Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Protect Grow Innovate



PestFacts WA

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Strategies for disease management in 2027



Volunteer canola plants forming a green bridge.

Above-median rainfall is currently forecast for November and December across the South West Land Division. Growers are encouraged to consider the potential for disease carryover into the 2027 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 that can transmit viruses.

For more information about weather forecasts, refer to DPIRD's latest Seasonal climate outlook newsletter.

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.

2026 disease observations

A wide range of fungal diseases and viruses were reported across cereals, canola, lupins and pulses in 2026, with severity varying between regions. Key issues included blackleg, powdery mildew, sclerotinia stem rot, blotches, smuts, rusts, yellow spot, septoria, scald, chocolate spot, root lesion nematodes, root diseases and virus infections.

The type of between-season management used will be influenced by the specific disease and pest threats anticipated for the 2027 season.

Disease management strategies for 2027

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

- Check the PestFacts WA map for disease reports by region in 2026.
- 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 2027. For more information on identifying and managing root diseases and nematodes, see the 2026 PestFacts WA issue 12 article Diagnosing patchy crops. Growers can also access free Fusarium crown rot stubble testing, for more information, or to arrange testing, email DPIRD Research Scientist Ahmed Saad.
- Monitor any green bridge that is present during the coming 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, root lesion nematodes 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 crop plants with herbicide at least 4 to 6 weeks before sowing to ensure they are completely dead at seeding.
  - heavily grazing. However, this will not reduce soilborne diseases or nematode pests.
  - cultivating weeds and crop volunteers. However, 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.
- 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 for sowing in 2027 with resistance, where possible, to the key diseases that crops are likely to encounter during the growing season. The DPIRD 2027 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, root lesion nematodes 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 2026 PestFacts WA Issue 11 article Canola aphid and turnip yellows virus update.
- 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 2025 and/or 2026 season may still harbour disease inoculum. Yellow spot and nodorum blotch of wheat, net blotches and scald of barley, septoria of oats, blackleg of canola and ascochytas in pulses are all examples of stubble borne fungal foliar diseases of grain crops.
- 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, scald (barley), nodorum blotch/yellow spot (wheat), septoria (oats) and sclerotinia (canola and pulses). 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.

Blackleg in Canola

Blackleg was the most frequently reported disease to the PestFacts WA team this season. 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 2027 WA Crop Sowing Guide and GRDC's Blackleg Management Guide.

Powdery mildew and leaf rust in barley and wheat

Powdery mildew and leaf rust were reported in barley and wheat crops across the WA grainbelt this season. For more information refer to the 2026 PestFacts WA Issue 10 articles Powdery mildew in wheat and Leaf rust in barley.

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 and leaf rust. For more information refer to the soon to be published DPIRD 2027 WA Crop Sowing Guide.

Sclerotinia in lupin and canola

Sclerotinia stem rot in canola, lupins and other grain legumes is caused by the same fungus (*Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*) and continues to pose a risk for 2027 crops.

Even in areas where incidence in canola and lupin was lower than previous seasons, the risk for 2027 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 a break crop.

To read about earlier sclerotinia activity this season, refer to the 2026 PestFacts WA Issue 9 article Sclerotinia stem rot.

Barley loose smut

Barley loose smut was observed throughout many areas of the grainbelt this season. A proportion of harvested seed is likely to be infected, which is important to recognise because infected seed is the source of infection in the following season.

In 2027, to minimise the expression of loose smuts in cereals, replace highly contaminated seed with certified (clean and uninfected) seed, for retained seed clean and grade seed and treat with an effective registered seed dressing. Barley varieties vary in susceptibility to loose smut, less susceptible varieties are available.

For more information, refer to DPIRD's Smut and bunt diseases of cereals and their management factsheet, 2026 PestFacts WA Issue 16 article Loose smut in barley and 2027 WA Crop Sowing Guide (available soon on the DPIRD website).

Further information

For more information on disease diagnostic testing and disease management, refer to the 2026 Grains Convo podcast episode Don't guess, test: What's affecting your crops?.

