

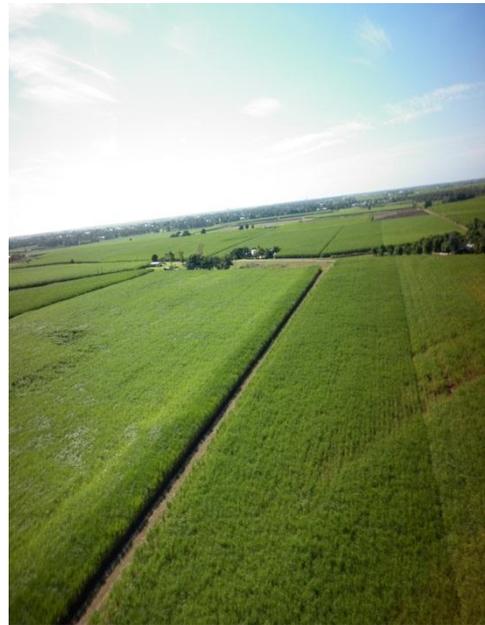


ISSUE 14 – MAY 2014

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

This issue contains:

- Staff Changes
- BPS Activities
- Update from the Plots
- Plant Source Inspections
- Rural Water Use Efficiency
- RSD
- Sterilization of Equipment
- Feral Pig Eradication
- Q-Cane Select
- YCS Update
- CCS Sampling – Portable Mill
- Soil Testing



STAFF CHANGES

John Deambrosis – After almost 3 years at the head of the organisation, John decided to retire in April, 2014. A passionate devotee of the sugar cane industry, John will be missed by all his friends and staff, all his farmer mates and many other industry representatives.

Lance Wassmuth – Lance joined the staff at BPS in January, 2010. During his time with the company, he transformed many of the administrative systems. A fireless worker, we wish Lance well in his new position at Blackheath & Thornburgh College in Charters Towers.

Mark Rickards –New Commercial Manager, Mark has gained a wealth of experience in managing finances and staff. He comes to BPS after having managed the Walkabout complex in Townsville for the past 12 years. Mark is also the BPS company secretary. He can be contacted on 4783 1101 or mobile 0427 834 800 and member services are listed as one of his chief priorities.



Alan Bowring – Alan Bowring is starting with BPS in early June as an Extension Agronomist and a large part of his role will be involved with the Rural Water Use Efficiency – Irrigation Futures project. He will relocate from the Gunnedah region in NSW bringing with him a wealth of knowledge in irrigation, soil nutrition, plant physiology and farming systems. Call Alan on 0428 927 079 or email abowring@bps.net.au



BPS ACTIVITIES

Earlier in the year, staff conducted a series of one on one farm visits to update farm plans and crop information. This data has now been recorded on the AgDat computer program for future reference.

February/March period involved a series of 18 shed meetings with grower groups to discuss productivity related issues. Issues discussed included crop nutrition, enhanced efficiency fertilizers, water quality grant program (formerly Reef Rescue), YCS, and Imidacloprid. Almost 250 growers from the 4 mill areas attended which is a fantastic result.

Upskilling of various staff has occurred during this period as well, with attendance at the Nitrogen Forum, GIVE Conference, Soil Health Forum, Incitec Pivot Agronomy in Practice course and Pump assessment course.

UPDATE FROM THE PLOTS

The rain has held up proceedings, but we are pleased to announce that all of our seed plots are now open to fill orders. The new varieties, **Q240**, **Q252** and **Q253** are in **high demand** and therefore, are being allocated on a pro rata basis amongst the growers who have ordered them. If you no longer require your orders for **any variety**, please advise your field officer, so that they can redistribute larger quantities amongst those growers who want more.

Field officers:

Invicta	–	Wayne Squires	0427 372 124
Pioneer	–	Kristine Patti	0407 167 159
Kalamia	–	Dave Paine	0427 167 159
Inkerman	–	Ray Hildebrandt	0409 831 863



Backpackers stripping cane for treatment before planting

PLANT SOURCE INSPECTIONS

With planting in full swing, and in the aftermath of cyclone Ida, many growers may not be able to use their intended **clean cane seed sources**. If you intend to use some of the **older ratoons** as a substitute and are unsure of their **suitability**, please contact your field officer for a plant source inspection.

This is a **free service** that is provided to all members of Burdekin Productivity Services Ltd. **Take advantage** of this opportunity and eliminate the chance of propagating diseased or unsuitable cane on your farm.

