

Grower Apdate

ISSUE 43 - DECEMBER 2021

Funded by Burdekin Canegrowers and Wilmar Sugar

Welcome to the December issue of our BPS newsletter. We hope you find the articles contained in this issue informative.



This issue contains:

2021 Christmas Message

Variety Selection Considerations

Approved Seed Cane Orders for 2022 Planting

2021 Variety Trial Results

Dual Herbicide Sprayer

Fall Armyworm Update

View From the Fields – Nematodes and Pachymetra

Opticane Update

Vehicles for Sale

Staff Contacts

The Board, Management and Staff of BPS would like to wish all growers and industry members a merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year.

The BPS office will close at 4pm Thursday
December 23 and will reopen at 7 am Tuesday
January 4.

KEY DATES

Seed Cane Orders – February 25, 2022

RSD Testing – minimum 3 weeks before planting

Soil Testing – minimum 4 weeks before planting; the earlier the better

2021 CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

With 2021 drawing to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all BPS members a very merry Christmas. While this year has certainly had its challenges, it is worth taking the time to reflect on the year that we have just experienced and learn from the challenges and celebrate the positives.

2021 saw the start of a revised strategic plan from BPS — every 3 years the strategic plan is reviewed by staff, BPS members, industry groups and the BPS board of directors. While there were no major changes to the strategy, there were some inclusions to ensure BPS management and staff provide services that will improve members' productivity, profitability and sustainability. The strategy revolves around 5 key areas of focus in order of priority:

- 1. Minimise pest and disease pressure through supply of approved seed cane and crop monitoring
- 2. Delivery of a focused advisory service to growers using all staff
- 3. Adoption of technology to advance industry efficiencies
- 4. Communicate and use data to improve productivity and profitability
- 5. Administration practices based on sound corporate governance and secure fiscal planning.

Prior to the strategy being formally adopted, all grower collectives as well as a random selection of growers and industry partners were engaged to endorse the strategic plan. The BPS Board and management find this process very important to ensure that all members and industry partners support the strategic direction of BPS. All staff report on activities they have undertaken that contribute to the strategic plan so that the board and management have confidence the industry endorsed strategy is being delivered.

Some of the highlights of activities throughout the year are below:

- Over 5000 T of approved seed cane distributed
- Over 200 plant source inspections conducted for growers
- Over 1300 RSD tests conducted
- Over 350 soil tests and independent fertiliser recommendations
- 150 variety management recommendations
- 147 growers were assisted with disease management
- 253 grower interactions around biosecurity and farm hygiene
- 65 pump flow tests
- 25 grower trials harvested (variety, nutrition, legumes, soil health)
- 43 growers set up on IrrigWeb (free online irrigation scheduling and record keeping software)
- 86 growers supported on Agtrix (free farm record keeping software)
- 18 new growers accredited through Smartcane BMP, taking total number of accredited hectares to over 25 000 Ha.

I urge all members to take advantage of the vast range of services that your 7 c/T levy covers.

The biggest challenge by far this year was dealing with an increase of RSD in the region on farms. There was also the detection of RSD on 3 approved seed cane plots. In two of these cases, consensus is that machinery movement was the vector for transmission of RSD — a good reminder that on farm hygiene is the most important part of RSD management. There have been a lot of questions raised around RSD testing, a few key points to consider are:

- Testing is only a small part of RSD management, on farm hygiene is far more important
- Testing is highly subsidised by SRA (\$2.20), and BPS does not charge growers (some other productivity services do charge their members) anything for RSD tests the test is the same type of test for COVID-19 which costs around \$150.

• When a sample is taken from a 20 Ha block, we are only sampling 16 stalks – this represents 1 in 115 000 stalks of the whole paddock being sampled.

- Chances of detection in such a small sample size are low; so just because an RSD test comes back negative (i.e. no RSD), it does not mean the block has zero RSD
- Initially RSD tests were conducted by far less sensitive methods that relied on human interpretation/observation (slicing and microscope) which resulted in missed positive samples and lower accuracy. The introduction of an automated and highly sensitive test has coincided with the increase in RSD positive results in the district
- If growers would like an RSD test on their potential plant sources for 2022, contact your BPS Field
 Officer with at least 3 weeks' notice prior to planting so the test can be collected and sent away for
 analysis.

