates?

The PestFacts WA team recorded over 1,600 invertebrate reports this season. The native budworm moth was the most frequently reported invertebrate pest, with 626 reports received. This was followed by diamondback moth (214 reports) and green peach aphid (85 reports). These three pests were actively surveyed by DPIRD staff and volunteer native budworm trappers, which contributed to their high report numbers. The top 5 invertebrates reported are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Top five invertebrates and number of reports to the PestFacts WA service during 2025.

Insect	Number of reports
Native budworm moth – including project surveillance	626
Diamondback moth – including project surveillance	214
Green peach aphid – including project surveillance	85
Redlegged earth mite	77
Lucerne flea	53

It was very encouraging to see the number of beneficial insects found and reported across the WA grainbelt during the growing season. To view beneficial insect reports made this season refer to the PestFacts WA map.

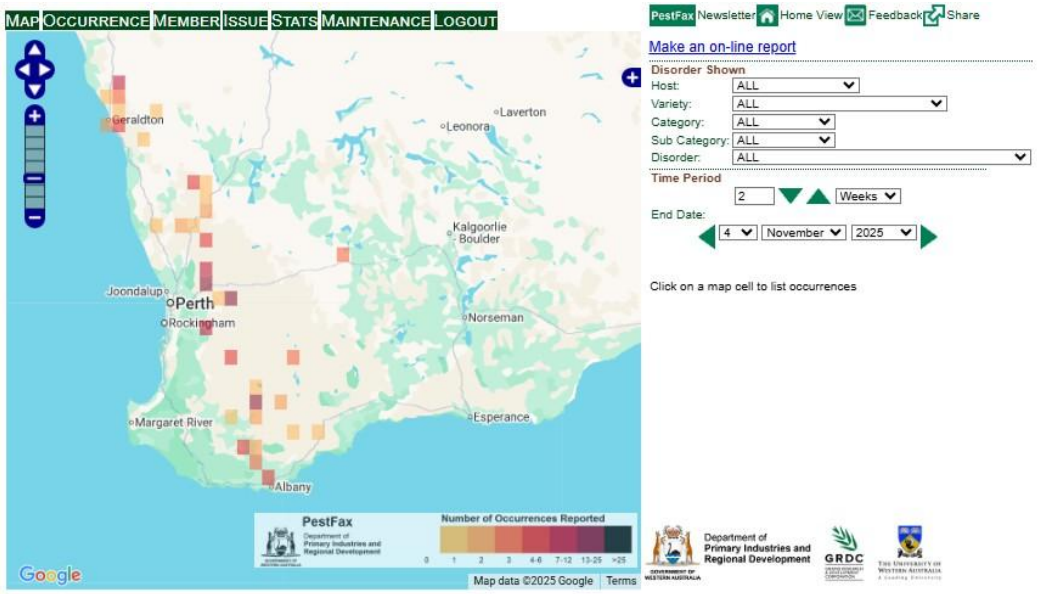
What were the top 5 reported plant diseases for 2025?

As of 4 November 2025, the PestFacts WA team recorded were 638 plant disease reports from a variety of sources. Yellow spot in wheat was the most frequently reported disease (79 reports), followed by powdery mildew in wheat (71 reports). Table 2 below displays the 5 diseases that were most reported.

Table 2 Top five plant diseases and number of reports to the PestFacts WA service during 2025.

Disease	Number of reports
Yellow spot in wheat	79
Powdery mildew in wheat	71
Blackleg in canola	56
Sclerotinia stem rot in canola	39
Loose smut in barley	36

PestFacts WA map usage



PestFacts WA map displaying occurrences for all disorders reported for the previous 2 weeks, current to 4 November 2025. Map courtesy of DPIRD.

The PestFacts WA map provides a visual display of the insect pests and plant diseases recorded in the PestFacts WA database since 1996. Viewers can generate maps based on host, disorder, date and time period. They also have the option to view a 'same time as last year' map to highlight seasonal similarities or differences.

As of 4 November 2025, viewers generated a total of 3,434 individual maps.

Diamondback moth (229) and native budworm (99) were the most viewed disorder maps. These disorders may have been viewed for current season and historical distributions. The other top viewed disorder maps are listed in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Top viewed PestFacts WA disorder maps (disease, insects and other) in 2025.

Disorder	Number of maps generated
Diamondback moth – including moth trapping	229
Native budworm moth – including moth trapping	99
Green peach aphid	63
Sclerotinia stem rot (all crops)	63
Leaf rust (all crops)	47

Acknowledgements

The PestFacts WA team would like to extend a sincere thank you to everyone who submitted insect and plant disease reports, as well as identification requests, to the PestFacts WA service throughout the year.

We also acknowledge the following people and projects for contributing invertebrate and/or plant disease reports:

- Consenting clients using the Agworld and Back Paddock Adviser apps. This collaboration was enabled through a competitive grant process by DPIRD's eConnected Grainbelt project, initiated in 2017. It continues to be supported by this project and DPIRD's Systems Modelling team.
- DPIRD and GRDC co-investment project titled: National Grains Diagnostics and Surveillance Initiative (DAW2305-004RTX).
- DPIRD and AgriFutures co-investment project titled: Understanding and reducing weather induced fungal staining of oaten hay windrows (PRO-016604).
- DPIRD, Marcroft Grains Pathology and GRDC co-investment project titled: Effective control of blackleg in canola (MGP2307-001RTX). Eyre Peninsula Ag, Living Farm and New South Wales DPIRD are also working in this project.
- DPIRD and GRDC co-investment project titled: WA DPIRD Soilborne disease initiative (DAW2507-001RTX).
- DPIRD and GRDC co-investment project titled: Minimising damage of invertebrate pests in canola through a better understanding of the impact of beneficial insects (CSP2309-004RTX).
- UWA PhD project with investment from the GRDC Research Scholarship: Natural enemies of key invertebrate pests of WA grain crops: Impacts and monitoring techniques (UWA2402-008RSX), Amber Balfour-Cunningham.
- DPIRD and GRDC co-investment project titled: Furthering grower knowledge and understanding of the scientifically unidentified 'Dongara weevil' (DAW2212-001 RTX).
- DPIRD and GRDC co-investment project titled: Effective virus management in grain crops (DAW2305-003RTX).

All reports are greatly appreciated and play a vital role in helping PestFacts WA keep growers and consultants informed and up to date with what's happening across the WA grainbelt.

Further information

For more information about the PestFacts WA service visit DPIRD's PestFacts WA page.

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