RURAL WATER USE EFFICIENCY INITIATIVE - IRRIGATION FUTURES

BPS is responsible for delivering the Rural Water Use Efficiency – Irrigation Futures (RWUE-IF) project for the Burdekin region.

This project was negotiated by Queensland CANEGROWERS through funding from Department of Natural Resources and Mines. The main focus of the project in the Burdekin region is to minimise the effect of high groundwater levels in the BRIA through both dewatering and improving irrigation efficiencies.

Funding is available to BRIA growers who are looking to improve irrigation management, particularly through minimising deep drainage losses. Items that may be funded include infrastructure, meters, recycle pits that will lead to improved efficiencies and less deep drainage as well as irrigation scheduling or automation equipment, or even a complete irrigation system change (eg: to overhead or drip).

All applications will be assessed by a technical panel. Please contact BPS for more information or a funding application.

The RWUE-IF project also is funding extension support across the whole region. BPS's new extension agronomist Alan Bowring is available to all growers to assess your current irrigation system and assist in implementing potential improvements. Give Alan a call if you would like to discuss your irrigation program.

RSD SAMPLING

During May & June, BPS field staff will start collecting close to 1,000 commercial cane samples from growers in the Pioneer and Invicta growing areas. These samples will be sent for analysis to the SRA laboratory in Brisbane. All Mother Plots and all Distribution Plots have been tested earlier in the year, prior to any seed cane being sold. It is pleasing to report that all RSD results from the plots came back negative (**No RSD present**).

By conducting intensive RSD sampling at our distribution plots, members can be assured that they are purchasing approved seed cane that is **RSD free**.

STERILISATION OF EQUIPMENT

It is of great concern to BPS during planting time, that equipment such as planters, harvesters and other equipment that may come in contact with cane juice, are not being sterilised before moving on to another farm. This is poor practice and a certain way to spread disease.

To ensure you do not get RSD, best practice would be for you to insist equipment is sterilized before using it.

Contractors or farmers should have sterilisation equipment and chemical on hand. If you are not sure, please contact your field officer for details.



FERAL PIG ERADICATION

Feral pigs are a major pest to our industry, damaging hundreds of hectares of cane each year. This translates into thousands of dollars in lost revenue to the industry and the community. Data collected from the 2013 crop survey showed around 4200 Ha of cane area affected by pigs with an estimated 13 400 tonnes of cane lost.

Last year we destroyed over 350 pigs through a series of professional aerial shoots. Similarly, this year we will be conducting shoots after the end of the crush aimed at targeting areas of high infestation. Burdekin Shire Council is also providing a baiting program and Wetland Care Australia will concentrate trapping in the Baratta region. Hopefully, a coordinated approach to the feral pig problem will help reduce numbers in the longer term.

There is limited funding available (through BPS and Wetland Care Australia) to assist landholder groups with aerial pig shooting in high pressure areas. Please contact Joe Savorgnan on 0407 960 057 or your field officer if you are having issues with pigs on or around your property to discuss a co-ordinated control plan.



Q-CANE SELECT

SRA have a handy application on their website called “Q Cane Select.” From their home page highlight the “Growing cane” tab, then click on “Varieties” and follow the links. Once logged in as a registered user, you can set up whole of farm plans, get variety selection recommendations to suit your soil type and compare district performance with your own figures.

If required, SRA are willing to hold training days to show farmers how to get the most out of the application. If you are interested let your field officers know and they will pass on your details to SRA.

YELLOW CANOPY SYNDROME UPDATE



Current BPS/SRA Trial

A pot trial comparing 7 varieties and cold soak, hot water treatment against untreated seed source was established in November 2013. BPS staff have been monitoring each of the plants in pots weekly and assessing YCS prevalence and severity as well as plant growth. To date the results are showing little difference between CS HWT and untreated pots.

The next step will involve imposing a shock stress treatment on half of the pots by withholding irrigation completely. Pot trials of a similar nature in Tully and SRA Burdekin showed a rapid appearance of YCS symptoms after being subject to this type of stress treatment. This process will allow us to establish if CS HWT of seed cane impacts YCS severity, and if the degree of symptoms are similar across the 7 trial varieties when there is a rapid escalation of YCS symptoms.



