



Grower Update

ISSUE 56 – JULY 2026

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

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING NOTICE

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) date for Burdekin Productivity Services has been set for the 21st of August 2026; breakfast from 8 am for a 9 am meeting start. The productivity award winners will be notified in the coming weeks.

Kevin Powell, SRA Entomology Leader will be the guest speaker at the AGM, and will discuss canegrubs, and plenty of the behind the scenes work that has been occurring over the last few years.

It would be great if lots of growers could attend. All the BPS staff and directors will be on hand to have a chat and discuss any BPS related topics. BPS understands it is a busy time of the year, however this is members' opportunity to ask any questions and catch up with the whole team.

Look forward to seeing you there!

BURDEKIN'S SWEETEST SCHOOL COMPETITION

The Burdekin's Sweetest School competition, an initiative of Canegrowers Burdekin Limited, has kicked off with 11 schools participating to see which school can grow the best cane. The sugarcane will be judged on weight and commercial cane sugar (CCS) content. The school that produces the highest tonnes of sugar will take home a prize of \$1,000.

Representatives from Canegrowers and Burdekin Productivity Services presented information to students from each school so they were able learn about the whole of the sugar cane industry, what cane needs to grow, and how they are going to grow the best cane. Kids were more than thrilled to be able to get dirty to prepare their plots and plant their cane billets. With tough competition this year students are encouraged to take the lead on looking after their cane and reach out to their farmer mentors if they need any tips and tricks.

Each school's cane will be displayed at the 2027 Home Hill Harvest Festival.



St Colman's Students getting their hands dirty assisting with planting

SOIL TESTING REMINDER

As we progress through harvesting, now is a good time to consider your soil testing needs.

As per Reef Regulations, all plant blocks require a soil test before planting. This includes late (plough-out replant) plant cane!

Soil testing is the best way to decide what nutrients your crop needs. With current fertiliser prices no-one wants to be applying expensive nutrients (particularly phosphorus and potassium) if they are not required. Equally, not applying these nutrients if they are needed will affect productivity. For example, phosphorus is particularly important for root growth, especially in plant cane, and should be applied if it is needed. But phosphorus is the most expensive nutrient and applying it when it is not required is just an additional, unnecessary, cost.

To organise a soil test, or to discuss your soil testing requirements please contact any of the BPS staff.

SOIL RECOMMENDATION REPORT

Service Provider: BURDEKIN PRODUCTIVITY SERVICES LTD
 Address/Contact: Merton Davis
 Phone: 0438 927 079
 Purchase Order: [blank]
 Sample Name: BL 01-01
 Sampling Date: 04/11/2025
 Yield Potential: 180
 Fertiliser Application: [blank]
 Harvest Mgmt: Burnt
 Dry Matter (t/ha): [blank]
 Last Analysis: [blank]

Product Recommendation

Product Recommendation	Rate (kg/ha)	Application Method	Timing
NK PLANTER	2500	Band and incorporate with at least 5cm tillage	Planting
CK 135	3300	Band and incorporate with at least 5cm tillage	Prior to cut-off-hand

Estimated per Hectare

Element	N	P	K	S	Ca	Mg	Zn	Cu	B	Mn	Fe	Na	Si
CK 135	25.9	12.5	45.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Total Nutrient Applied	25.9	12.5	45.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Total Nutrient Recommended	25.9	12.5	45.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0

Legend

N: Nitrogen P: Phosphorus K: Potassium S: Sulphur Ca: Calcium Mg: Magnesium Zn: Zinc Cu: Copper B: Boron Mn: Manganese Fe: Iron Na: Sodium Si: Silicon

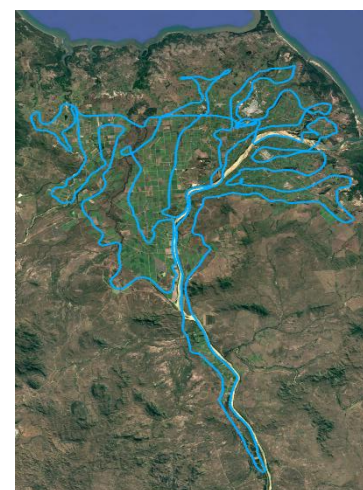


CANEGRUB FLIGHT AND AREA REPORT

In The first week of June BPS conducted the annual grub flight across the Burdekin. Grub damage was high this year with several blocks being heavily impacted. The main areas affected were along the Burdekin River bank, Haughton River bank, Lilliesmere Lagoon, Jarvisfield, Rita Island, Sheep Station Creek and Plantation Creek.

Staff have been doing grub digs since February for farmers that had concerns about canegrub damage. They found plenty of greyback canegrubs (the damaging species) and some redhead grubs (they do not damage cane). In the worst affected blocks, staff found that stools could easily be pulled put by hand due to the severe root damage.

