PestFacts WA

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Contents

Canola diseases

Several canola diseases have been reported to the PestFacts WA team recently, including blackleg, downy mildew and sclerotinia stem rot.

Blackleg

- East Chapman
- Pingelly
- Munglinup

Agworld app users have reported finding blackleg in canola crops near East Chapman and Pingelly.

Blackleg infection on a canola flower. Photo courtesy of Quenten Knight (Agronomy Focus).

Quenten Knight (Agronomy Focus) has reported finding blackleg upper canopy infection in Nuseed Hunter canola east of Munglinup. Less than 10% of the crop was estimated to be infected.

Blackleg infection risk depends on variety resistance, paddock rotation, time of sowing, fungicide usage, proximity to last year's canola stubble and stubble management.

For blackleg stem canker, growers need to consider their varietal resistance levels before applying a foliar spray at the 4-6 leaf stage, as it may not be economical to spray varieties with high resistance levels. Most crops are beyond this growth stage now.

DPIRD's BlacklegCM app supports blackleg crown canker management during seedling and the early vegetative phase.

Upper canopy infection (UCI) is usually worse in very early sown crops and can infect all parts of the canola plant, including flowers, heads (causing head abortion), stems, branches and pods. Yield loss mainly results from early stem and branch infections that limit pod filling. Alternaria can resemble UCI on pods, but blackleg shows black pepper spots inside white lesions.

Variety resistance ratings for UCI blackleg, along with regional gene effectiveness, are available in GRDC's Blackleg Management Guide 2026 Autumn Fact Sheet.

A decision support tool is also available for canola growers to use during flowering to help with management decisions for blackleg UCI. For more information, refer to DPIRD's UCI BlacklegCM decision support tool page.

Several fungicide products are registered for the control of blackleg UCI in canola. Fungicides applied during the early bloom stages will reduce the major UCI infections that cause the greatest yield penalties. As canola crops flower across the grainbelt, growers are urged to consider both blackleg UCI and their sclerotinia stem rot risk as a single fungicide application can be sufficient to protect crops from both diseases. For more information on registered fungicides, refer to DPIRD's Fungicides page.

For more information, refer to DPIRD's Blackleg and its management in canola factsheet.

Downy mildew

- Narrogin
- Highbury

Low levels of downy mildew were recently found in a Regiment canola crop near Narrogin.

Downy mildew and white leaf spot symptoms on the upper (left) and under-side (right) of a canola leaf. Photos courtesy of Hillary Wittwer (Farmworks).

Hillary Wittwer (Farmworks) has also reported finding downy mildew in multiple canola crops, particularly varieties Hunter and Regiment, in the Highbury area. The plants had 8 true leaves or more.

Downy mildew mainly affects young cotyledons and the first few true leaves. Symptoms include yellowed cotyledons and lower leaves. Older leaves display angular lesions on the upper leaf surface that have a yellow-orange halo. Sometimes lesions appear as cream-coloured, circular to irregular spots of varying sizes on the upper leaf surface, which turn brown over time. The underside of leaves often shows a corresponding patch of white fluffy growth, although this can become less apparent with age or turn beige in colour, or have sand adhering to it. Severely affected cotyledons shrivel up and senesce prematurely.

In WA, downy mildew rarely causes economic yield loss, and foliar fungicide treatment is usually not warranted.

Plants usually grow out of the disease as they mature and conditions cool. Downy mildew is generally favoured by temperatures of 15-18◦C, wet soil and high humidity. Under such conditions, disease spreads very rapidly.

Downy mildew in WA is mainly soil borne but can also be seed-borne or carried over on the green bridge. Once primary lesions are formed on the underside of the leaves, secondary spread of the disease occurs via airborne spores formed in the primary lesions. Disease epidemics are sporadic, therefore developing control strategies against downy mildew can be very challenging.

Most of the current canola varieties are susceptible to downy mildew, although some varieties are affected less than others. Canola varieties are not screened for their resistance to this disease.

Seed dressings with the active ingredient metalaxyl-m can help suppress downy mildew in seedlings.

