



Phil Hawker
0427 367542

AG NOTE

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DERRINALLUM (Head Office)

P (03) 5597 6622 F (03) 5597 6773
E admin@westernag.com.au
W www.westernag.com.au

BANNOCKBURN

(03) 5281 2840

WILLAURA

(03) 5354 1585

HORSHAM

(03) 5382 2488

NHILL

(03) 5391 3386

KANIVA

(03) 5392 2911

GOROKE

(03) 5382 2488



Gerard O'Brien
0419 801485

Introduction

Welcome to the Autumn edition of our newsletter.

At the time of writing, there has been no real opening rain and soil moisture levels are variable across the Wimmera, Mallee and SW Vic. This can be more difficult to manage due to the partial germination of sown crops and pastures.

Due to the greater assurance of follow up rainfall in high rainfall areas crops are being sown earlier and more to a target sowing date rather than waiting for opening rains.

This year, we expect to see clients challenge the norm with some very early sown Canola and wheat in particular, and it will be great to see just what corresponding water use efficiencies and yields can be achieved.

Everyone at Western AG is wishing you a trouble free sowing and a successful 2016 season. As always, we hope you find the information in this edition of our newsletter helpful and please contact any one of our team members for any further clarification.



Ashley Perkins
0458 822066

Research Update (by James Jess)

Western AG undertakes its own research each year to evaluate new products, compare crop varieties and to better understand plant nutrition. This research is in the form of replicated small plot trials, un-replicated test strips and side by side comparisons using farm scale equipment. We feel it is critically important to invest in our own research in the effort to help our clients maximise their productivity and profitability.

We will also be involved in evaluating fungicides later in the year with more of the new SDHI group products becoming available.



This year, we have contracted Southern Farming Systems to conduct a trial that evaluates agronomy practices to maximise yield in barley and wheat in the high rainfall zone. We are also testing a number of new products. These include Arcade from Syngenta (straight Prosulfocarb from Boxer Gold), Talinor also from Syngenta (a new Group H and C cereal broadleaf herbicide) and Butisan from BASF (Group K canola Pre-Em herbicide for Ryegrass, Wild Oats and Wireweed).

Another interesting project we are currently running is a paddock scale comparison over two seasons to evaluate the weed control and economic performance of Roundup Ready (RR) canola production systems compared to the Triazine Tolerant (TT) varieties.



James Jess
0419 801650



Michaela Alexander
0428 976555



Matthew Barber
0488 298170



Western AG is celebrating 10 years in business this year.

Our promise to you is to continue to provide the latest farm production technology and best possible service.

We thank you very much for your support.



Trudy McCann
AgInvest
0438 725008



Matt Witney
0488 298621



Tim Hofmaier
0488 298222



Edwina Simpson
0439 622867



Nick Zordan
0427 823062



Braydn Robertson
0438 976557

SW Victoria Update & Sowing Times (by Matt Barber)

Unfortunately for the South West, the dry finish last spring and little summer rainfall has thrown up some challenges for farmers this Autumn. Coupled with very limiting stock water issues, the region is also suffering from very low pasture reserves and fodder supplies. Consequently, there has been an increase in plantings of cereals for grazing along with many Annual grasses.

Long season wheat varieties, such as Revenue and Adagio, and grazing oat varieties, such as Outback and Forrester, along with barley varieties, such as Moby and Ranger, have all been sown by now, albeit sometimes difficult to secure. Some of these options will potentially give growers feed within 6-8 weeks, rain dependant.

The widespread areas of bare pasture have prompted many growers to dry sow varying varieties of Annual Ryegrass for both hay/silage production and winter feed. There have also been significant areas resown to permanent pastures. The choice of ryegrasses can be somewhat confusing due to the number of varieties on the market, so it's best to discuss with your agronomist the varieties available and individual quality traits.

From a cropping point of view, work primarily conducted by James Hunt (research scientist CSIRO) and some progressive farmers has shown that in the absence of huge frost risks, sowing cereal varieties early has significant yield advantages over sowing later.

Wimmera/Mallee Update (by Tim Hofmaier)

Working through farm plans this year we have observed that the majority of clients are taking a more cautious approach with a lot of cereals on cereals being planned and the canola area being reduced. The lentil area is definitely on the rise due to higher prices and good gross margins over the past two seasons.