Looking at the months ahead, it appears we may be in for a wet summer. Hopefully the weather is kind to us and there is enough rain to save some irrigations, but also enough fine weather to grow next year's crop and control weeds and volunteers in fallow blocks.

I wish all BPS members the best over the festive season, hope there is opportunity for some down time to spend with your loved ones, and look forward to a productive 2022.

Rob Milla

December 2021

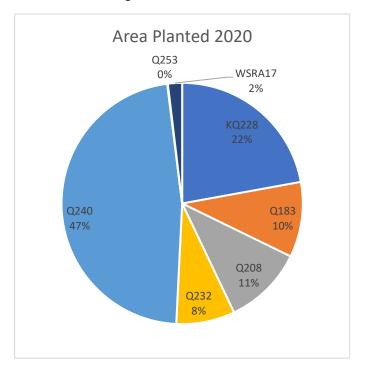
VARIETY SELECTION CONSIDERATIONS

BPS field staff are currently out and about collecting farm crop data. Apart from the standard collation of pest and disease occurrence and damage, there are other important components of this process to consider. Two of these are to firstly track seed sources for all varieties and crop classes on each farm and secondly, to gain an understanding of variety distribution district wide, which can then be compared to overall yield in terms of tonnes of sugar per hectare.

From the data collected thus far, it is apparent that Q240 has become the dominant variety throughout the district. In 2021, Q240 accounted for approximately 41% of the harvested area, and 43% of the tonnes delivered. In the Invicta mill area, those percentages are 47% and 50% respectively. When a single variety dominates the mix, there is the risk of variety specific disease occurring. The effects of such an occurrence will be accentuated if a well-balanced mix of varieties is not maintained. Ideally, a good farming system will include a mix of several varieties in proportionate quantities.

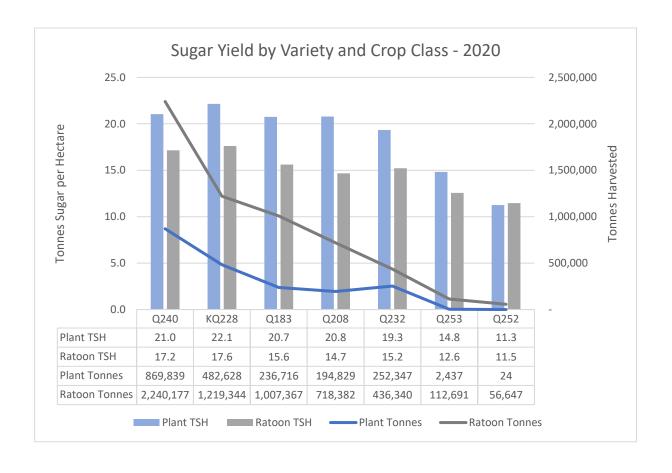
Below is a pie chart of district area planted in 2020 where Q240 figured prominently at 47%. At time of printing 2021 planting data was unavailable. Plantings of Q240 outstripped that of the next most popular variety KQ228, by 113%.

Area and Percentage of Varieties Planted in 2020



Variety	Area Planted (ha)
Q240	5946
KQ228	2787
Q208	1348
Q183	1269
Q232	989
WSRA17	239
Q253	11
Total	12589

When we consider crop yield (tonnes of sugar per hectare), KQ228 was the best performing variety district-wide during the 2020 harvest. This is largely driven by KQ228 being grown on the more fertile delta soils, compared to Q240 which is grown on a wider range of soils.



APPROVED SEED CANE ORDERS FOR 2022 PLANTING

Now is the time to think about next year's plantings on your farm. If they have not done so already, BPS staff will be visiting for the annual crop data collection. This is the opportunity to have a serious discussion about varietal mix on your farm, what varieties are suited to particular soil zones and how to produce early sugar, mid-season sugar and late season sugar.

Seed cane purchases will form part of this discussion and we are pleased to inform all plots have been planted for the 2022 planting season and the clean seed looks impressive.

Following is a chart of plots and varieties available for purchase in 2022. Please ensure that seed cane orders are submitted to your field officer by **February 25, 2022**.

Note: Only plant cane is available as approved seed cane from the Inkerman plot as the entire plot was ploughed out in 2021 due to RSD infection.

