



Grower Update

ISSUE 53 – OCTOBER 2025

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



This issue contains:

BPS AGM and Productivity Awards

Daffodil Day

Nematode and Pachymetra Survey

Sorghum and Itch Grass Rogueing

Ratoon Stunting Disease Testing

Canegrub Management

Soil Testing

Staff Contacts

BPS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thanks to those members who attended the BPS AGM on 15th August.

Congratulations to the 2024 season Productivity Award Winners. Thanks to Garry Rosewarne from Sugar Research Australia who gave a very informative talk on plant breeding.

Winners were as follows:

Highest farm average CCS

- Inkerman - Ben Pontifex 15.6
- Invicta - Tom Lewis 15.6
- Kalamia - Felix Gabiola 14.9
- Pioneer - Brandon Farming 15.7

Highest tonnes of cane farm average (over 25 ha and less than 28% plant cane)

- Inkerman - Brad Hanson 159 TCH
- Invicta - Kurt Booth 147 TCH
- Kalamia - MHPF/Rob Town 150 TCH
- Pioneer - Christian Lago 150 TCH

Burdekin Sugar Producer of the Year was Allan Davies with a farm average of 20.8 tonnes of sugar per hectare.



Left: Guest speaker,
Garry Rosewarne

Right: Bryce Davies
congratulates the award
winners

Top: Tom Lewis

Middle: Rob Town

Bottom: Christian Lago



DAFFODIL DAY

On the 21st August, BPS hosted a morning tea for Daffodil Day, a Cancer Council Fundraiser. We would like to thank everyone who participated and donated money to this worthy cause. Every contribution, big or small, makes a difference. Thanks to everyone's generosity, we were able to raise \$756. This will go directly towards funding life-saving cancer research, prevention programs, and on-going support for those affected by cancer. Cancer affects everyone either directly or indirectly, and it was great to see our BPS and Burdekin farming community coming together for an important cause.



In conjunction with our Daffodil Day fundraiser, we also received donations towards the Cancer Council's 'Pony Tail Project'. Kristine Patti cut and donated her hair on 29th August, with all donations also going to the Cancer Council. She would like to thank everyone who not only donated to BPS's Daffodil Day, but also towards her fundraiser.



NEMATODE AND PACHYMETRA ANNUAL SURVEY

Over the next five weeks, field officers will be out and about across the district collecting soil and root samples as part of our annual survey for Nematodes and Pachymetra Root Rot. This essential work gives us a snapshot of what's happening below the soil surface and helps identify potential pest and disease pressures impacting sugarcane crops.

We'll be collecting 80 samples per mill area, randomly selected, to build a clear picture of both soil-borne pests (like nematodes) and diseases (like Pachymetra Root Rot).

Why It Matters: What We're Looking For

Nematodes – The Good and the Bad

Nematodes are tiny, worm-like organisms that live in the soil and can only be seen under a microscope. There are two main types:

- **Free-living nematodes:** These are the good guys – they feed on bacteria, fungi, and organic matter, helping break it down and make nutrients available to plants. High numbers of these nematodes often signal healthy, well-functioning soils.
- **Plant-parasitic nematodes:** These are the troublemakers. They attack plant roots, reducing the plant's ability to take up water and nutrients, which can lead to stunting, poor growth, and yield loss.

Two key parasitic nematodes we're monitoring in sugarcane are root lesion (*Pratylenchus*) and root-knot (*Meloidogyne*). Other parasitic species may be present too, but they generally pose less threat unless in large numbers.

Nematode	Symptoms	Where found
Root Lesion (<i>Pratylenchus spp.</i>)	Red lesions on roots, poor root health	Found in all soil types
Root-Knot (<i>Meloidogyne spp.</i>)	Galls (lumps), stunted roots, excessive root branching	Mostly in sandy soils

Yield Loss	No. nematodes/200 g dry soil	
	Lesion	Root-knot
Low (<5%)	100-500	100-300
Medium (5-20%)	500-1000	300-800
High (>20%)	>1000	>800

The pictures to the right show the typical symptoms of root lesion and root-knot nematodes.



Figure 2 Root lesion



Figure 1 Root-knot

Pachymetra Root Rot

Pachymetra Root Rot is a unique sugarcane disease found only in Australian soils. It is caused by a fungus-like organism. The disease attacks individual roots usually through the tips and breaks down internal root tissue, leading to:

- Soft, flaccid, rotting roots
- Significantly reduced root mass and poor root anchoring

This can quietly reduce crop yield and stool strength over time.