This summer, we have seen above average rainfall for the months of January and February throughout the Wimmera/Mallee. Horsham has received 52mm, Nhill 86mm and Hopetoun 88mm. This has resulted in huge germinations numbers of Paddy and Camel Melons along with Caltrop (Bindis), Mint Weed and self-sown cereals.

Traditional 'Anzac Day' plantings have been challenged and already many wheat, bean and lupins have been sown (some kicked off in the first week of April!). There also seems to be advantages in sowing canola early as well with the best yields last year coming from those sown early. Some winter canola was sown in in March this year but the lack of rain has not seen much germinate.

The key message is to plant a particular variety within an optimal sowing window so that it will flower at its' optimum time for the area. For instance in the Streatham area the preferred flowering date is around the 16th of October. Below details some varieties and optimal sowing times to maximise potential yields.

Variety & Time of Sowing:

Wheat:

Manning & SQP Revenue
Early April to Late April
SF Adagio, Beaufort & Bolac
Late April to Early May
Kiora, Trojan & Derrimut
Late April to Mid-May

Barley:

Westminster & Grange R
Early May to Early June
Oxford & Rosalind
Early May to Mid-June

Canola:

Hyola 970 CL
Late March to Mid-April
Hyola 577CL, 45Y88CL, Hyola 650TT
& Wahoo TT
Mid-April to Early May

"...plant a particular variety within an optimal sowing window so it will flower at its' optimum time for the area."

This topic has challenged earlier beliefs that the ideal time of sowing for the Western District is from early May to the end of June. It is a great debate to have with your agronomist because there are many agronomic challenges, such as weed issues, chemical options and frost and disease risks that need to also be considered when planning a sowing program.

At the very least, if you are nervous about swinging your entire sowing program to an earlier sowing, than at least try some in consultation with your agronomist.



Clients have sprayed some paddocks twice with the loamy soils carrying the greatest growth of weeds. There have been issues with weed control due to stress and "in sprayer" wheel tracks due to dust. Good to note that poor control in wheel tracks has been overcome using twin nozzles behind boom spray wheels and higher water rates (70L/ha plus).



Paddy Melons and Mint Weed

As in previous years, spraying weeds early this summer has allowed us to retain moisture for the start of the cropping program which will help improve our yields for the season. With the cooler weather setting in, ryegrass and brome grass germinations have now been observed. It is important to get a good kill of these before sowing and to use an effective pre-emergent program. Over the last 5 years, we have seen that the earlier sown crops have been the best yielding crops as this allows the crop to get away and compete better with grasses.

Early sowing is still king!

Slugs in 2016 (by Ashley Perkins)

With such a dry previous 18 months, are slugs going to be an issue for the 2016 growing season?

Past experience has indicated that with significant rainfall events early this Autumn/Winter that they will be active so vigilance and proactive monitoring is required. It is also a pretty safe bet that paddocks that have had issues in the past are those most likely to be affected.

The Grey Field slug can emerge and start its breeding cycle with little early rainfall, where Black Keeled slugs require significantly more rain to emerge and start feeding on susceptible crops. Therefore, growers need to continue to monitor after crop emergence when soil moisture levels increase, even after bait has been applied to control Grey Field slugs.



In the past, tiles and bags have been placed in paddocks to monitor for slugs, but experience has found that the spreading of actual bait and checking for slugs the next day is probably a more reliable way to check for activity.

Factors that need to be considered in determining whether to bait, or not, and what type of bait to use include;

- The slug history of the paddock.
- The slug density, baits per m² is important.
- Weather conditions at spreading and forecast for the following 7 to 10 days after spreading.
- The amount of trash retained in the paddock.

Product options include;

Crop Care Meta (15g/kg metaldehyde). A grain based pellet that has a label rate of 5-7.5kg/ha. At the 5kg rate it delivers approx. 11 baits/m². This product breaks down very quickly in wet conditions therefore its best fit is as a bait prior to sowing susceptible crops as a knockdown or when used under dry conditions. Follow up applications may be required.

SlugOff Lentils (30g/kg metaldehyde). This product from ACTA has a 3kg/ha label rate which delivers approx. 30-33 baits/m². Because of its unique lentil shape it spreads evenly and is relatively dust free. It is relatively rain fast and has double the dose rate of metaldehyde than cheaper products.