Burdekin Approved Cane Plots – 2022

Plot	Location Owner		Varieties Plant Cane	Varieties First Ratoon			
	Mother and Distribution Plots						
Inkerman Plot	Home Hill	Inkerman Cane Growers	Q183, Q208, KQ228, Q240, WSRA17, SRA23	N/A			
P & K Plot (Pioneer & Kalamia)	Ayr	PCGO & KALAGRO	Q183, Q208, KQ228, Q232, Q240, WSRA17, SRA23	Q183, Q208, Q232 Q240, WSRA17, SRA23			
Brock Rd Plot	Clare	AgForce Cane. Lease to BPS	Q183, Q208, KQ228, Q240, WSRA17, SRA23	Q183, Q208, KQ228, Q232, Q240, WSRA17, SRA23			
Christensen Plot	Ayr	Christensen	Q240, SRA23	Q240, SRA23			
		Distribution Plots					
Rapisarda Plot	Clare	Rapisarda	Q240, SRA23	N/A			
Millaroo Plot	Millaroo	AgForce Cane. Lease to BPS	Q183, Q208, Q240, WSRA17, SRA23	Q183, Q208, Q240, WSRA17, SRA23			
Giru Plot	Giru	Lyons	Q183, Q208, KQ228, Q240, WSRA17, SRA23	Q183, Q208, KQ228, Q240, WSRA17, SRA23			

2021 VARIETY TRIAL RESULTS

Four variety trials were harvested in the 2021 season. These were plant cane at Inkerman, second ratoon at Mulgrave, third ratoon at Millaroo and fourth ratoon at the Upper Haughton.

BPS would like to thank all of the participating growers and their harvesting crews for their assistance with the variety trial program.

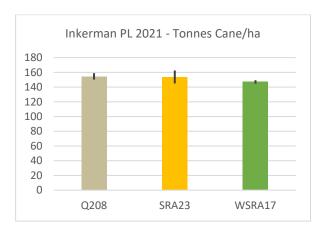
The trial results for each site include the harvest results from this year as well as the cumulative results over the life of the trial. The black lines on the graphs for the 2021 results show the range of results, that is the lowest and highest yield for each variety.

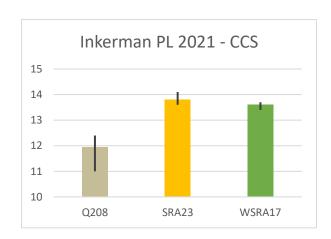
For the 2021 returns a sugar price of \$450/t has been used; for the cumulative results over all years of the trial a sugar price of \$400/t was used. Harvesting and levies have been set at \$8.50/t.

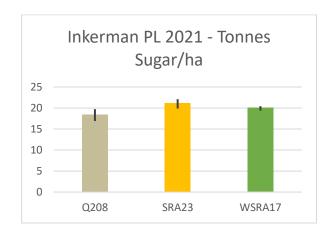
Inkerman - Plant Cane

- Q208 and SRA23 outperformed WSRA17 for tonnes of cane per hectare
- CCS was very similar for SRA23 and WSRA17, and well ahead of Q208
- SRA23 was the highest tonnes of sugar, followed by WSRA17; Q208 was well behind due to the low CCS
- \$/ha return reflected the tonnes of sugar –
 SRA23, then WSRA17 and Q208 last

Variety	TCH	ccs	TSH	\$ Return*
Q208	154	11.9	18.4	3750
SRA23	153	13.8	21.2	4886
WSRA17	147	13.6	20.0	4574





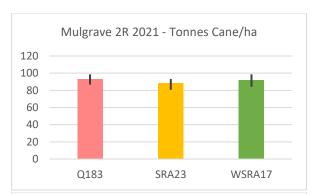


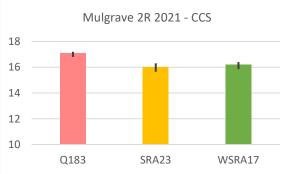
Mulgrave - 2nd Ratoon

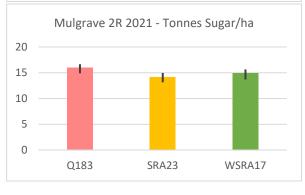
2021 Results

- Q183 and WSRA17 both had higher tonnes cane/ha than SRA23
- Q183 was a unit of CCS higher than the others
- Q183 had the best tonnes of sugar/ha with 1 t/ha more than WSRA17 and nearly 2 t/ha better than SRA23; this is also reflected in the \$/ha return