Sclerotinia stem rot (apothecia)

- Gibson
- Merivale

Sclerotinia apothecia in a cereal crop. Photo courtesy of Nicky Tesoriero (DPIRD).

Research Scientist Nicky Tesoriero (DPIRD) recently found apothecia under wheat on DPIRD's Esperance Downs Research Station near Gibson.

Sclerotinia apothecia. Photo courtesy of Quenten Knight (Agronomy Focus).

Quenten Knight (Agronomy Focus) has reported finding apothecia in wheat paddocks near Gibson and Merivale. Both paddocks had been sown with canola last season.

Apothecia are small mushroom-like fruiting bodies that release spores that can initiate sclerotinia infection in broadleaf crops. They are small (5-8 mm across), cream to apricot in colour, and emerge from sclerotia on or near the soil surface.

To read about managing sclerotinia stem rot in canola, refer to the 2026 PestFacts WA Issue 9 article Sclerotinia stem rot.

Further information

Growers and consultants are encouraged to use the PestFacts WA Reporter app to report any disease observations as the season progresses.

For more information on canola diseases, contact Senior Research Scientists Andrea Hills, Esperance on +61 (0)8 9083 1144, Ciara Beard, Geraldton on +61 (0)8 9956 8504 or Jean Galloway, Northam on +61 (0)8 9690 2172.

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Article input: Jean Galloway (DPIRD Northam).

Leaf rust in barley

- South Stirling
- Munglinup
- Cascade
- Gibson

Department staff have recently reported finding leaf rust in Neo CL barley near South Stirling and in barley near Gibson.

Leaf rust pustules on NeoCL barley. Photo courtesy of Quenten Knight (Agronomy Focus).

Quenten Knight (Agronomy Focus) has reported finding leaf rust in tillering Neo CL barley near Munglinup. The infection was widespread across the crop.

Leaf rust has also recently been found in Maximus CL barley near Cascade and in Granite CL barley near Cascade. Both crops were at stem elongation and were going to be sprayed with a fungicide.

Monitoring susceptible cereal crops is important. When checking cereals for rusts, growers and consultants are also urged to investigate the canopy and full length of stems for the presence of other rusts that have not yet been reported this growing season, such as stem, leaf or stripe rust in wheat or stem and leaf rust in oats.

Barley, wheat and oat leaf rusts are host-specific and do not cross infect. However, this report indicates that seasonal conditions have been conducive for development of rust diseases.

Symptoms

Leaf rust pustules are small and circular to oval in shape, varying in colour from orange to light brown. Pustules containing light brown, powdery spores appear on the upper leaf

surface and, in cases of heavy infection, on leaf sheaths. As the crop matures, the pustules darken and produce black spores embedded in the leaf tissue.

Leaf rust develops rapidly in moist conditions when temperatures are between 15-22°C.

Volunteer cereals along paddock edges and roadsides are the primary source of rust carryover. Therefore, it is worth inspecting volunteer wheat, oats and barley, as well as sown crops.

Management

Variety selection is the best defence against rust diseases in-crop. Varieties rated as moderately resistant to moderately susceptible (MRMS) or better will show significantly less rusting than a susceptible (S) and very susceptible (VS) variety. These more resistant varieties are unlikely to require a fungicide application to maintain grain yield, except in exceptional years with very high disease pressure. For variety disease ratings, refer to DPIRD's 2026 WA Crop Sowing Guide.

If rust is detected in a susceptible variety (rated VS to S), fungicide is more likely to be needed to protect yield. In these cases, fungicide should be applied before the epidemic becomes severe, taking into consideration the stage of crop development. Spray decisions should consider the level of disease in the crop, varietal susceptibility, the time of the season and the crop growth stage. Growers should also consider the chance of ongoing rainfall after spraying, as this is favourable for disease development. Use high rates of fungicide when a longer period of protection is needed, such as when season conditions favouring infection are likely to persist, or when growing more susceptible varieties. Ensure the cost of fungicide treatment is aligned with the crop's yield potential and the length of the growing season to maximise economic return.

It is important to follow fungicide label recommendations for application rates and withholding periods. For foliar fungicide information, refer to DPIRD's Fungicides page.