SlugOut (18g/kg metaldehyde). From Crop Care, this product is an all-weather slug and snail bait which has been widely used throughout the Western District and has been extremely effective throughout this time. The label rate (10kg/ha) has approx. 130 baits/m². It has been proven to have greater resistance to mould and provides the greatest bait station per m² of the majority of the baits available and is registered in Australia.

AgNova Metarex (50g/kg metaldehyde). Is a highly palatable all weather slug and snail bait. At 5kgs/ha it provides 39 bait stations per m². In wet conditions it persists extremely well and has a very uniform size therefore spreads evenly. It has also performed well in HRZ's.

Metarex Micro (50g/kg metaldehyde). Also from AgNova, this has all the benefits of Metarex but has a smaller size (approximately the same as canola seed), it has been developed for direct drilling situations to be applied with the seed. This product is ideal where a partially or open furrow is left at sowing.

Boxer Gold Post-Em (by Nick Zordan)

Boxer gold is registered for Early Post-Em (EPE) application in wheat and barley to suppress Annual Ryegrass. The use of Boxer Gold (Group J & K) EPE should be used by growers as part of their current Integrated Weed Management (IWM) programs when the situation arises.

Early post emergent application of Boxer Gold can provide useful levels of suppression of Annual Ryegrass and is an option on Group A and Group B resistant Annual Ryegrass populations but, it should not be used as the primary means of control.



There are four key factors to get the most out of the application.

1. There must be good soil moisture
2. The crop must be no later than GS25
3. Ryegrass plants must be 1-3 leaves
4. There needs to be follow-up rain after application

The rate of application is 2.5L/ha which is around \$37.00/ha plus application, given the cost this treatment is often used strategically. It is best used in problem paddocks where other methods of control may not be an option; for example Pre-Em chemistry hasn't achieved acceptable results when dry sowing.

To give the chemical the best chance of working, many factors must be considered. The most important factor is receiving the follow up rain which washes the chemical into the root system and allows it to attack the weed.

Using boxer gold EPE is another tool for growers to have in their IWM toolbox and helps reduce plant numbers and therefore weed set of Annual Ryegrass.

Remember, ask your Agronomist if this is an option you may require and whether it can suit your program.

Spray Water Quality (by Michaela Alexander)

For the best results when spraying pesticides it is important to know what type of water you are using. Poor quality water can adversely affect your end result or cause your spray solution ending up as solid mess in your spray tank!

Qualities that should be known and can be tested for include; pH, total hardness, bicarbonate level and either total dissolved salts (TDS) or salinity (EC or electrical conductivity). Nufarm offer a free water testing service that has proven to be very popular, let us know if you wish to arrange testing.

Pesticide labels and technical notes often specify what type of water is suitable and if any additives are required. The table to the right summarises a range of common products & water quality use restrictions.

The pH at either extreme, highly alkaline or highly acidic can cause products to breakdown and/or potentially lead to gelling in the spray tank. The risk of gelling is more likely if products are left in the spray tank overnight. Companion® from SST is an acidifying and buffering product commonly used.

Hardness is a measure of the amount of cations (positive ions) such as calcium, magnesium, sodium, bicarbonates and iron in the water. This can cause products to breakdown or become inactive.

Bicarbonates particularly effect the efficacy of Group A herbicides such as Clethodim and Axial, as well as 2,4-D amine products. Using the higher label rates of these products can help as can the addition of ammonium sulphate. Salts can lead to chemical breakdown and inactivation. Saline water can also prevent water pH changes if correcting with Companion®. The only option to treating saline water is to dilute it and mix with clean water, or not use it for spraying at all. Muddy water has soil particles in suspension which in turn bind to chemical active ingredients affecting activity.

Glyphosate, Paraquat & Diquat are particularly at risk. If the soil particles are allowed/able to settle out, this may also lead to high levels of calcium and aluminium which can also react with chemicals.

In addition to water quality, temperature extremes can also affect stability of products in spray tanks. Hot weather can lead to chemical breakdown and cold weather can lead to mixes coagulating and potentially solidifying as well as having granular type formulations not readily dissolving.