Variety	TCH	ccs	TSH	\$ Return*
Q183	93	17.1	15.9	4213
SRA23	88	16.0	14.1	3594
WSRA17	92	16.2	14.9	3817







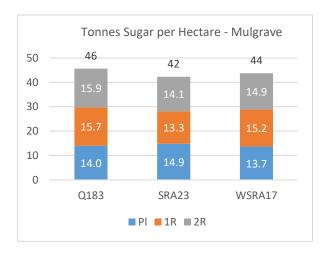
Cumulative Results

- Cane yield was slightly higher this year than last year. Over the trial so far, WSRA17 has the highest total tonnes of cane (269), which is slightly better than Q183 (266).
- Q183 has consistently had the best CCS averaging about a unit better than WSRA17 and SRA23.

Tonnes Cane/ha						
Variety Pl 1R 2R Total						
Q183	84	88	93	266		
SRA23	92	82	88	262		
WSRA17	88	89	92	269		

ccs						
Variety Pl 1R 2R Average						
Q183	16.6	17.8	17.1	17.2		
SRA23	16.1	16.2	16.0	16.1		
WSRA17	15.6	17.0	16.2	16.3		

Tonnes Sugar/ha					
Variety Pl 1R 2R Total					
Q183	14.0	15.7	15.9	46	
SRA23	14.9	13.3	14.1	42	
WSRA17	13.7	15.2	14.9	44	

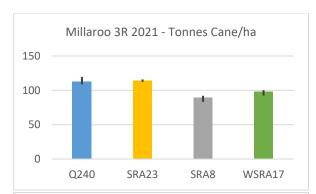


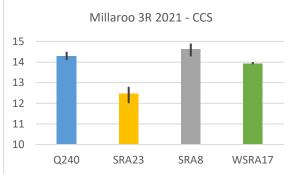
Millaroo - 3rd Ratoon

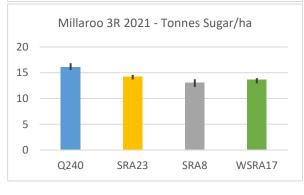
2021 Results

- Q240 and SRA23 had the best tonnes cane/ha; SRA8 had the lowest and was more than 20 t/ha behind the best two varieties
- Conversely, SRA8 had the best CCS, closely followed by Q240. SRA23 was the lowest being nearly 2 units behind the best performers.
- Overall Q240 had the best \$/ha return;
 SRA23 had the lowest return, despite having the highest cane yield, because of the low CCS

Variety	TCH	ccs	TSH	\$ Return*
Q240	112	14.3	16.1	3808
SRA23	114	12.5	14.2	3017
SRA8	89	14.6	13.0	3136
WSRA17	98	13.9	13.6	3162







Cumulative Results

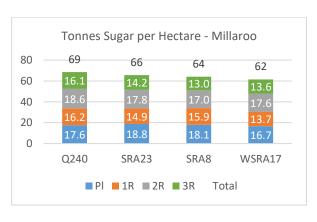
- Over the four years of the trial Q240 has the highest tonnes of cane and WSRA17 has the lowest.
- Average CCS is very similar across all varieties.
- Tonnes sugar/ha and \$/ha return have followed the tch trend.

Tonnes Cane/ha					
Variety Pl 1R 2R 3R Total					
Q240	108	110	123	112	454
SRA23	113	100	122	114	449
SRA8	110	111	115	89	425
WSRA17	101	94	116	98	409

ccs							
Variety	Pl	1R	2R	3R	Average		
Q240	16.3	14.7	15.2	14.3	15.1		
SRA23	16.7	14.9	14.6	12.5	14.7		
SRA8	16.4	14.3	14.9	14.6	15.0		
WSRA17	16.5	14.6	15.1	13.9	15.0		

Tonnes Sugar/ha						
Variety PI 1R 2R 3R Total						
Q240	17.6	16.2	18.6	16.1	68.5	
SRA23	18.8	14.9	17.8	14.2	65.7	
SRA8	18.1	15.9	17.0	13.0	64.1	
WSRA17	16.7	13.7	17.6	13.6	61.5	