Rusts predominantly spread via wind from infected plants, but spores can also be transported through the movement of people, machinery and plants. Growers are urged to adopt hygiene (biosecurity) measures during their paddock checks to reduce the risk of spreading the disease.

Rust pathotype testing

Growers and agronomists are encouraged to send samples of all rusts for pathotype testing at any time of the year to the Australian Rust Survey. This is a free testing service that identifies new rust strains. This information will assist cereal breeders in developing new resistant varieties as new strains could become problematic in existing varieties. Infected leaf samples should be mailed in paper envelopes (do not use plastic wrapping or plastic lined packages) along with your details and collection information (location, variety etc.) directly to The University of Sydney, Australian Rust Survey, Reply Paid 88076, Narellan NSW 2567. Optional free reply-paid envelopes can be ordered from University of Sydney. For further details refer to the University of Sydney's Australian Cereal Rust Survey page.

Further information

For more information about barley leaf diseases, refer to DPIRD's Barley leaf diseases and their management factsheet.

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Net blotches in barley

- Wongan Hills
- Northam
- Tenterden
- Kendenup
- South Stirling

Spot form net blotch lesions on barley plants. Photo courtesy of DPIRD.

Senior Research Scientist Kylie Chambers (DPIRD) recently found low levels of spot-form net blotch (SFNB) in barley near Northam and Wongan Hills. Plants were at the tillering stage (Z22).

Senior Research Scientist Kithsiri Jayasena (DPIRD) has recently observed net-form net blotch (NFNB) in barley near Tenterden, Kendenup and South Stirling.

With the recent rainfall across much of WA, seasonal conditions have been more conducive to the development of both SFNB and NFNB. Growers and consultants are encouraged to monitor barley crops for both diseases.

Symptoms

Early spot-form net blotch lesions (left) and net form net blotch lesions (right). Photos courtesy of DPIRD.

SFNB and NFNB can vary considerably in appearance depending on the pathogen form, barley variety and stage of infection. Initially, SFNB lesions are dark brown and tend to be rounded with yellow margins. In contrast, early NFNB lesions are also dark brown but tend to start as very thin lines and can develop into rectangular 'nets' as it spreads.

Both net blotches can cause losses in both yield and grain quality. They are most damaging in crops sown to varieties rated very susceptible (VS) to susceptible (S) with good yield potential (>3 t/ha) in medium to high rainfall barley growing regions.

Barley varieties that are susceptible to SFNB or NFNB, have not been treated with a registered seed dressing for net blotches, and are sown into a high-risk situation (barley on barley) are particularly vulnerable.

Management

Selecting resistant varieties of crops is the simplest way to manage all diseases. Even choosing varieties with the disease ranking of Moderately Susceptible (MS) or better will noticeably reduce SFNB and NFNB levels in crops relative to a variety with a Susceptible (S) ranking. To see which barley varieties are susceptible to SFNB and NFNB, refer to DPIRD's 2026 WA Crop Sowing Guide.

Applying a foliar fungicide may be necessary where disease threatens crops with high yield and quality expectations and seasonal rainfall supports disease development. Depending on the disease pressure and grain yield potential, fungicide management of net blotches should be targeted at protecting the upper leaves that contribute most to grain filling. In barley these are the two leaves under the flag leaf.

Application of a foliar fungicide during tillering is generally not recommended, as it only temporarily reduces disease levels and rarely results in a yield response without additional fungicide applications. Unnecessary fungicide applications

accelerate the development of fungicide resistance, particularly if a single active is applied.

DPIRD's NetBlotchBM app assists growers with foliar fungicide application decisions and assessing the likely economic returns. For more information, refer to DPIRD's NetBlotchBM decision support tool page.

Research conducted by the Centre for Crop and Disease Management (CCDM) at Curtin University has identified SFNB and NFNB pathogen populations in WA showing levels of resistance or reduced sensitivity to DMI (Group 3) and SDHI (Group 7) fungicides, and NFNB to QoI (Group 11) fungicides. To prevent further development of fungicide resistance, rotate fungicides with different modes of action, avoid using the same mode of action more than twice per season, use fungicide mixtures with different modes of action, and stick to the label rates. If fungicide resistance is suspected, leaves can be submitted to CCDM via frg@curtin.edu.au.

