Burdekin Productivity Services

PRODUCTIVITY PROFITABILITY SUSTAINABILITY

Funded by Burdekin Canegrowers and Wilmar Sugar

Grower Update

ISSUE 33 – APRIL 2019

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

This issue contains:

ELECTION OF BPS GROWER DIRECTORS

Nominations are being called for the election of three Grower Directors of Burdekin Productivity Services Limited. The term is for a period of 3 years and shall commence immediately after the 2019 Annual General meeting (AGM) scheduled for August 27, 2019.

All members, both men and women from across the district, whether experienced or not, are encouraged to apply to be part of a progressive and well run Productivity Services, representing the largest sugarcane growing area in Australia. Being part of the BPS board will allow directors to have direct input into decisions that will deliver changes and improvements in the way Productivity Services capture, report and deliver information and services to growers.

Growers should be aware that they will need to be committed and ensure that they can spend adequate time devoted to their position so that they are discharging their obligations as required by the Corporations Act.

In order to be able to nominate or second a nomination when a member is a corporation, estate, partnership or trust, you need to be the authorised representative of that member. If you are unsure as to whether you are the authorised representative, then please contact the company secretary (Mark Rickards) on (07) 4783 1101 or 0427 834 800 during business hours (7 am – 4 pm, Monday – Friday).

Nomination forms are available from the office of Burdekin Productivity Services Limited from April 8, or by phoning (07) 4783 1101 during business hours.

Nominations close at 4.00 pm on Friday May 3, 2019.

Mark Rickards

Company Secretary

2019 Triennial Election Timetable

Nominations open..... April 8, 2019

Nominations close ..... 4 pm, May 3, 2019

Official Rolls close..... 4 pm, May 3, 2019

Ballot papers posted..... May 20, 2019

Ballot papers returned ..... 4 pm, June 14, 2019

Counting of votes ..... June 17 & 18, 2019

Election results declared ..... June 21, 2019

Term of office commences . August 27, 2019

Above: Incoming and outgoing directors and management at the last directors election in 2016

NEW VARIETY APPROVED FOR RELEASE

The regional variety committee (RVC) met on 27th March to discuss variety trial results and consider which varieties should progress through the plant breeding system. The voting members of the committee approved the release of a current experimental variety, QA07-2330. An SRA number will be assigned to this variety in the coming months. QA07-2330 will be planted in BPS mother plots this year (following cold soak, hot water treatment), then distribution plots in 2020, and will be available for purchase in 2021.

As implied by its current name, QA07-2330 is a variety that has been in the system since 2007. It has been observed to have the following traits (R = resistance):

TCH	CCS	Milling			Disease		Comments
		Fibre %	Fibre Quality	Floc	Smut	Leaf Scald	
Average	Average	Acceptable	Safe	Acceptable	R	R	Arrows profusely Drops off in ratoons

While its performance in terms of productivity and CCS is classed as average (i.e. it does not exceed the average of the current standards – Q183, Q208, Q240 and KQ228), the RVC decided that it would be wise to have another variety that has smut resistance available for local growers. As always, growers are encouraged to consider their variety mix on farm and be aware that once a single variety becomes dominant, then risk increases significantly.

A summary of QA07-2330's performance in SRA trials can be seen below. Note that this is the average of plant, 1st and 2nd ratoon in 2 series and compares performance with current standards. BPS and SRA do not have any data on this variety's performance beyond 2nd ratoon.

Clone	TCH	CCS	Fibre
2011 (P, 1R, 2R)			
KQ228*	116	16.5	13.6
Q183*	110	16.6	14.2
QA07-2330 *(n=12)*	110	16.4	14.2
Q208*	109	16.1	14.2
2013 (P, 1R, 2R)			
KQ228*	128	16.8	12.7
Q208*	129	16.0	12.6
QA07-2330 *(n=12)*	120	16.5	12.9
Q183*	114	16.7	12.9

For further information on QA07-2330, please contact a BPS staff member.

RAT BAITING SUBSIDY - 2019

Rats are being reported as an increasing issue across the region with a growing number of crops being affected. The species that affect cane are protected species under environmental law and require a permit to destroy.

BPS holds a district wide damage mitigation permit on behalf of its members so that they can use registered chemical products to control rat populations.

To comply with the permit conditions, the use of registered rat control products must be accurately reported back to government. If the details of usage are not reported correctly, the permit may be withdrawn thus restricting rat control measures. This could lead to a population explosion in various rat species throughout the district and beyond.

Rat Baiting Subsidy Program - 2019

The Rat Baiting Subsidy Program for 2019 provides a 50% subsidy of the cost of rat baiting products for BPS members, up to a maximum of $500/yr per member, on the following conditions:

- Inspection and extension advice (re: harbouring control) to precede subsidy approval
- Proof of purchase and payment receipt to be provided
- Baiting activities are reported to BPS including date, location and amount of product used
- Location of baited area/s must be provided on a farm map
- Only registered products to be used as per permit requirements
- Management discretion may be used to exceed monetary limit for larger growers

The BPS 2019-20 financial budget has allocated an amount towards the rat baiting subsidy. Board approval may be granted to extend the program if money allocated to the subsidy is exhausted during the financial year.

This program demonstrates that BPS is responsive to members concerns in relation to a pest causing increasing damage, and hopefully encourages greater reporting of use of registered products, thus ensuring ongoing approval of permits for the industry.

Please contact your BPS Field Officer or Mark Rickards to provide your records and receive the subsidy.