Staff have started, and will continue, to follow up with growers that have been affected by canegrubs over the next couple months to assist and discuss management options. We



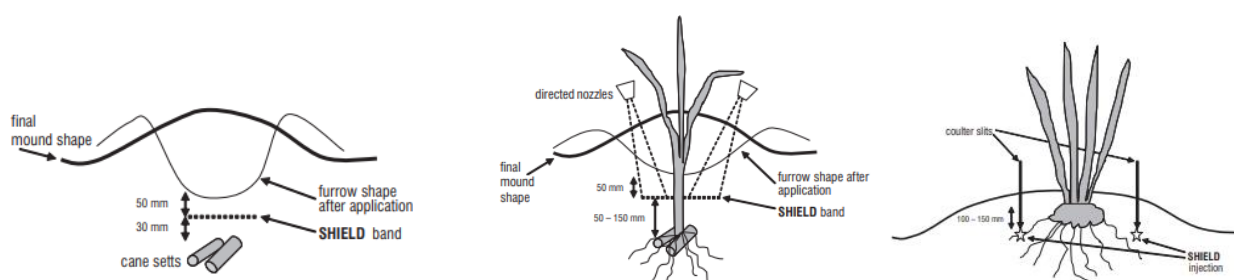
Track map of grub flight

will also be conducting a survey to investigate if there are any trends or differences between blocks that have significant vs minimal damage. Please assist the industry by participating in this survey. Both BPS and SRA staff will contact growers to conduct the survey.

When applying liquid grub control, remember:

- Depth of application should be 100-150 mm
- Space between coulters on side dresser should be 220 – 500 mm, and definitely no more than 500 mm apart.
- Spray band should be no more than 100 mm wide.
- If fertiliser is being applied at the same time, then fertiliser should be in front of grub control product.
- There should be moisture at coulters depth, or the soil should receive 15 mm of rain or irrigation within 1 week

These diagrams are taken from the Shield label and show the correct placement. The same directions can be applied when using imidacloprid. The first two diagrams are for plant cane, the 3rd diagram on the right is for side dressing ratoons.



WHAT GRUB IS THAT?

As reported in the previous article, there has been an increase in blocks showing symptoms of canegrub damage this year. The main, and most damaging species, we have in the Burdekin are Greyback canegrubs but there are also some minor species - French's, Grata and Squamulata. As well as the various canegrubs, there are a number of other soil dwelling grubs. The most common of these are Christmas beetles and Redheaded grubs. Neither of these grubs cause any significant damage to sugarcane, they mainly feed on organic matter in the soil.

At this time of year, most grubs that are found are unlikely to be greyback canegrubs as they will be deep (50-60cm) in the soil and pupating. After pupating they will emerge as beetles towards the end of the year.

The way to identify true canegrubs from other grubs is by their raster pattern. True canegrubs, e.g. greybacks, have a pattern of hairs on their last body segment. Other grubs don't have this pattern.

For grub identification, contact any of the BPS staff. The SRA website also has a range of grub identification and management guides as well as a pest field guide.

Burdekin canegrub identification chart: <https://tinyurl.com/Grub-id>

Pests of Australian Sugarcane Field Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/Pest-Field-Guide>



1. Greyback

Two almost straight rows of 20-28 short hairs.

(1) Identify canegrubs by their raster pattern; (2) Christmas Beetles and Redheaded grubs don't have a raster; (3) Greyback raster

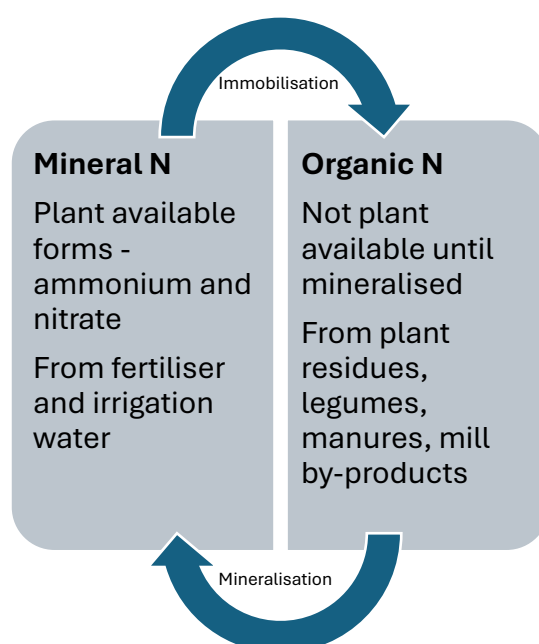
Photo sources: (1) & (2) – Pests of Australian Sugarcane Field Guide, SRA 2019; (3) Canegrub identification chart Burdekin Region, SRA

NITROGEN AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Nitrogen is the nutrient that we use in the greatest quantities, and with external factors affecting both fertiliser availability and price, it is understandable that everyone is re-evaluating their nitrogen use.