For more information on fungicide resistance, refer to the Grains Research and Development Corporation's (GRDC) Ground Cover article Net form net blotch triple fungicide resistance detected in WA and publication Fungicide resistance management in Australian grain crops.

For a list of registered fungicides to use as foliar sprays for managing SFNB and NFNB in barley, visit DPIRD's Fungicides page.

Further information

For further information on symptoms and management of blotches see DPIRD's:

- Net form net blotch and its management in barley factsheet
- Spot form net blotch and its management in barley factsheet
- 2025 Protecting WA Crops Issue 48 article Outcomes from 5 years researching spot form net blotch management in low rainfall areas.
- Managing net blotches and using the NetBlotchBM support tool 2025 webinar recording.

For more information on blotches, contact Senior Research Scientists Andrea Hills in Esperance on +61 (0)8 9083 1144, Kithsiri Jayasena in Albany on +61 (0)8 9892 8477, Kylie Chambers in Northam on +61 (0)8 9690 2151 or Research Scientist Jason Bradley in Perth on +61 (8) 9368 3982.

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Powdery mildew in wheat

- Gibson

Powdery mildew on Shotgun wheat. Photo courtesy of Quenten Knight (Agronomy Focus).

Quenten Knight (Agronomy Focus) recently reported finding powdery mildew in Shotgun wheat near Gibson. The crop was at the stem elongation stage, and the infection was widespread across the paddock. Shotgun is rated S (Susceptible) to powdery mildew.

Barley and wheat powdery mildew are host-specific and do not cross infect. However, this report indicates that seasonal conditions are conducive for development of both diseases. Monitoring of wheat and barley crops for powdery mildew and other diseases should be ongoing, particularly in areas where a pre-season green bridge was present or susceptible varieties have been sown.

Symptoms

When diagnosing powdery mildew, look for fluffy, white powdery growths of fungal spores on the surface of leaves and leaf sheaths. Infection usually starts low in the canopy and, under severe disease pressure, can spread to stems and heads. As the infection ages, the infected tissue yellows and the infected area turns a dull grey colour, with small black specks becoming visible.

Severe powdery mildew infections can cause yellow patches in a crop that may be mistaken for waterlogging when viewed from a distance. To avoid misdiagnosis, it’s important to walk into the crop and check for powdery mildew symptoms.

Temperatures of 15-22°C, combined with high humidity, favour the disease. Rain does not spread the disease, but it can create extended periods of canopy humidity that favour disease development. Under favourable conditions, the infection cycle can take as little as seven days, causing rapid build-up in crops. Mildew can also disappear rapidly in dry, hot weather and very heavy rain can also wash spores away from plants.

Management

Assess crop risk by considering:

- Variety resistance
- Seed or fertiliser applied fungicide
- Plant growth stage
- Disease symptoms
- Weather outlook

For resistance ratings of wheat varieties to powdery mildew, refer to the Department's 2026 Crop Sowing Guide. Infection early in the season (e.g. during crop tillering) on susceptible to moderately susceptible varieties can significantly reduce yield (by up to 25%). Infection at later growth stages (after Z39) is usually less damaging.

Assess disease severity and distribution in susceptible varieties:

- If mildew is confined to the lower canopy and weather conditions are becoming less favourable for disease development (drying), continue close monitoring.
- If mildew is moving up the canopy, is widespread within the paddock, or humid conditions are forecast, consider applying a registered fungicide to prevent disease reaching damaging levels and infecting upper leaves and heads.

Fungicide considerations for susceptible varieties

Registered foliar fungicides can be used to manage powdery mildew infection. Applications made early in an epidemic, before significant disease development occurs, are generally most effective. For more information, refer to DPIRD's Fungicides page

Key strategies:

- Use an effective registered product.
- Follow current WA fungicide resistance management guidelines (link below), as some powdery mildew populations in WA have shown evidence of reduced sensitivity to Group 3 fungicides.
- Continue monitoring after spraying. Any follow-up application should be based on disease severity, variety susceptibility, crop growth stage and seasonal outlook.