BPS Rat Baiting Subsidy Program – 2019 Application form

Member to complete following table:

Date:	
Name of Member:	
Farm Number:	
Block number/s:	
Certificate of Title Ref:	
Product name & amount:	
Cost (attach invoice & payment receipt):	

For Office Use Only:

Inspection by BPS Officer - Name	
Inspection by BPS Officer - Date	
Details of extension advice provided to member	
Farm map attached to this application form depicting area of application (Yes/No)	
Amount of Subsidy entitlement if approved	**$**

Rat Baiting Subsidy approved by: Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

RATOON STUNTING DISEASE

In preparation for the opening of seed plots, BPS field staff have been busy testing for ratoon stunting disease (RSD). Testing has been completed for the Inkerman, P & K (Whitson's), and Brock Road plots, with all results being negative. Testing of commercial cane blocks will commence when all of the seed cane blocks have been sampled.

Above: Juice sampling for qPCR testing

To help manage the risk of RSD BPS aims to test one block from every farm in the region every year. Generally this will be the oldest ratoon of the most susceptible variety. Positive RSD tests from commercial blocks are treated with the strictest confidence. The affected grower will be notified regarding which block has tested positive, this allows him to put control measures in place. Other growers in the harvest group and the contractor will be informed that RSD is present in the group, however individual growers will not be identified to other group members.

RSD is an important disease of sugarcane. It is caused by a bacterium that infects the water carrying vessels of the plant, reducing its ability to carry water and grow. It is transferred from plant to plant via infected juice. Overall, RSD is thought to be present in less than 5% of fields in Australia. However, where it is present losses of 5-60% have been recorded. RSD has no easily visible symptoms other than stunting (and this may not be obvious) and diagnosis is via laboratory testing of juice samples.

This year, a new method of analysis has been implemented by SRA. Juice samples will now be tested using qPCR (quantitative polymerase chain reaction). This is a more sensitive test than the previous Elisa test, meaning that RSD can now be detected more accurately.

The good news is, RSD is very manageable and preventable.

RSD is controlled by:

- Planting approved seed cane. This is cane that has been hot water treated to kill any bacteria before planting, and tested to ensure it is free of RSD before being sold.
- Sterilising equipment. Anything that comes in contact with contaminated juice (knives, planters, harvesters, stool splitters etc.) has the potential to transfer the disease to uninfected plants. Washing down machinery to remove soil and plant material, then treating with disinfectant (Cane Knife Steriliser or SterimaX) will kill the bacteria and prevent infection.
- Controlling volunteers. If clean cane is planted into a field with infected volunteers, there is the potential for those volunteers to reinfect the clean cane.

Following these three steps will minimise the risk of RSD being introduced to your farm, or of spreading it if it is already present.

GPS TRAINING

There has been a growing interest in precision agriculture from the local industry, particularly the use of GPS systems and the benefits of keeping accurate and timely records. In response to this BPS sought and received funding from Smartcane BMP to facilitate GPS training workshops with the local major providers of GPS systems - Trimble, John Deere and GPS Ag.

The training has been well received with feedback from growers who attended being positive. The aim of these workshops has been to bridge the knowledge gaps, by facilitating open formatted workshops where growers have been able to learn from the experts and each other. Both Trimble and GPS Ag brought the relevant GPS screens with them to demonstrate processes as you would see them in the field and clearly answer questions.

During the day the group set the direction of the discussion and many people had similar queries or technical challenges that were answered. At the end of the day a hydraulic calibration was completed, this was beneficial to the groups because it clarified some of the processes that were discussed during the workshop.

One of the key learnings from the events has been ensuring that you have the correct structure to keep your records. It is all in the detail! When a GPS is first being set up is the key time to make sure that all the field hierarchies are correct. Both Trimble and GPS Ag have provided operation manuals and cheat sheets to attendees.

The John Deere workshop date is still to be determined. We will provide notice and reminders of the workshop to growers who have registered.

SOIL TESTING

Soil testing is an important part of the cane production cycle. It forms the basis of nutrient management programs and ensures that money can be best spent on providing the nutrients the crop needs. Over application of one nutrient will not compensate for a lack of another nutrient and can just cost money.

Soil tests are also useful for identifying constraints to production such as salinity or sodicity. It should be remembered though that not all areas of poor growth are because of a lack of nutrients. In our irrigated farming system, irrigation management plays a major role in overall productivity. Waterlogging or a lack of soakage can have a much greater effect on productivity than nutrition.

Soil testing should be completed before planting begins, remembering that it takes approximately 2 weeks from the time that the sample is taken until the lab results are available. Extra time is then usually needed to complete the interpretation and develop a recommendation.

There are three key steps when soil testing and developing nutrient recommendations:

1. Taking the soil sample
2. Getting the sample analysed
3. Interpreting the test and developing recommendations

Step 1

To get the best value from a soil test the sample should be as representative as possible. Generally this means taking the sample from the major soil type in the block. If areas are displaying poor growth, then a site specific soil test could be valuable to identify if soil constraints are the cause of the poor growth.

Step 2

Once the sample is taken it needs to be sent to an appropriately certified laboratory. This means the lab has been audited to ensure that it follows a standard procedure for handling of samples and running the analytical tests. To meet regulatory requirements soil tests must be sent to a laboratory that complies with required testing methods. Soil tests for sugarcane must include:

- Organic carbon (uncorrected Walkley Black method)
- BSES extractable P
- P buffer index (PBI) adjusted to Colwell extractable P

Step 3

The final step is interpretation of the soil test analysis and development of nutrient recommendations. In most cases the analysis and report will be provided by the advisor who submitted your soil test to the lab. The soil test report should provide recommendations for the key nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and sulphur) as well as identifying any other nutritional deficiencies or excesses and other chemical constraints to productivity (e.g. salinity or sodicity).

BPS offers an independent soil testing and recommendation service to members with all tests and recommendations complying with the Reef protection regulations. To arrange for a soil test or an independent interpretation contact any of the BPS extension staff.

STAFF CONTACTS

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