Table 2 Herbicide tolerances to water qualities

Herbicide	Water quality				
	Muddy	Saline	Hard	Alkaline (> pH 8)	Acidic (< pH 5)
Affinity®	✓	✓	✓	X	NR
Ally®	✓	✓	✓	Marginal	X
Brodal®	✓	✓	X		
Dicamba	✓	✓	NR	NR	
Diuron	✓	Test	✓	✓	
Diuron + 2,4-D amine	✓	Test	X	NR	
Diuron + MCPA amine	✓	Test	X	NR	
Fusilade Forte	✓	✓	✓	NR	X
Glean®	✓	✓	✓	Marginal	X
Glyphosate	X	✓	X	✓	
Hoegrass®	✓	✓	✓	NR	✓
Logran®	✓	✓	✓	Marginal	X
Lontrel™	✓	✓	X	X	
Sertin®	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simazine	✓	X	✓	NR	
Spray-Seed®	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Targa®	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tigre®	✓	X	X	NR	
Trifluralin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Verdict®	✓	✓	✓	NR	✓
2,4-DB		X	NR		
2,4-D or MCPA amine	✓	✓	X	NR	
2,4-D or MCPA ester	✓	Test	Test	✓	✓

Key: ✓ = OK; X = Do not use; NR = Not recommended but use quickly if there is no alternative; Test = Mix herbicides and water in proportion and observe any instability; Marginal = Not ideal, but acceptable

Source: Weed Control in Winter Crops, 2011 – NSW DPI

Deep N Soil Testing (by Edwina Simpson)

Deep N soil testing measures the amount of nitrogen (N) available to the crop at the time of testing. It is the sum of nitrogen that has broken down by mineralisation from the soil organic carbon as well as recent inputs of fertiliser N.

Why Deep N Test?

Deep N soil tests taken in crop are an excellent guide for topdressing decisions. They can also provide insight into other factors affecting crop production such as plant available water and potential for any sub soil constraints. This enables more accurate decisions to be made regarding how much nitrogen is required to meet a target yield and quality parameters.

Knowing the nitrogen demand of crops is essential in determining how much nitrogen to apply and demand can vary according to;

1. Crop type
2. Crop health
3. Growth stage
4. Seasonal conditions
5. Paddock history

It is important to keep in mind other factors affecting crop yield potential. Significant factors include;

- Soil moisture
- Weeds, diseases and other nutrient deficiencies
- Soil constraints affecting plant root growth.

What are the benefits of testing?

The aim is to maximize nitrogen use efficiency with the right product in the right place, at the right time and at the right rate. Interpretation of deep N soil tests as well as understanding other contributing factors can help to achieve the most cost effect N applications. Although we can't control the weather, a deep N soil test will help to make informed decisions about your in-crop fertiliser applications.

Early Post-Em options for Broadleaves in Cereals (by Matt Witney)

With the 2016 sowing season underway, it is important to start considering early post emergent broadleaf herbicide options, and to monitor paddocks closely to avoid broadleaf weeds from competing with cereals, which slows down crop vigour, compete for nutrients and precious water, which is all required for yield.

We need to look at previous chemical history, potential resistance, herbicide carryover, weed species and pressure, farm budgets, crop effect, climatic conditions and farming methods. More importantly, we need to achieve the best “return on investment”, which means achieving a great result on the weeds, with minimum crop damage while avoiding potential herbicide resistance.

For example, a low cost treatment of commonly used Group I + B herbicides such as MCPA LVE, Ally and Lontrel will be the most cost effective on easy to kill weeds, but there is increasing resistance to these herbicides, particularly Group B. Another common treatment, Tigrex (Group F+I), is also starting to struggle on problem weeds such as wild radish due to resistance. It is important to look at the alternatives which can be softer on the crop and yet harder on weeds.

Triathlon, from Adama has 3 Modes of action (Group F+I+C). It has registration for use on wheat, barley and triticale and active on 47 weeds. It can be sprayed from 3 leaf to fully tillered crop and provides residual control for up to 4 weeks. It has good crop safety and is a great rotational option.

Velocity from Bayer (Group H + C) is registered for wheat and barley from 2 leaf. Velocity is very safe and robust in dry conditions and in high weed pressure situations. It is a good tool for early self-sown canola control in cereals; you can spray cereals early before the crop suffers from toxicity effects from bio fumigation. It controls 28 target weeds including Bifora, Bedstraw, Bindweed, Wireweed, Amsinkia and Radish.

Precept also from Bayer (Group H + I) is registered for wheat, oats and triticale from 3 leaf and barley from 5 leaf. Precept is a good safe option for oats, and is more cost effective than Velocity if Bifora isn't prevalent.