Maintain good crop nutrition, but avoid excessive nitrogen application, as dense canopies and lush crop growth can increase powdery mildew risk.

Testing for powdery mildew fungicide resistance

Wheat powdery mildew is at high risk of developing fungicide resistance. Reduced sensitivity to some DMI (group 3) fungicides has been detected in southern WA (see Pesticide Resistance Integrated Mapping (PRIM) tool), so growers are encouraged to use fungicides wisely. As good practice, all fungicide actives should be rotated within and across seasons. For more information, refer to the Grains Research and Development Corporation's (GRDC) Fungicide resistance management in Australian grain crops publication.

Growers and consultants who suspect fungicide resistance in powdery mildew in a crop can contact the Centre for Crop and Disease Management's (CCDM) fungicide resistance team by emailing frg@curtin.edu.au for further information.

Further information

For more information on powdery mildew, visit DPIRD's Powdery mildew and its management in wheat factsheet.

For more information on cereal diseases, contact Senior Research Scientists Kithsiri Jayasena in Albany on +61 (0)8 9892 8477, Andrea Hills in Esperance on +61 (0)8 9083 1144, Ciara Beard in Geraldton on +61 (0)8 9956 8504, Kylie Chambers in Northam on +61 (0)8 96902151, Research Scientist Jason Bradley on +61 (0)8 9368 3982 or Principal Research Scientist Geoff Thomas in Perth on +61 (0)428 947 287.

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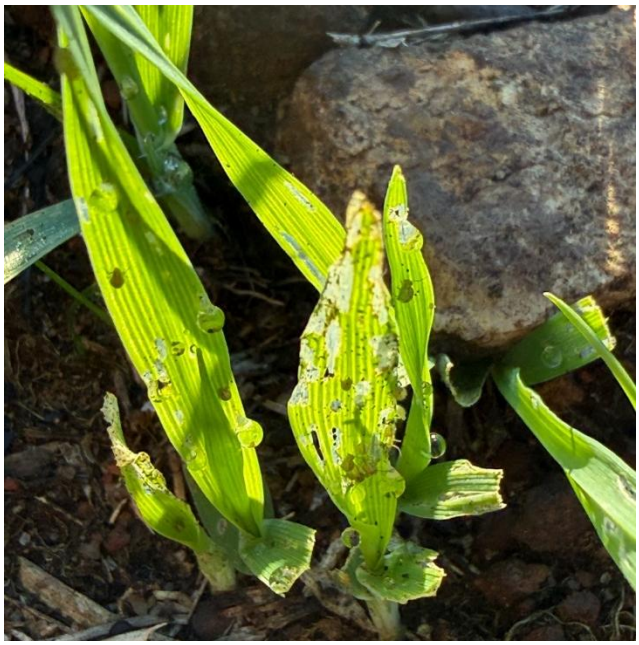
Lucerne flea are damaging crops

- Ogilvie
- Northampton
- Marrah
- East Chapman
- Geraldton
- Mullewa
- Yandanooka
- Three Springs
- Narrogin
- Duranillin
- Katanning

Growers are urged to monitor crops after Agworld app users recently reported lucerne flea activity and damage in barley, canola, lupin and wheat crops near Ogilvie, Northampton, East Chapman, Mullewa, Three Springs and Katanning.

Lucerne flea and visible feeding damage on a lupin plant. Photo courtesy of DPIRD.

DPIRD staff have reported lupins damaged by lucerne flea activity in a crop near Geraldton, with several plants not having any leaves left. Lucerne flea and associated damage have also been observed in canola near Marrah and Yandanooka.



Lucerne flea on barley. Photo courtesy of Cameron Ritchie (Darkan Agri).

Cameron Ritchie (Darkan Agri) recently reported dense patches of lucerne flea in 2 Maximus barley crops near Duranillin, with feeding activity causing noticeable crop damage. A further report has been received of lucerne flea and damage in barley near Narrogin.

