

Year-on-year moisture benefits at Pingelly

PINGELLY grower Robert Lee said serious croppers wouldn't buy a tractor without GPS autosteer today and, where required, he considers including SE14 moisture attraction and retention agent at seeding the same way.

Mr Lee and his brother Michael, located on another property near Bullaring, have used SE14 from SACOA for the past three seasons and Mr Lee said they were capturing benefits every year.

"If you've got some non-wetting issues, it's the product to go for," Mr Lee said.

"For \$14 per hectare, it doesn't take much to get that back.

"We now see it like using UAN at seeding – growers know it's viable and that they need to do it if they want to be on the ball."

Mr Lee said they noticed the crop difference from the first year of SE14 application, compared to where it was not used in some seeding strips to effectively assess its performance.

"We could see the mark from when the crop came up, all the way through to flowering," he said.

"Where it was not used, the crop was slower, thinner and the yield was surprisingly looking less all year.

"It looked like the germinations were 20 per cent better and that's why we knocked back our seeding rates.

"Lupins came back from 100 kilograms to 80kg.

"Some people don't think we sow

our wheat at 75kg because it's so thick, but that's what SE14 has done.

"Getting crops out of the ground is the biggest thing.

"This year our crops are again greener and healthier.

"We have barley coming out in ear and it's charging along.

"We are noticing the benefits in the drier conditions this year – the crops are green as green.

"We had a blockage in our paired-row boot this year and we dug down recently and the crop in the other row had moisture underneath, but where the row was blocked it was as dry as a bone."

The Lees recorded 51 millimetres of rainfall in February, only 8mm in March and 7mm in April – with a total of 173mm since April, whereas normally they would average close to 300mm.

Mr Lee said even germination and establishment helped improved weed control.

"Instead of waiting until a critical stage to spray, it is good to know that the crop can all be at two-leaf, the weeds are two to 15 days behind and we can go out and smash the ryegrass and not hurt the crop," he said.

The Lees crop 2800 hectares of diverse soils ranging from heavy red granite through to Christmas tree sands.

Wheat forms the bulk of the program and they also grow barley, canola,

lupins, oats for sheep feed and clover.

The main crop rotation includes a cereal followed by lupins or canola, then another cereal followed by two years of pasture.

Canola is grown only when lupins are excluded due to soil type.

Mr Lee said SE14 was first considered due to germination problems on sandy and loamy country with non-wetting soils.

The recognised wxy lupins caused non-wetting and clover harvesting on dry soils exacerbated issues as well.

"We were looking at solutions and would have had to spade or mould-board plough, but we didn't believe we had the right soil for that," Mr Lee said.

Transitioning into the banding of liquid fertilisers has advanced the application of the SE14 moisture attraction and retention agent, made possible by upgrading to a 19,000 litre Bourgault seeding rig incorporating a 3500L liquid tank.

Applications are managed via a John Deere rate controller in the manufacturer's 9530 four-wheel-drive tractor and delivered by the Friction Flow system from Furrow Management Systems Australia, ensuring accurate and even metering across the seeding bar.

Mr Lee said four tanks allowed flexibility of product applications.

"With wheat, for example, we can have the compound fertiliser in one



Robert Lee, Pingelly, checks on the development of canola sown with SE14 from SACOA, which this season was included in a mix with UAN liquid fertiliser and trace elements.

tank, liquid in a tank and the wheat in two tanks," he said.

SE14 is banded at two litres per hectare with all grain crops and this year was included in a mix with UAN liquid nitrogen for the first time at 30L/ha as well as copper, zinc and manganese at 0.5L/ha, topped up with water to a 50L/ha solution.

"On some country with rhizoctonia issues, we also tipped in some Uniform (fungicide) when sowing wheat, and we used EverGol Energy for rhizoctonia and smut with the barley," Mr Lee said.

"It was easy not having to pickle grain and it all flowed well and was easy to apply."

He said banding the UAN with the SE14 this season was a 'game changer'. "Together, they have made a massive difference," he said.

"The crops germinate, the SE14 and UAN is right there and they jump out

of the ground and are away.

"Then the roots grow sideways and they find more."

The SE14 and UAN mix is banded with the seed at the back of 75mm Agmaster paired-row boots, set at 25-centimetre (10in) spacings across the bar, followed by compound fertiliser placed a maximum 2.5cm away, but next to the seed.

An MAP and muriate of potash fertiliser mix is used with cereals at 80kg/ha, also to assist the clover production and which has helped maintain good grain quality even in dry finishing seasons.

An NPS compound fertiliser is used with the lupins at 50kg/ha.

Mr Lee said he believed the SE14 was helping to increasingly retain moisture in subsequent years and with the narrow spacings and paired-row boots, following crops were being sown close to furrows from the previous season.



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