Nitrogen is one of the major crop nutrients and it is used in a number of important processes within the plant. These include protein production and photosynthesis, cell structure and function, and of course crop growth and leaf expansion.

Nitrogen in the soil consists of 2 main pools. The mineral pool contains the plant available forms of nitrogen (ammonium and nitrate) and is largely supplied by applied fertiliser. The organic pool contains nitrogen that is not directly plant available. This is nitrogen that is



held in crop residues, mill by-products and manures, and nitrogen fixed by legumes. This organic nitrogen needs to go through a process of mineralisation to convert it to plant available forms. This is not a one-way reaction. Nitrogen in the mineral pool can be immobilised and return to the organic pool.

Nitrogen Fertilisers

Most of the nitrogen in cropping is applied as fertiliser, and almost all of this is as either urea or ammonium. The ammonium based fertilisers include DAP and MAP, as well as sulphate of ammonia (or more correctly ammonium sulphate).

In soil, ammonium is:

- Used by plants as ammonium,
- Tightly bound to soil particles,
- Converted to nitrate by soil bacteria and used by plants.

Urea is:

- Firstly converted to ammonium,
- Once in the ammonium form it is subject to the same processes as ammonium fertilisers.

How quickly these processes - converting urea to ammonium and ammonium to nitrate - occur is affected by soil temperature. The warmer the soil, the faster the process. For example at 20 degrees Celsius, urea is converted to ammonium in 1 day and ammonium to nitrate in 1 week.

Nitrogen in the ammonium form is considered more stable, because it is bound to the soil particles, but this doesn't mean it can't be lost.

The main loss pathway for ammonium is via volatilisation where the ammonium is converted to ammonia and lost as a gas. The best way to minimise this loss is to apply fertiliser sub-surface and ensure that there is compacted soil covering the fertiliser band.

Once the nitrogen has been converted to the nitrate form it is not bound to the soil and is more subject to losses. The main loss pathways are through leaching and denitrification. Leaching involves water moving down past the root zone and taking dissolved nutrients with it. Denitrification is the gaseous loss of nitrogen that occurs in waterlogged soils. Both of these can be minimised by good irrigation management.

TABLE 16 INDICATIVE DURATION OF CONVERSION OF UREA INTO AMMONIUM AND NITRATE IN THE SOIL

UREA ↓ (UREASE)		AMMONIUM ↓ (SOIL BACTERIA)	
SOIL TEMPERATURE (°C)	CONVERSION TIME OF NITROGEN FERTILISER INTO AMMONIUM	SOIL TEMPERATURE (°C)	CONVERSION TIME OF 50% OF AMMONIUM INTO NITRATE
2	4 days	5	6 weeks
10	2 days	8	4 weeks
20	1 day	10	2 weeks
		20	1 week

(Source: Incitec Pivot Limited)

Source SRA Nutrition Manual, 2022

When making decisions about nitrogen management the key things to remember are:

- Nitrogen is almost never the most limiting factor. Applying nitrogen above the recommended rates will only cost money without growing extra cane.
- Stick to known nitrogen sources. We know that there are people out there offering “too good to be true” solutions. When sugar prices are low is not the time to be experimenting with unknowns.
- The form of nitrogen is not important, the management of it is. Sulphate based blends will not “last longer” or give higher yields than urea based ones. Applying nitrogen sub-surface with good coverage and avoiding waterlogging or excessive deep drainage will minimise losses and leave the most nitrogen available to the plant.
- Nitrogen uptake peaks in the 100-200 days after planting/ratooning. For ratoon cane, watering after harvest and establishing a new root system before applying fertiliser will help to match N availability to crop demand.
- Where possible try to meet all of your crop’s nutritional requirements, not just nitrogen. This is particularly the case for plant and high yielding ratoon cane. For older ratoons or low yield potential cane there is the option to reduce fertiliser inputs and apply just a nitrogen product rather than a blend.

STAFF UPDATES

Madeline Muguira – Invicta Field Officer Maternity Leave

Maddie is officially on maternity leave, her last work day was on the 12th of June and she will be away until January 2027.

Maddie’s phone has been diverted to Rina Patane (Invicta Field Officer) during her maternity leave absence.

All the staff at BPS wish Maddie and Matthew all the best as they welcome baby Ava, born in early July, to their family.



Appointment of Cameryn Koia as Full Time Trainee Kalamia Field Officer

Cameryn has moved from trainee officer working only one day a week to the full time Kalamia Field Officer. Cameryn will continue to work with a number of more experienced staff to gain an understanding of all the requirements of the position. Cameryn will be able to assist growers with all Field Officer tasks.

Please welcome Cameryn to the BPS team, Cameryn can be contacted on mobile: 0427 372 124 and email:

ckoia@bps.net.au.



STAFF CONTACTS

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