For more information on crop foliar diseases, contact Principal Research Scientist Geoff Thomas in Perth on +61 428 947 287, Senior Research Scientists Ciara Beard in Geraldton on +61 8 9956 8504, Andrea Hills in Esperance on +61 8 9083 1144, Kithsiri Jayasena in Albany on +61 8 9892 847, 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 soilborne fungal diseases of grain crops, contact Senior Research Scientist Daniel Hüberli on +61 427 426 522 or Research Scientist Ahmed Saad on +61 477 150 079, both based in Perth.

For more information on nematodes of grain crops, contact Senior Research Scientist Sarah Collins on +61 404 488 113 or Research Scientist Carla Wilkinson on +61 8 9368 3862, both based in Perth.

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Native budworm: how did 2026 compare with previous seasons?

The PestFacts WA (formerly PestFax) newsletter and native budworm pheromone trapping network has been operating throughout the Western Australian grainbelt since 1996. The success of the program is reliant on dedicated volunteers. We would like to recognise the longest-serving contributor, Digby Stretch of Kojonup, who has continuously monitored native budworm since the program's inception 31 years ago.

This long-term dataset gives us an opportunity to look at the historical numbers, and we can compare 2026 moth populations with the previous 30 years.

Native budworm (budworm) moth numbers did pick up later in the season, but overall, 2026 was neither a high- or low-pressure year for moth and caterpillar numbers.

There were some high numbers of budworm moths recorded north of Geraldton in mid-July, with fortnightly trap catches of 308 at Ogilvie, 348 at Marrah and 347 at Southern Cross. Two weeks later, Moonyoonooka, east of Geraldton, recorded 380 moths. While these high numbers didn't continue, there were consistent moth flights in the northern and eastern grainbelt. In contrast, low moth numbers were recorded in the southwest and Esperance regions (Figure 1).