Cumulative Return \$/ha							
Variety TCH CCS \$ Return*							
Q240	454	15.1	14604				
SRA23	449	14.7	13691				
SRA8	425	15.0	13582				
WSRA17	409	15.0	13024				

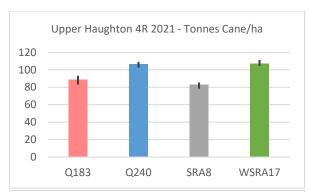


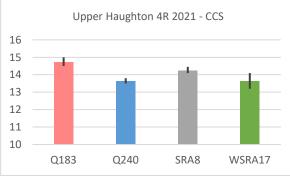
Upper Haughton – 4th Ratoon

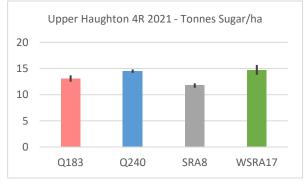
2021 Results

- Q240 and WSRA17 had the best cane yield and identical and lowest CCS. SRA8 had both the lowest yield and lowest TSH.
- Q183 had the best CCS but was behind by 19 t/ha on cane yield.
- \$/ha return was best for Q240 and WSRA17, followed by Q183 with SRA8 being the worst.

Variety	TCH	ccs	TSH	\$ Return*
Q183	88	14.7	13.0	3149
Q240	107	13.6	14.5	3323
SRA8	83	14.2	11.8	2786
WSRA17	107	13.6	14.6	3348







Cumulative Results

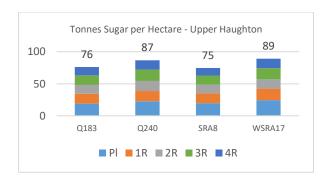
- Over the five years of the trial WSRA17 has the highest cane yield (650 t/ha), followed by Q240 (613), SRA8 (536) and then Q183 (532).
- Average CCS for all varieties was between 13.9 (WSRA17) and 14.5 (Q183).
- Despite having a slightly lower average CCS, WSRA17 had the best overall return; Q240 was the next best variety.

Tonnes Cane/ha						
Variety	Pl	1R	2R	3R	4R	Total
Q183	151	105	93	95	88	532
Q240	176	111	109	111	107	613
SRA8	150	109	100	93	83	536
WSRA17	197	127	106	114	107	650

ccs						
Variety	Pl	1R	2R	3R	4R	Ave.
Q183	12.6	14.7	14.7	15.7	14.7	14.5
Q240	12.9	14.6	14.4	15.9	13.6	14.3
SRA8	13.0	13.9	13.7	15.2	14.2	14.0
WSRA17	12.5	14.1	13.8	15.4	13.6	13.9

Tonnes Sugar/ha						
Variety Pl 1R 2R 3R 4R Total						
Q183	19.0	15.4	13.6	15.0	13.0	76
Q240	22.6	16.1	15.6	17.6	14.5	87
SRA8	19.6	15.3	13.7	14.2	11.8	75
WSRA17	24.5	17.8	14.6	17.5	14.6	89

Cumulative Return \$/ha						
Variety TCH CCS \$ Return*						
Q183	532	14.5	15943			
Q240	613	14.3	17863			
SRA8	536	14.0	15150			
WSRA17	650	13.9	18010			



DUAL HERBICIDE SPRAYER

For anyone who has problem weeds in any of their blocks, such as Itch grass, sorghum, Guinea grass there is an alternative spraying method that is available to be used.

The dual herbicide sprayer (DHS) is designed to apply different products to the furrow and the hill. You can use cheaper products (e.g. glyphosate or paraquat) in the furrow and only have to use more expensive products (e.g. asulam) on the hill. This leads to a saving on chemical costs as only 50% of the block is being sprayed with the more expensive options. It also means that more options become available for controlling problem weeds in the interrow.

The DHS can provide effective weed control and save costs when used in the correct manner, and it is a good alternative for your harder to control weeds.

The DHS is available for growers to borrow. Contact Joseph Magatelli (0427 372 124) or your field officer for more information.



5 days after spraying: Row sprayed with paraquat and flumioxazin Furrow sprayed with glyphosate and 2,4-D



The same block 6 weeks after spraying



FALL ARMYWORM UPDATE

Fall armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) was first found in Australia in February of 2020 and has since spread across much of the tropical and sub-tropical areas of northern Australia. The moth can fly over 100 km in a night meaning it is able to spread quickly. It is most common to see damage in spring and summer as they prefer the warmer temperatures, however, they can be seen year-round in north Queensland.