Paradigm from DOW (Group I + B) is registered for use on wheat, triticale, barley and oats from 3 leaf and from 5 leaf when tank mixing with high rates of LVE MCPA 570. This is also a great herbicide where Bifora is present, and is great for use on Oats.



Unity from Crop Care (Group G and I) when mixed with MCPA 750).

Registered on wheat, barley, oats and triticale. Unity treatment is very strong on all hard to kill weeds including Bifora, Sheep Weed and particularly Marshmallow.

Vortex from Adama (Group I + B) is expecting registration soon. For use on barley, wheat and triticale from 5 leaf as cost effective alternative to Paradigm (not suitable for use on oats). It is also not as effective on Bifora as Paradigm. Vortex has a low residual Group B, and has a fit where early weed control wasn't able to occur, and where difficult to control weeds are present such as Bindweed, Bedstraw, Wild Radish, Capeweed, Wild Vetch and pulses.

New Products (by Braydn Robertson)

There have been a number of new crop protection products released and extended registrations of existing that will be available to clients this year. These changes can certainly be hard to keep track of and below is a review of a number of the more significant developments.

Systiva (333g/L Fluxapyroxad).

A new SDHI group fungicide seed dressing from BASF registered in barley and wheat. Systiva provides excellent control of Spot Form of Net Blotch (SFNB), Net Form of Net Blotch (NFNB), Scald, Powdery Mildew and Rust in barley as well as seed borne diseases. Systiva is unique in that it is able to provide protection on SFNB, NFNB and scald up until the heading stage of the crop.



Sharpen (700g/kg Saflufenacil).

Sharpen WG herbicide is expecting a label extension in August this year. Registered for in crop use in wheat and for desiccation of pulses is expected. Its main use in these situations is for the late control of Wild Radish and can be used from the milky doe stage in wheat.



Sharpen is a systemic herbicide and is able to provide good control of Radish that is beginning to produce pods. The other advantage is that it is a Group G which helps to reduce the resistance pressure on Group B and I herbicides which have been extensively used for late broadleaf weed control in cereals.

Gramoxone 360 Pro (360g/L Paraquat). Gramoxone Pro is a higher loading Paraquat and a replacement for Gramoxone 250. It contains 30% more Paraquat, therefore 30% less product is needed for the same results i.e. 1L/ha of Gramoxone 250 = 700ml/ha of Gramoxone 360. With the higher loading of Paraquat in the formula, it contains no adjuvant, so this must be added. Chemwet, Companion, and Hasten are all good mixing options.

Pyrinex Super (400g/L Chlorpyrifos and 20g/L Bifenthrin) from Adama is a mix of the active ingredients in Lorsban and Talstar. It provides wide spectrum insect control, dual modes of action plus the convenience of being pre mixed. It works best as a bare earth treatment after sowing crops and pastures. The grazing and cutting withholding period is 4 weeks.

Can Lentils be grown in SW Vic? (by guest editor Janine Souness - PBSeeds HSM)

In Australia, lentil production is typically confined to the cropping regions in NW Victoria, mid-North and the Yorke Peninsula in South Australia, where soils are alkaline. Lentils have been grown successfully in these areas for the past 20 years, often achieving high gross margins for growers. Market prices fluctuate according to international supply and demand ranging between \$400/t to \$1000/t, and a record high of \$1500/t has occurred in the past few months. These high returns have now generated interest in lentil production outside the traditional growing areas.

In the past few years, PBSeeds has supplied PBA lentil variety seed and monitored research and grower trials of these lentils grown on acid soils in southern NSW. In 2015, PBSeeds visited a number of commercial lentil growers' crops, some yield results are shown below:

The yields and grain quality achieved by these growers are similar to yields achieved in traditional lentil cropping areas, which has further encouraged NSW growers to expand production in 2016. Through past knowledge and insights gained from this region, we suggest that there are opportunities for growing lentils on acid soils providing some key issues can be addressed:

The most important factor for lentils are:

1. WELL DRAINED SOILS:

In areas where rainfall is higher water needs to be freely draining through the lentil root zone

2. SOIL ACIDITY:

Most of the paddocks where NSW growers were trialling lentils had a good cropping history which included canola in the rotation and thus a regular liming program. Minimising effects of soil aluminium and manganese toxicity through liming may be an important factor.