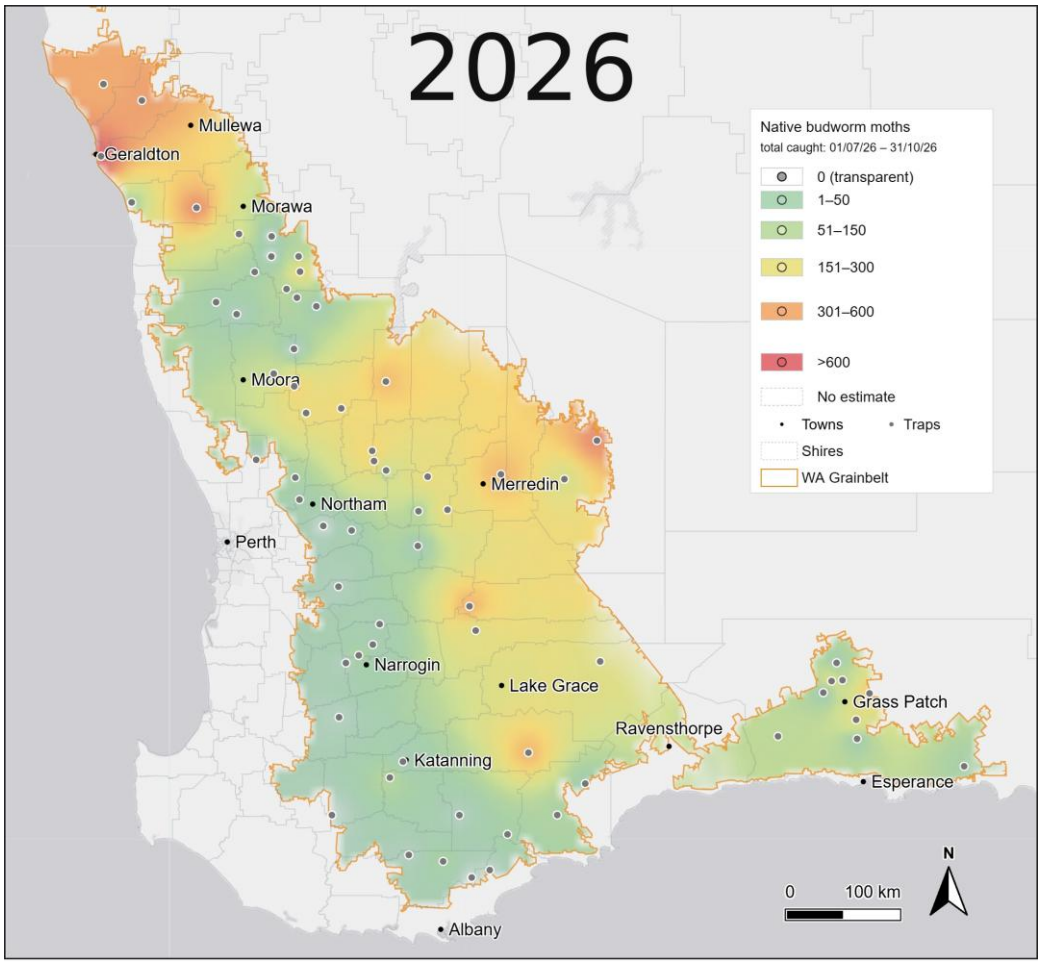


Figure 1. Native budworm moth numbers from 1 July to 31 October 2026. The map is a visual guide only. Colours are interpolated from available pheromone trap catches to illustrate broad spatial patterns and are not validated estimates of moth density.

The 2026 monitoring period (July to October) recorded 9,946 moths from the trapping network, averaging 16 moths per report. Comparable seasons include 2021, 2020 and 2002, which recorded average catches of 15 to 20 moths per report. The 2002 and 2020 seasons also showed a broadly similar mix of trap catches and geographical distribution of moth activity.

In recent seasons, 2022 and 2023 experienced moderate to low moth pressure. In contrast, 2024 and 2025 recorded large flight numbers that placed significant pressure on susceptible crops. Moth numbers in those years were comparable to 1996 and 1998, when the trapping network was first implemented.