The life cycle takes 30 days to complete from egg to moth which allows it to have several generations in a year. The caterpillar is the only stage that damages the crop and can reach a length of 40 mm before it burrows into the soil and pupates into a moth. Its preferred food source are crops like sweetcorn, maize, and sorghum; it has also been found in soybeans and mungbeans, however, it much prefers the former. The occurrence of FAW in sugarcane has been low compared to grain crops but there have been incidences of this occurring. This year in the Burdekin, there have been three sugarcane blocks identified to have FAW with varying levels of infestation. All blocks were plant cane but not all the same variety or age, however, all had a mix of weed species growing prolifically in the block, particularly grass weeds. It is believed that the FAW moth initially entered the blocks due to the weeds rather than the sugarcane and moved into the cane as a secondary food source.









Fall Armyworm Life Stages

Left: Newly hatched larvae

Middle: Late instar larva

Right: Pupae (top), Moth (bottom)

Currently there are no thresholds established for sugarcane due to the lack of occurrence in cane. However, if an infestation is noticed it should be monitored closely. The first sign of FAW damage is windowing on cane leaves which occurs in the first instar just after hatching. As the caterpillar progresses the damage becomes more evident with chew marks starting in the youngest emerging leaves, ranging from small holes to completely stripping leaves to the mid rib in worst cases. It is important to notify your agronomist or field officer if you suspect there may be FAW damage on your farm.

Not all the FAW blocks identified this year were treated the same because all had different situations. For instance, one block had late plant cane that was around 40 cm when the infestation occurred, however the cane was not the primary target. The weeds within the block were sprayed out which is what the FAW were eating and once their food source had died, they moved onto the cane. This block was monitored, and no insecticide was applied to control for FAW. Instead, natural predators such as birds and parasitic flies and wasps helped control the population and the cane has now grown through the damage.

Another block had even smaller late plant cane and was heavily infested with weeds, particularly grass weeds. There was a large population of FAW at all different life stages throughout the entire block and

much of the cane had been stripped to the mid rib. It was noticed that ants were attacking egg masses and carrying away dead caterpillars that had been parasitised by the Tachinid fly. This block was sprayed with Altacor after discussions with entomologists as the numbers were very high and the cane was still very young.

The most recent block is late plant cane that had many grass weeds hosting the FAW. There were twice as many caterpillars on a grass stool than there were on a cane stool which shows which they prefer. The weeds in the interrow were cultivated to reduce the food source and impending rain also helped to knock the numbers around and give the cane a kick along. Since the initial wave, the number of FAW have dramatically reduced. This is partly due to Tachinid flies parasitising on the caterpillars by laying their eggs on the head or body which then hatch in the caterpillar and eventually kill it. Sugarcane armyworm has been found in the block too, but FAW numbers have drastically dropped. There was no insecticide sprayed on the block, rather it is being closely monitored to make sure that the numbers do not increase suddenly.

To prevent FAW coming onto your farm the best thing to do is to maintain a clean crop with minimal weeds and to give the cane optimal nutrition and water so that it is not compromised and susceptible. It is important not to panic and spray insecticide immediately as there are FAW populations that are known to be resistant to some chemicals such as carbamates and organophosphates. There are many beneficial insects that will attack FAW, unfortunately if some chemicals are used, they can knock out your beneficials leaving your farm defenceless.







Left: Fall armyworm damage

Middle: Tachinid flies are an important beneficial insect that parasitises caterpillars

Right: Larva with tachinid fly egg on its head

Sugarcane is not fall armyworm's preferred food source

- Maize
- Sweet corn
- Sorghum
- C4 pasture grasses
- Sugarcane
- Rice



More preferred

Less preferred

VIEW FROM THE FIELDS

Our field staff have been conducting nematode and Pachymetra surveys across the district in the past few months. Twenty samples for each disease were taken from every mill area.

Nematodes

Nematodes can be broken up into 2 groups. Plant parasitic nematodes which feed on plant roots, and beneficial nematodes that feed on fungi, bacteria and other soil organisms. The two species of plant parasitic nematodes that cause serious damage to sugarcane are root lesion nematode (RLN) Pratylenchus zeae, and root knot nematodes (RKN) Meloidogyne spp. There are many other types of nematodes that can affect sugarcane, such as dagger and spiral nematodes. These are usually only a problem when they occur in very high numbers.