Identification and crop damage

Lucerne fleas are springtails, or Collembola, and have a forked appendage under their abdomen that enables them to spring off vegetation when disturbed. Adults are globular, grow to about 3mm in size, and are green-yellow in colour with mottled darker patches. Nymphs are smaller and paler in colour.

They can be more problematic on loam and clay soils. Lucerne fleas attack a range of crops and pastures, causing characteristic ‘windowing’ of leaves. Feeding damage begins at ground level, with damage occurring on the underside of leaves. This can be confused with caterpillar chewing.

Management

Lucerne fleas are often patchily distributed in crops, and spot spraying may be sufficient. They are not effectively controlled by synthetic pyrethroids (SPs).

If crops are not outgrowing lucerne flea damage, control relies on application of organophosphates (OPs) such as dimethoate or omethoate.

Crops should be monitored again after spraying, as chemical applications will not control lucerne flea eggs already laid. For registered insecticide recommendations for lucerne flea, refer to DPIRD’s 2026 Winter Spring Insecticide Guide.

Further information

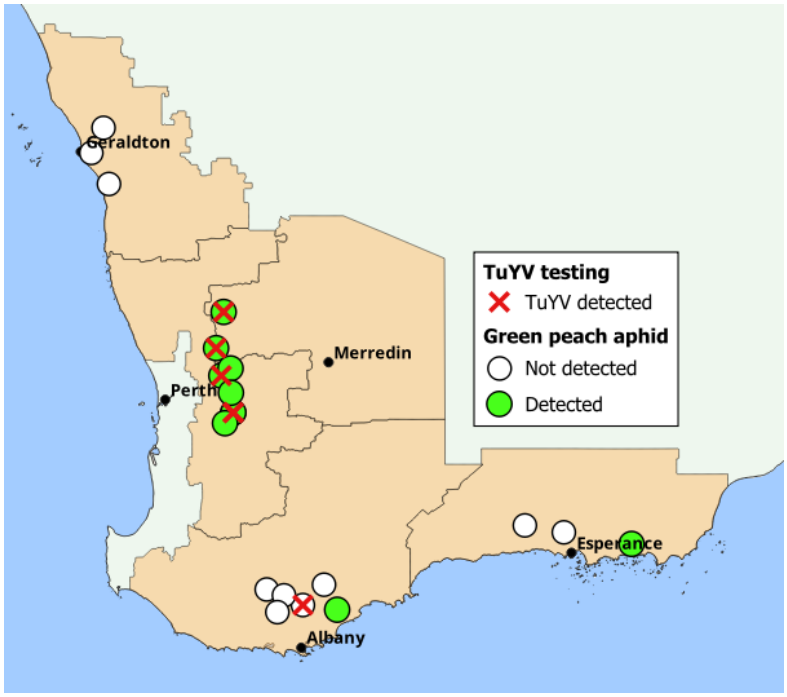
To read about earlier lucerne flea activity this season, refer to the 2026 PestFacts WA Issue 7 article Lucerne flea and mite activity update and Issue 2 article Lucerne flea and mites are active.

For more lucerne flea information, contact Senior Research Scientist Svetlana Micic in Albany on +61 8 9892 8591.

Article author: Cindy Webster (DPIRD Narrogin).

Green peach aphids detected in Esperance port zone

- Cataby
- Kwinana West port zone
- Esperance



Findings from green peach aphid and turnip yellows virus (TuYV) monitoring sites, current to 1st July 2026. Map courtesy of DPIRD.

DPIRD's plant virology and entomology surveillance teams have detected green peach aphid (GPA) infestations in canola crops east of Esperance. In the Kwinana West port zone, GPA infestation rates of up to 70% in canola crops have been recorded with turnip yellows virus (TuYV) infection also being detected in several crops. For more information, refer to the latest map above.

Green peach aphids on the underside of a canola leaf. Photo courtesy of Helen Lethlean (Farmco).

The PestFacts WA team has also recently received a report of GPA in canola crops near Cataby.

