

CLEARFIELD & INTERVIX DRIVES PROFITABILITY AT MURRAY BRIDGE

LIKE MANY AUSTRALIAN FARMERS, BRETT AND NATHAN WEGENER ARE CONTINUALLY LOOKING FOR WAYS TO INCREASE THEIR PROFITABILITY BY PRODUCING HIGHER YIELDING CROPS WHILE OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES OF RESISTANCE AND WEED CONTROL.



Over the past seven years the Wegener family have focused predominately on an intensive cropping operation on their Callington property near Murray Bridge, South Australia.

Both brothers identified that controlling ryegrass has been the biggest challenge they have faced and have been trying to overcome it by using more pre-emergent and robust early post emergent herbicides. About five years ago the Wegener's identified that they needed to vary their cropping program to control ryegrass, so they switched from growing TT canola varieties to CLEARFIELD® Canola.

The CLEARFIELD Production system consists of canola varieties that have been specifically bred for tolerance to the herbicide Intervix®. Intervix is the new generation CLEARFIELD herbicide, which will replace the current OnDuty® herbicide. Intervix offers growers a more robust grass herbicide as well as offering safer plantbacks compared to OnDuty.

Growing hay in rotation with CLEARFIELD Canola and the use of Intervix herbicide are the two main strategies that the Wegener's have implemented to combat annual ryegrass. According to Brett Wegener, the CLEARFIELD system was appealing because Intervix was a Group B herbicide, which would reduce the reliance on Triazine (Group C herbicide) and Group A herbicides in the canola phase of the rotation.

"We were relying too much on Group A herbicides. We would usually use Group A herbicides in the pea crops so we wanted to have a different mode of action to battle the ryegrass," he said.

Although weed control was the deciding factor

for changing to the CLEARFIELD system, the Wegener's also recognised the yield advantage that CLEARFIELD had compared to TT varieties.

The Wegener's now believe they are "getting on top" of ryegrass. Last year the canola crop was sown at what Brett Wegener described as perfect conditions – in the first week of May with excellent moisture in the soil. Predominately the CLEARFIELD 44C73 variety was sown, with small amount of CLEARFIELD 44C75. "We were very pleased with the establishment of the crop in the early stages, but we were unfortunately struck by insects, which had an effect on the yield in some areas," he said.

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Last year, for the first time, the Wegener's switched from the OnDuty herbicide to Intervix and believed it was stronger on broadleaf weeds and ryegrass compared to OnDuty. They used a pre emergent spray mix of Roundup® PowerMAX® and Triflur X®. Brett gave the example of one particular paddock where ryegrass was germinating when the canola was sown. "There were fully tillered plants of ryegrass when I sprayed the paddock with Intervix. I didn't want to use a Group A Herbicide due to

resistance and I didn't want to put a "Dim" on it because I wanted to save that for my peas," said Mr Wegener. "When we windrowed the crop there was basically no ryegrass, which I was very impressed with, seeing that ryegrass was at such an advanced stage when we sprayed it."

Brett identified Group B resistance is something he and his brother are wary of and have chosen to save the Group B herbicide for the canola rotation of the cropping program. "While some ryegrass got through, certainly the end result was almost minimal seed set with good plant control after using Intervix Herbicide with the CLEARFIELD Canola," he said.

Nathan Wegener is aiming for two years of total control of ryegrass. "Quite often a paddock rotation will start with pasture, hay and then we come in with a canola or even peas," he said. "Being seed producers, producing high yielding crops supported by excellent weed control is a very important part of the business," said Nathan.

Nathan pointed out that the decision to grow CLEARFIELD Canola fitted well into their business. "Excellent weed control with the use of Intervix, good profitability and having a yield advantage over other varieties were all driving factors," he said. Nathan and Brett Wegener received oil percentages of 42 and 44% for their CLEARFIELD Canola varieties.