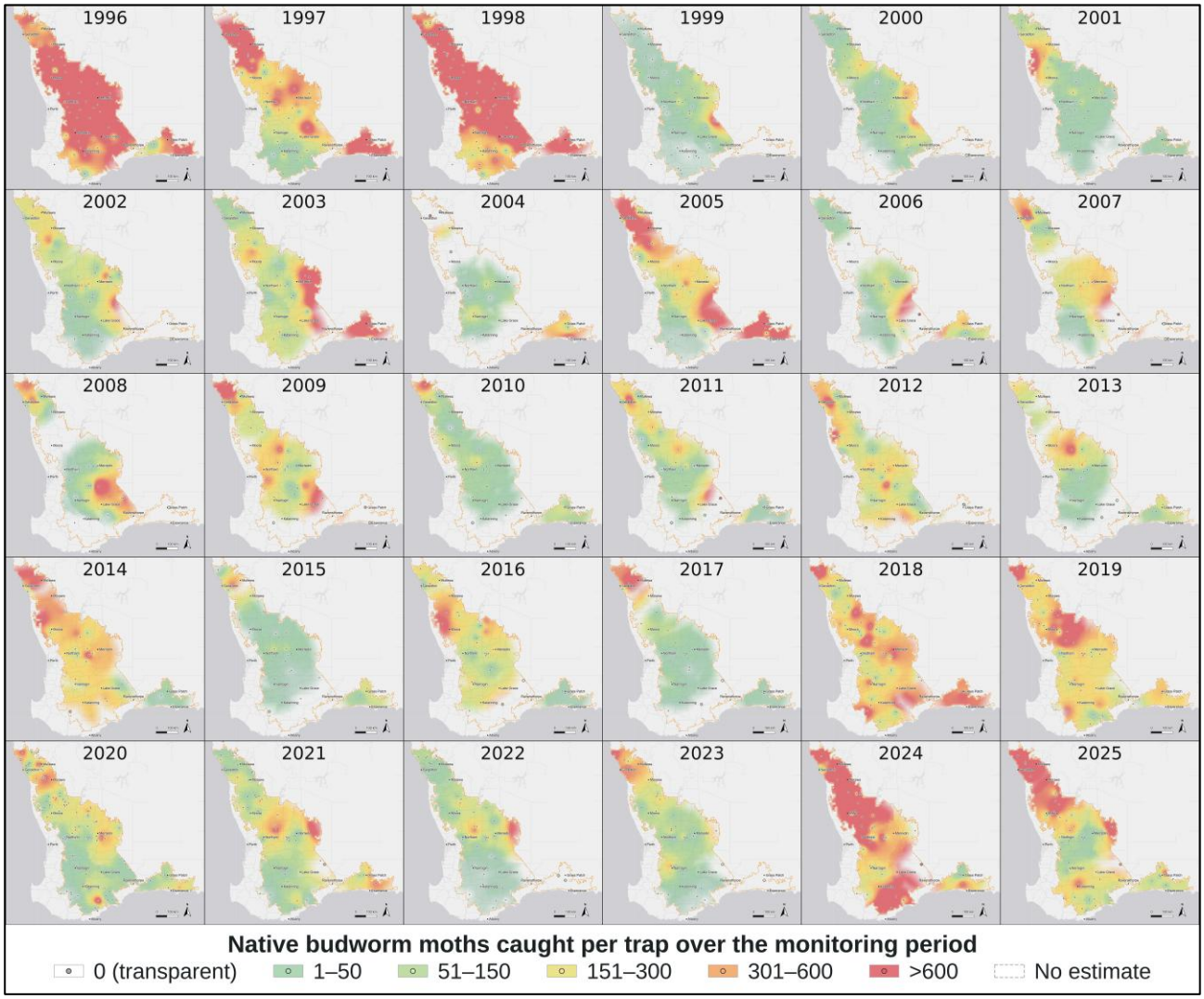


Figure 2. Native budworm moth catches across the WA grainbelt, 1996–2025. Most maps cover 1 July to 31 October. Some years had shorter monitoring periods due to seasonal conditions or the duration of the trapping program. Colours are interpolated from available pheromone trap catches to illustrate broad spatial patterns.

The long-term trapping network continues to provide valuable insight into seasonal trends and supports growers and advisers in monitoring budworm risk.

Further information

Detailed information on this pest can be found on the department's Native budworm page.

To read about native budworm activity earlier in the season, and the moth trapping program, refer to the 2026 PestFacts WA articles in:

- Issue 22 Late season native budworm update and monitoring program concludes
- Issue 21 Native budworm thresholds
- Issue 20 Native budworm moths have migrated into the southern grainbelt
- Issue 19 Check your crops for native budworm caterpillars
- Issue 17 Diamondback moth and native budworm activity update
- Issue 15 Native budworm caterpillars detected in northern cropping regions
- Issue 12 Waves of native budworm moth migration detected
- Issue 9 Early native budworm moth flights detected in northern and central regions
- Issue 7 Would you like to host a native budworm moth trap this year?

For further information, contact Principal Research Scientist Dusty Severtson in Northam on +61 8 9690 2160 or Research Scientist Christiaan Valentine in Northam on +61 8 9690 2160.

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Final PestFacts WA newsletter for 2026!



Harvesting wheat.

This is the 23rd and final issue of the PestFacts WA newsletter for the 2026 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.

2026 PestFacts WA statistics

This year the PestFacts WA team received more than 2,700 insect and plant disease reports (current to 1 November 2026).

What were the top 5 reported invertebrates?

The PestFacts WA team recorded more than 2,100 invertebrate reports during the season. Native budworm was the most frequently reported pest, followed by diamondback moth, with both species heavily represented through targeted surveillance, including pheromone trapping, sweep-net sampling and public submissions. Lucerne flea was the third-most frequently reported invertebrate pest (131 reports), followed by green peach aphid (124) and cabbage aphid (90). These aphid reports were also boosted by surveillance undertaken through the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) and DPIRD co-funded project DAW2305-003RTX: Effective Virus Management in Grain Crops. The 5 most frequently reported invertebrates are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Top five invertebrates and number of reports to the PestFacts WA service during 2026.

Insect	Number of reports
Native budworm moth – including project surveillance	709
Diamondback moth – including project surveillance	333
Lucerne flea	131
Green peach aphid	124
Cabbage aphid	90

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.

