

Good News for Southern Cucurbit Growers

3 December 2010

FOR Australia's southern cucurbit producers just getting underway with this growing season, there is good news from their northern colleagues.

After several years of ineffective powdery mildew control, use of a new protectant fungicide in this year's crop has provided northern growers with good results.

Bundaberg zucchini, rockmelon and sugarcane grower Rodney Killer has had problems controlling powdery mildew in zucchini and melon crops.

"We have had powdery mildew problems for about 25 years, and there have only ever been a couple of fungicides that have worked – but they have come and gone from the market. Until this year, nothing has been working well for us; we have really been wasting dollars on powdery mildew chemicals.

"This year we tried a new fungicide on our zucchini crop, and got a good, lengthy period of powdery mildew control from it. I believe the active ingredient boscalid has been very effective.

"We used the new product Colliss® just as the label said, applying prior to the picking season, observing the 7-day harvest withholding period.

"Growers have to get their head around using the product – as a protectant rather than as a curative fungicide."

Colliss is also being used on the Killer's current rockmelon crop.



TOP side of zucchini leaf (left) treated with a spray program containing Colliss and (right) an untreated leaf.

Prospect Agriculture crop consultant Chris Monsour, Bowen, central Queensland has been involved in some of the Australian trials of the new fungicide, which proved to be equal to, or more effective than current registered fungicides.

Pumpkin yields at Mareeba in far north Queensland were increased by 20 tonnes/ha compared with untreated pumpkins. At Kununurra in WA, infected zucchini leaves were reduced from 100% in untreated crops to less than 10%. At Bowen and Giru in north Queensland, the proportion of severely infected zucchini leaves was reduced from 30% to almost zero.

Crop Care Australasia Pty Ltd

ABN: 53 061 362 347

Portal North – Unit 15/16 Metroplex Avenue Murarrie QLD 4172

PO Box 84 Morningside QLD 4170

Phone: 07 3909 2000 Fax: 07 3909 2010 www.cropcare.com.au



Chris Monsour: “Because cucurbits are grown in the dry tropics for most of the year, the disease can be active over a long cropping period. To date there haven’t been enough products available for an effective rotational spraying program throughout the season. Accordingly, there is certainly a place for the new product.

“It’s important that growers understand its mode of action, and use it according to directions as part of a planned rotation. It’s also important to check that spraying equipment is providing effective coverage of the plant – especially the underside of leaves, and near the crown of the plant.”

Crop Care advises cucurbit growers to preserve the usefulness of this new fungicide by using no more than two sprays of Colliss per crop. In addition, no more than four applications per paddock per year will be allowed, to effectively manage plant-back residues. The fungicide should only be applied to field-grown cucurbits using ground spray-rigs.

Best results are expected from protective applications during flowering or early fruiting, before powdery mildew becomes established.

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Prospect Agriculture crop consultant Chris Monsour, Bowen – pictured in a grower’s honeydew melon crop – has been involved in trialing a new fungicide on a range of commercial cucurbit crops in north Queensland. He said the trials indicated that the new product was equal to or more effective than existing fungicides, and would increase growers’ chances of minimising powdery mildew infection and resistance – provided they used it wisely as part of a rotational spray program.

For More Information:

Kerrie Mackay
National Horticulture and suSCon
Business Manager
Ph: 07 3909 2008
Mob: 0413 458 069
Email: kerrie.mackay@cropcare.com.au

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