Monitoring and management

Growers are encouraged to monitor canola crops, including those sown with neonicotinoid treated seed, for GPA using the guidelines outlined in the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) Manage turnip yellows virus in canola factsheet.

For more details on monitoring and managing canola aphids and TuYV, refer to the 2026 PestFacts WA Issue 9 article Canola aphid and turnip yellows virus update.

Further information

For more information about GPA, TuYV and earlier seasonal activity, refer to the articles in 2026 PestFacts WA:

- Issue 9 Canola aphid and turnip yellows virus update.
- Issue 7 Green peach aphids and turnip yellows virus detected in canola crops
- Issue 5 Check canola crops for green peach aphids to assess virus risk .

For further information, contact Research Scientist Benjamin Congdon, in Perth on +61 488 904 480.

Article authors: Benjamin Congdon (DPIRD Perth) and Cindy Webster (DPIRD Narrogin).

Thrips: friend or foe?

Continuing our theme of showcasing beneficial invertebrates, this article explores the biology of predatory thrips and the important role they play in supporting invertebrate pest management.

A predatory thrip on barley. Photo courtesy of Sam Stubna (South East Rural Traders).

Predatory thrips have recently been found in barley near Beaumont.

Identification and biology

Thrips are tiny, slender insects equipped with specialised mouthparts designed for sucking and rasping. Adults typically measure 1-2 mm in length and usually have a pair of narrow wings edged with long hairs. Their juvenile stages are wingless and tend to appear paler or lighter in colour than the adults.

Some thrips species prey on other insects and mites, making them useful biological control agents, but plant-feeding species are recognised as pests because they can cause damage to crops.

A predatory species of thrip. Photo courtesy of Zac Rick (ABS Agronomics).

Beneficial thrip species belong to the family Aeolothripidae (commonly known as banded-thrips). These species are predators of other small arthropods and are not known to be a crop pest.

These thrips are very small (2 mm long), narrow bodied insects. They are predominately black with what looks like a white band across the middle of the body. Under magnification, these bands can be seen to be developing wing buds on the thorax.

There are also a few plant-feeding **pest** thrips species in broadacre crops, including Plague thrips (*Thrips imaginis*) and Onion thrips (*thrips tabaci*). Adults and nymphs pierce plant tissue and suck sap, resulting in distorted leaves. Flower abortion occurs in extreme cases. When examined closely (preferably with a magnifying lens), the leaf twisting is associated with small lesions. These lesions are caused by thrips sucking plant juices from beneath the leaf surface. Affected areas of the leaf may become transparent and have black marks (droppings). Where thrip damage is severe, leaves may shrivel and die.

Thrips damage to lupins has been confused with symptoms of cucumber mosaic virus (CMV). The virus damage causes stunting, down-curling of leaves and chlorosis in infected growing tips, turning them pale green to yellow.

Crops can be checked by cutting and bashing flowering spikes against a light surface (e.g. large ice cream container).

Conserving beneficial bugs

If beneficial bugs are present in a paddock, they should be correctly identified and protected where possible, as they help reduce pest levels. The following practices can be used to conserve beneficial bugs and beneficial insects in general:

- Spray only if necessary: Apply sprays only when pests reach threshold damage levels.
- Choose insecticides that are ‘soft’ on predators. For more information refer to Cesar Australia’s Beneficials Chemical Toxicity Table.

- Target spray applications: Apply sprays only to paddocks or portions of paddocks where damage is occurring. Pests such as weevils and aphids tend to colonise paddock edges, so a border spray may be sufficient.

Further Information

The PestFacts WA Reporter app can be used to request a diagnosis or report beneficial or pest insects.

To read about other beneficial invertebrates found in WA's grainbelt, refer to the 2026 PestFacts WA articles in:

- Issue 8 Predatory bugs
- Issue 7 Hoverfly larvae
- Issue 6 Predatory beetles
- Issue 5 Balancing sprays with biological control: the benefits of Parasitoids .

For more information on beneficial insects, refer to the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) Back Pocket Guide – Beneficial Insects .

For further details, contact Senior Research Scientist Svetlana Micic in Albany on +61 (0)8 9892 8591.

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