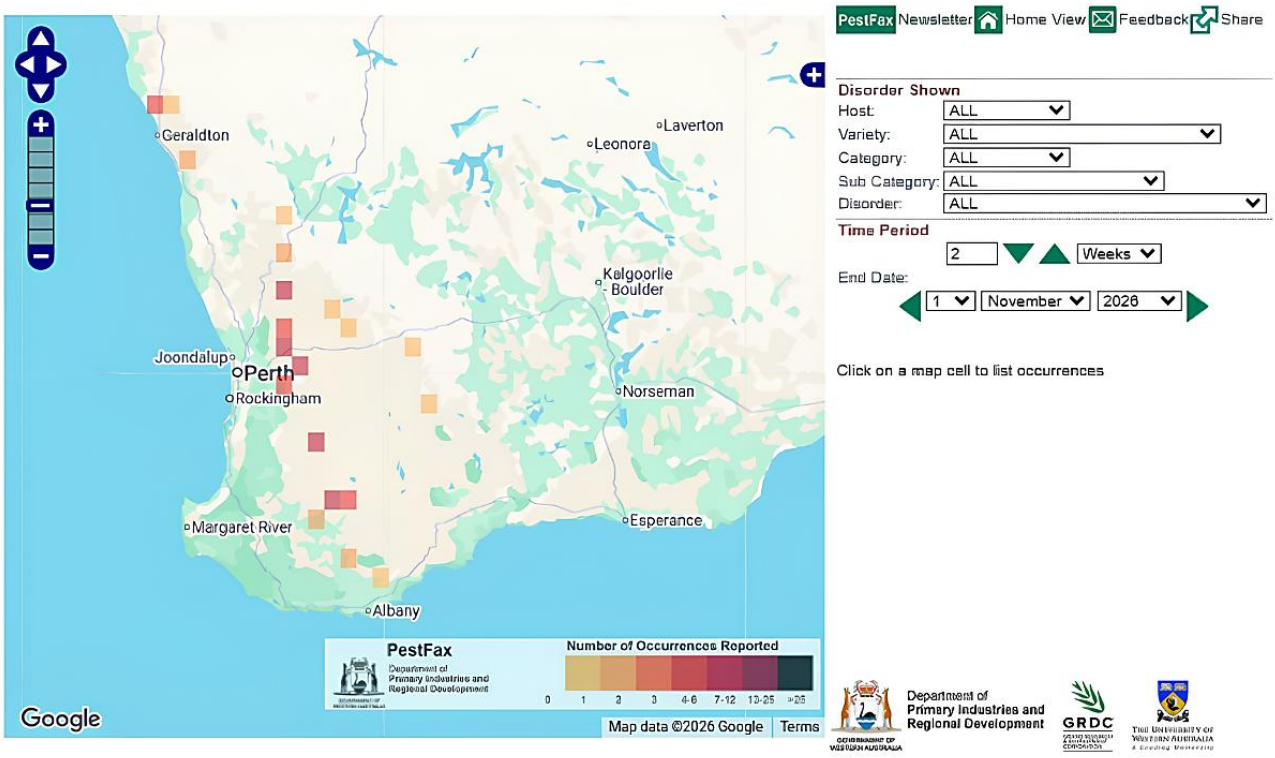
What were the top 5 reported plant diseases for 2026?

As of 1 November 2026, the PestFacts WA team recorded 573 plant disease reports from a variety of sources. Blackleg in canola was the most frequently reported disease (98 reports), followed by powdery mildew in wheat (60 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 2026.

Disease	Number of reports
Blackleg in canola	98
Powdery mildew in wheat	60
Sclerotinia stem rot in canola	40
Net-type net blotch in barley	35
Loose smut in barley	34

PestFacts WA map usage



PestFacts WA map displaying occurrences for all disorders reported for the previous 2 weeks, current to 1 November 2026.

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 1 November 2026, viewers generated a total of 1,073 individual maps for WA.

Native budworm (including trapping) (119) and cockchafers (44) 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 2026.

Disorder	Number of maps generated
Native budworm moth – including moth trapping	119
Cockchafers/Grass grub	44
Diamondback moth – including moth trapping	29
Redlegged earth mite	16
Turnip aphid	9

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 agronomists using the Agworld and Back Paddock Adviser apps.
- Growers, agronomists and DPIRD staff.
- DPIRD and GRDC co-investment project titled: DPIRD Seasonal status of pests and diseases delivered to growers (DAW2404-005RTX).
- 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: Effective virus management in grain crops (DAW2305-003RTX).
- DPIRD and GRDC co-investment project titled: NGN: Exploration of Management Strategies for Pest Scarab Species of Australian Grains (DAW2505-006RTX).

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

Further information

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

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Article author: Cindy Webster (DPIRD Narrogin).

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