Our sampling tested for both beneficial and parasitic nematodes as follows:

- Beneficial:
 - Bacterivores
 - Aphelenchida
 - Tylenchida
 - Dorylamids
 - Mononchids
- Parasitic:
 - Pratylenchus (Lesion)
 - Helicotylenchus (Spiral)
 - Tylenchorhynchus (Root Stunt)
 - Paratrichodorus (Stubby Root)
 - Meloidogyne (Root Knot)
 - Rotylenchulus (reniform)
 - Criconemella (Ring)
 - Xiphinema (Lance Dagger)

Galls produced by root-knot nematode (above) and lesions produced by lesion nematode (below). The absence of fine roots (above) is the result of several nematode species feeding on roots.



RKN are mainly found in the lighter, sandy soils, whereas lesion nematodes can be found in every cane-growing soil in Queensland. Both RKN and RLN enter through the root tips, while most other nematodes feed on the outer surface of the roots. Damage to the roots will depend on the species present. Typical symptoms are short, thickened and blackened primary roots with very few fine secondary or tertiary roots. RKN produces distinctive symptoms of swelling and gall formation on the root tips. RLN produces the presence of many red lesions on the root surface.

Fortunately, our samples showed very few parasitic nematodes, and often the beneficials were in greater numbers than the parasitic ones. Here are some management strategies if you find you have a nematode problem:

- Avoid plough-out/replant where possible.
- Harvest plough-out blocks early to give a maximum break before planting legume crops.
- Include a legume rotation in your crop cycle. Soybean and peanut crops can reduce plant parasitic nematode numbers by 80-90 per cent.

Pachymetra Root Rot

Pachymetra is a fungal disease that invades the root system and greatly reduces root growth and yields in susceptible varieties. Once infected the internal root tissue breaks down leading to a soft, flaccid rot of the larger roots. These roots either stop growing, or are completely destroyed. The overall root system is much smaller than a healthy root system. This can lead to less well anchored plants and excessive stool tipping.

Pachymetra root rot is unique to Australian cane fields. The disease is not seen in any other country, or in fields where sugarcane has not previously been grown. While it is a major disease in many parts of Queensland and New South Wales, it has only been found in a small number of blocks and at low levels in the Burdekin.

All samples taken were below threshold, with the majority well below threshold, even zero.

If you suspect you have nematode or Pachymetra damage, contact your field officers to take a sample.

Source:

https://sugarresearch.com.au/sugar_files/2017/02/Nematodes-IS13040.pdf

https://sugarresearch.com.au/sugar_files/2017/02/Pachymetra-root-rot-IS13005.pdf

OPTICANE

The project team is continuing to update and modify Opticane based on user feedback. If you haven't checked it out recently, you might notice some changes on your next log on. To access Opticane go to www.opticane.net



Generic daily crop water use numbers are now under the "Irrigation" tab for users who don't have an Opticane account linked to IrrigWeb. If you do have an account, you will find your own information under Irrigation, and the generic numbers under "Extensions".

To see the weather station network and current readings click on the "Current conditions" tab. You will see a map of the stations that are transmitting data, plus a list and overview of the most important conditions. The list will be to the side on a desktop, or below the map on mobile. Clicking on the map will take you directly to that weather station. It also now takes two fingers to zoom the map, making it easier to scroll past. Similarly with the "Forecasts" page, clicking on a region scrolls you to the information for that region.

The Irrigation section has been modified to be more similar to IrrigWeb. The paddock icons are now colour coded to provide a better snapshot of current crop water status e.g. red – needs watering, blue – the profile is full and irrigation is not required. Users with multiple farms can select whether to see all their farms, or jump to a single farm. Clicking on a paddock icon jumps you straight to the detailed irrigation information for that farm.

The JCU team have put together a video which gives a good overview of Opticane and what it can do. While it is quite long (10 minutes) you can jump between chapter by clicking on the slider across the bottom of the screen. The video is available here: https://youtu.be/6LgidwdrLU0

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For more information or to arrange a test drive contact Mark Rickards on 0427 834 800



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