BPS Staff Assessing YCS Symptoms in Pot Trial

Update from all SRA/BPS/HCPSSL YCS trials

Research undertaken to date has found the following:

- Photosynthesis is compromised when a crop is impacted by YCS.
- Crop yield reductions of up to 30% have been recorded in severely impacted blocks
- There is a build-up of starch around the phloem tissue in YCS impacted stalks.
- Plant cane germination can be impacted when using YCS impacted planting material.
- YCS is not caused by contaminants in fertiliser or herbicides.
- No correlation between above ground insects and YCS has been observed in any trials
- YCS impacts all varieties in both plant and ratoon, however the symptoms may differ slightly between varieties.
- At this stage transmission by various methods cannot be ruled out, and research is ongoing to further investigate this.

- The “wave effect” or increase and decrease of symptoms over time has been observed in the intensively monitored research sites.
- YCS is now found in cane growing regions between Mossman and Sarina.

To date no cause of YCS has been discovered, however the research project is becoming far more focused in its activities to try and further understand some of the issues raised in the points above.

What can I do to manage YCS on my farm?

Do we stop planting any variety at this stage?

No - trial results have not identified any variety that is always affected or never affected by YCS. Results to date suggest that ensuring a mix of varieties on your farm is more important than trying to pick a variety that will be less affected by YCS.

Use seed source that is vigorous has the most green leaves possible to ensure good germination (call your field officer for a plant source inspection).

Attempt to minimise crop stress where possible by managing the following-

- Crop nutrient stresses - meet crop requirements
- Ensure an appropriate irrigation schedule (ie: minimal waterlogging or drought stress)
- Pest and disease stresses like:
 - RSD - Plant only approved seed cane
 - Nematodes- undertake a soil test and discuss management options with an extension officer
 - Grubs- use appropriate grub control measures



CCS SAMPLING – PORTABLE MILL

Seasonal CCS variation

One question BPS staff are often asked about new varieties is whether the variety is an early or late season variety in relation to CCS. This season, the system described below will assist us to answer that question.

SRA have developed a Mobile Maturity Tester that is a new generation of high-throughput, go anywhere sugar cane tester for maturity testing. The Mobile Maturity Tester is the result of four years of research and development from BSES Limited/SRA and has been tested on all commercial sugar cane varieties.

Main features

- Fully automated cane juicer which can process up to 120 sugar cane stalks/hr.
- Uses robust digital Brix refractometers, which are easy to read and use.
- Can operate in the field or in a harvester shed.
- Can log field information in an easy to use database.
- Calculates CCS, fibre and pol using a juice sample.
- Determine 14, 28 and 42 day maturity forecasts.
- Trends field maturity.

BPS will use this mobile mill every 2-3 weeks at our plots and trial sites to gather data to develop a CCS curve for our newer varieties. If you are interested in seeing the system at work, contact Joe Savorgnan or Rob Milla.

For more information about the unit please contact Roderick Fletcher, Variety Development Officer SRA on 0459847445 or rfletcher@sugarresearch.com.au



Mobile Maturity Tester in use

SOIL TESTING

The importance of regular soil testing should not be underestimated. Nutrient deficiencies and other soil constraints can be identified and corrective action can be taken that is targeted and effective. As a result, money on unnecessary inputs can be saved, or limiting nutrients can be addressed.

BPS have qualified staff who are trained and accredited to take soil tests and analyse results through Incitec Pivot's NAA program. We can prepare an independent recommendation on nutritional requirements that you can take to your supplier.

WEBSITE

Don't forget that the BPS website is up and going. For all your information needs regarding pest and disease visit www.bps.net.au or contact your field officer.

The website is full of useful information such as daily evaporation rate, hot topics, industry links and also has staff and directors profiles. Our newsletters and annual reports are posted under "BPS News" and the "Seedcane Plots" section has maps of varieties that are being grown at each plot.

If you are moving machinery into or out of the district, it is important that you refer to the inspection checklist listed under 'Machinery Movement'. We have 4 qualified staff who are authorized to conduct machinery inspections and legally certify machinery movement from one area to the next.

The section you will use the most will be the 'Improve Productivity" section, as it has information relating to varieties, pest and disease, crop needs, harvesting and precision agriculture as well as equipment calibration information. Please, browse the site and let us know what you think. Your feedback is important to developing and making the site better.

Staff Contacts

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Joe Savorgnan	Field Officer	0407 960 057	jsavorgnan@bps.net.au