3. PADDOCK SELECTION:

Grow in the best paddock and ensure good weed control. Check if there may be potential chemical residue problems from prior crops. Only "XT lentil varieties" (Hurricane XT and Herald XT) have Imidazolinone and Sulfonylurea residue tolerances.

4. USE DISEASE RESISTANT VARIETIES:

Jumbo2 and Herald XT red lentil have high disease resistance

5. INOCULATE WITH RHIZOBIUM:

Ensure inoculation is successful

6. USE PREVENTATIVE FUNGICIDE & CONTROL PESTS:

Apply pre-canopy closure fungicide (minimum) and monitor/spray if conditions favour high disease and insect pressure in spring

7. HARVEST ON TIME:

Lentils are a food crop so quality is paramount. Timely harvest is vital.

LOCATION	LENTIL VARIETY	SOIL pH (CaCl)	GRAIN YIELD (t/ha)
Parkes	Ace	5.5	1.1 t/ha
Junee	Ace Hurricane XT	4.5 - 5	1.1 t/ha 1.4 t/ha
Urana *this paddock had variable soil type – some with problem sodicity	Ace	5.5	1 t/ha
Holbrook a) good deep river flat soil b) heavier clay soil on hill slope	a) Ace & Hurricane XT b) Ace	5.5	3 t/ha 1 t/ha
West Wyalong	Ace	6	2 t/ha



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The information contained in this AG Note is to be used as a guide only and specific information needs to be sought from the authors regarding individual situations. Western AG Supplies takes all care in compiling this information. However Western AG Supplies accepts no liability for any loss or damage suffered by any person who relies on this information.

Tri-Solfen & Avenge from Bayer Animal Health (by Leigh Walters)

Tri-Solfen

Western AG is now able to supply Tri-Solfen which is the first product to address the animal welfare concerns of mulesing. It provides pain relief through two active ingredients, Lignocaine, for immediate pain relief, and Bupivacaine, for longer lasting (24 hr) post-operative pain relief. The product also contains Adrenaline, which reduces the risk of shock and blood loss.



Tri-Solfen is a gel formulation that adheres to the wound area acting as a barrier to the elements and reducing the risk of infection. Application is made easy with the spray applicator, and each spray distributes 2ml of product. Tri-Solfen dosage is based on weight, with the recommended minimum weight being 6kg.

It is not recommended that high volumes of fly treatment are used in conjunction with Tri-Solfen due to the likelihood of it being washed off the wound.

Tri-Solfen does have a withholding period (WHP) of 90 days for meat and it is not advised to be used in lactating ewes where milk or milk products may be used for human consumption.

Tri-Solfen comes in 3 different pack sizes, 1L, 5L and 20L.

Avenge

Avenge is another important animal health product supplied by Western AG as it is the only pour on lice knock down that provides 4 week residual protection. It is also 100% effective on all strains of lice, including those resistant to other chemicals.

It can be applied just 7 days after shearing and can be used on unshorn lambs up to the age of 2 months. This product has been tested in various rainfall conditions and proved to be effective on sheep before and after treatment.

Avenge has stringent WHP's that must be adhered to. These are;

Meat:

DO NOT USE less than 21 days before slaughter for human consumption.

Milk:

DO NOT USE on female sheep who are producing or possibly could produce milk in the future for human consumption.

Wool:

DO NOT USE less than 6 months before shearing or fibre collection.

Export:

DO NOT slaughter for export less than 63 after treatment.



Business Update (by Ashley Miller)

Store Upgrades:

Western Ag are continually trying to improve the services that we provide to our clients. This year will see the continuing development of our Branch network across the regions we service, particularly Willaura and Kaniva.

Kaniva

Our newest Branch has been operating since late in 2015 and is undergoing final fitout and stocking of all input products. Please feel free to drop in and see the changes as we are sure that they will make visiting the store a much better experience.



Willaura

After many years of planning and development, the Willaura Branch has gone under a serious upgrade to allow Animal Health and General Merchandise products to be stored properly and made available. This has entailed a new purpose built display area and shopfront being constructed. We expect the final touches to be complete in the next few weeks.



Publication Distribution:

Courtesy of Australia Post mailing cost increases, we are aiming at providing our AG Notes to customers via email moving forward. If you are happy enough to provide your current email address to your closest store, or to your agronomist, we can then ensure you receive all our publications in the most efficient manner possible. However, you can still choose to have them mailed if this is your preference.