

Tyfu Cymru: Technical Advice Sheet

Strawberry April 2020



General Comments

As the weather is starting to warm, now is the time to start looking at your strawberries and check their condition before the season starts. Get up to a high view point and look out over your whole crop – look for a healthy, uniform green colour and watch out for any dry patches. You should also check your drippers to make sure none are blocked, and you should begin to monitor the electrical conductivity (EC) of your feed water and runoff daily. As you start feeding the water in the slabs will be displaced so you should see a steady rise in EC – you should be looking at 1.5m/S (or 1500µ/S) in the runoff, and certainly above 1m/s. You should aim to record this often, and keep a record to track changes over time. If crops have been overwintered on the ground these should be lifted up and put on tables. Check for vine weevil [larvae](#), and treat with a nematode drench if required.

COVID-19

The current situation is having a wide range of impacts on the sector, and while farm shops are reporting an increase in trade pick-your-own growers may be facing limited access to customers. Social media can be used for selective advertising (especially if PYO growers are selling punnets) and may also be useful for managing crowds once we return to normal. PYO growers may wish to delay their crops (either by delaying plantings or checking the crop by leaving tunnels uncovered). You may also wish to check that you have adequate supplies and order ahead of time, particularly of chemicals and biologicals, to make sure you can keep control over the season.

Pest & Disease Management

Start to think about your pest and disease management strategy. Good spray coverage and an early start to regular weekly sprays can be key. Early applications before the canopy has developed can also improve efficacy. You may also wish to consider preventative sprays (e.g. Charm and Luna Sensation) although you should check for a mixture of FRAC codes to prevent resistance development, and watch out for maximum treatment numbers and harvest intervals.

Powdery Mildew

Look out for signs of leaf curling in your crop as this may be an early sign of powdery mildew, and there are early signs in Elegance, Elsanta, Centenary, Vibrant and Flair. There is a higher risk of PM with higher humidity as tunnels are starting to dry out from the winter, or in tunnels with tall grass under benches – grass can be burnt off with a Roundup spray, but only if the plastic has not yet been put on. You should begin PM sprays now to ensure robust control later. Systhane is a good choice and Talius is available under EAMU (0210/17), a spray should be put on every two-three weeks, although this could be increased if disease pressures are high, and within a week of first planting. Should a bad infestation develop, this can be treated with a remedial spray of bicarb.



Leaves below showing typical cupping associated with early signs of powdery mildew

Aphids

You should be regularly inspecting from aphids. For overwintered plants, these will congregate in the centre of plants – look out for curled up plants as an early warning. Batavia can be a good product to use (spirotetramat 100g/l, 1l/ha max), although it can be used no later than 14 days before flowering and can only be used twice per year, although it is reported to be safe for beneficials unlike other products such as Hallmark. Control is best achieved through biological control (e.g. *Aphidius*) and these can be applied as conditions warm.



Mites

You should also look out for mites on the backs of leaves, especially on older leaves, using a hand lens. Overwintered mites emerging from hibernation will appear brick red and these can be difficult to control, so it is best to target eggs and young motiles. Some acaricides are available i.e. Envidor (EAMU 1600/17) and Apollo 50SC (clofentezine) which can be used for early control, however before use consult EAMU 0620/18, which permits the use of this acaricide in strawberries as there are specific restrictions as to the method of application & HI that apply to use on outdoor and the protected crop. However, effective control is best achieved using *Phytoseiulus* so you should aim to get this established in your crop as conditions warm towards May – but you should check on supplies now.



Crown Rot & Red Core

Crown rot is more of a concern in newly planted crops. Check new plants for bright orange colouring in the crown before planting. You should also periodically open slabs to check the roots are a strong white colour. Paraat can be applied only as a drench, but it has a 35 day harvest interval. Phosphites can also suppress spread (e.g. Hortiphyte).

Weed Control

Check for weeds early in field planted crops as these will be harder to control later. As soil crops break dormancy products like Stomp, Wing P and Shark are likely to scorch the crop. However, an early season application of Wing P can be made immediately after planting a new crop to control fresh weeds. Centurion Max can be used for grass weeds e.g. couch grass, annual meadow grass under EAMU (3640/19) but needs to be used before flowering. This may scorch the crop a little but early application avoids flower/fruit damage, and won't impact the crop unless it's very weak to start with. Dow Shield can be used for may weed, groundsel, and will check dandelions. This works well when weather is warm (unlike residuals like Wing P) that are best when damp (but lasting 4-5 weeks) after which pre-flowering Dual Gold application can be used for topping up.

Disclaimer

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of information and recommendations given in these notes. All applications of crop protection chemicals should be made in accordance with label recommendations, which should be consulted before spraying. Some of the pesticides mentioned in these notes may not be supported by label recommendations for their use on pumpkin crops but are permissible via Extension of Authorisation for Minor Use (EAMU) in the UK under 'The Revised Long Term Arrangements For Extension Of Use (2002)'. In these cases, the use of the pesticide is at the risk of the user and Tyfu Cymru does not accept liability for any loss or damage caused by such use. The references to on-label approvals and EAMUs for use of pesticides in pumpkin crops and are correct at the time of writing. These are subject to change and approval may be withdrawn at any point. It is the grower's responsibility to check approvals before use of pesticides. If in doubt a grower should seek advice from a BASIS qualified advisor - this is available free of charge for eligible growers through the Tyfu Cymru program, please contact us to arrange an appointment – email/telephone advice is also available.