While it's not commonly detected in the Burdekin, it's still important to monitor, especially in susceptible varieties. None of the varieties currently grown in the Burdekin are considered susceptible, but a number are rated as having an intermediate level of resistance including KQ228, Q208, Q240 and WSRA17. For the resistance ratings of all varieties, see the latest Burdekin variety guide at https://sugarresearch.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/SRA_Variety-Guide-Burdekin-2025-26.pdf.

Most test results in the Burdekin remain below the low threshold or zero, but continued sampling helps ensure it stays that way.

Table: Likely disease severity based on Pachymetra spore counts (from 2022 Pachymetra Root Rot information sheet, SRA)

Probable disease severity	Fallow field	Standing crop (intermediate resistance)
Low	0-30 000 spores/kg	0-40 000 spores/kg
Medium	30-50 000 spores/kg	40-70 000 spores/kg
High	50-120 000 spores/kg	70-200 000 spores/kg
Very high	>120 000 spores/kg	>200 000 spores/kg

Pachymetra spores are long lasting and can survive for more than 5 years in the soil. These spores can spread in soil on machinery or cane stalks and infect new fields. If you have Pachymetra you should be cleaning down between blocks to minimise spread.

The simplest way to manage this disease is by planting resistant varieties.

If you have any questions about Pachymetra or Nematodes and how to manage them, please contact your field officer.



A Pachymetra oospore (from 2022 Pachymetra Root Rot information sheet, SRA).

SORGHUM AND ITCH GRASS ROGUEING

All the BPS plots have now been planted and as such there is availability for the casual employees to perform Sorghum and Itch Grass rogueing services for BPS members.

For Sorghum an application form **needs** to be completed before any rogueing can commence. The application form is on the BPS website as per the following directory: <https://bps.net.au/2018/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Wild-Sorghum-Rogueing-Subsidy-2024-002.pdf>

For sorghum BPS covers **50%** of the wage cost with the grower paying the other 50%. For itch grass this is subsidised 100% by BPS.

Please contact your Field Officer if you would like rogueing activities to be carried out on your farm. In the case of Sorghum rogueing once the form is completed growers will then be added to a list based on first in, first served basis. Please do not delay any normal farming operations i.e. watering in lieu of rogueing operations. BPS staff will work around farmers day to day operations and sometimes certain farm blocks will take longer or inversely quicker to rogue depending on level of infestation.

Itch grass (*Rottboellia chochinchinensis*)

Itch grass is a tall plant that competes strongly with sugarcane. The stalks and leaves are covered in the hairs which give it its name. Other characteristics are the prop roots that develop from the base of the stem and the very distinctive seed head. The seed head consists of a number of spikes. When the seeds mature the individual seeds break off and fall to the ground. Each plant can produce many thousands of seeds.



Small Itch
Grass Plant



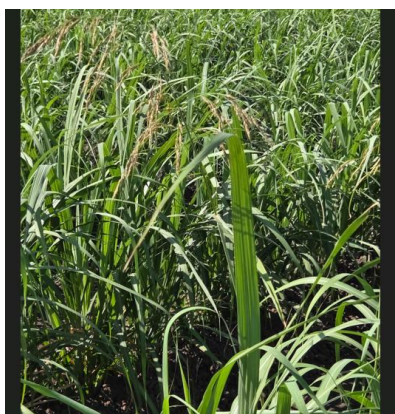
Itch Grass Root



Itch Grass Seeds

Wild Sorghum / Rhodesian Sudan Grass (*Sorghum arundinaceum*)

Wild sorghum can be distinguished from sugarcane and itch grass by its smooth leaves and its lack of prop roots. When flowering the seed head is quite distinctly different to that of itch grass. Sorghum heads are open with many short branches containing the seeds.



Wild sorghum plants growing in cane and the seed head

RATOON STUNTING DISEASE TESTING

A reminder for all growers to contact BPS at anytime throughout the year to get their blocks tested for Ratoon Stunting Disease (RSD). All BPS members receive this service at no additional cost. The turn around time for tests is generally around two weeks.

Arrange RSD testing as soon as you have identified seed sources. Juice samples for testing can be collected as soon as the plant has developed cane.

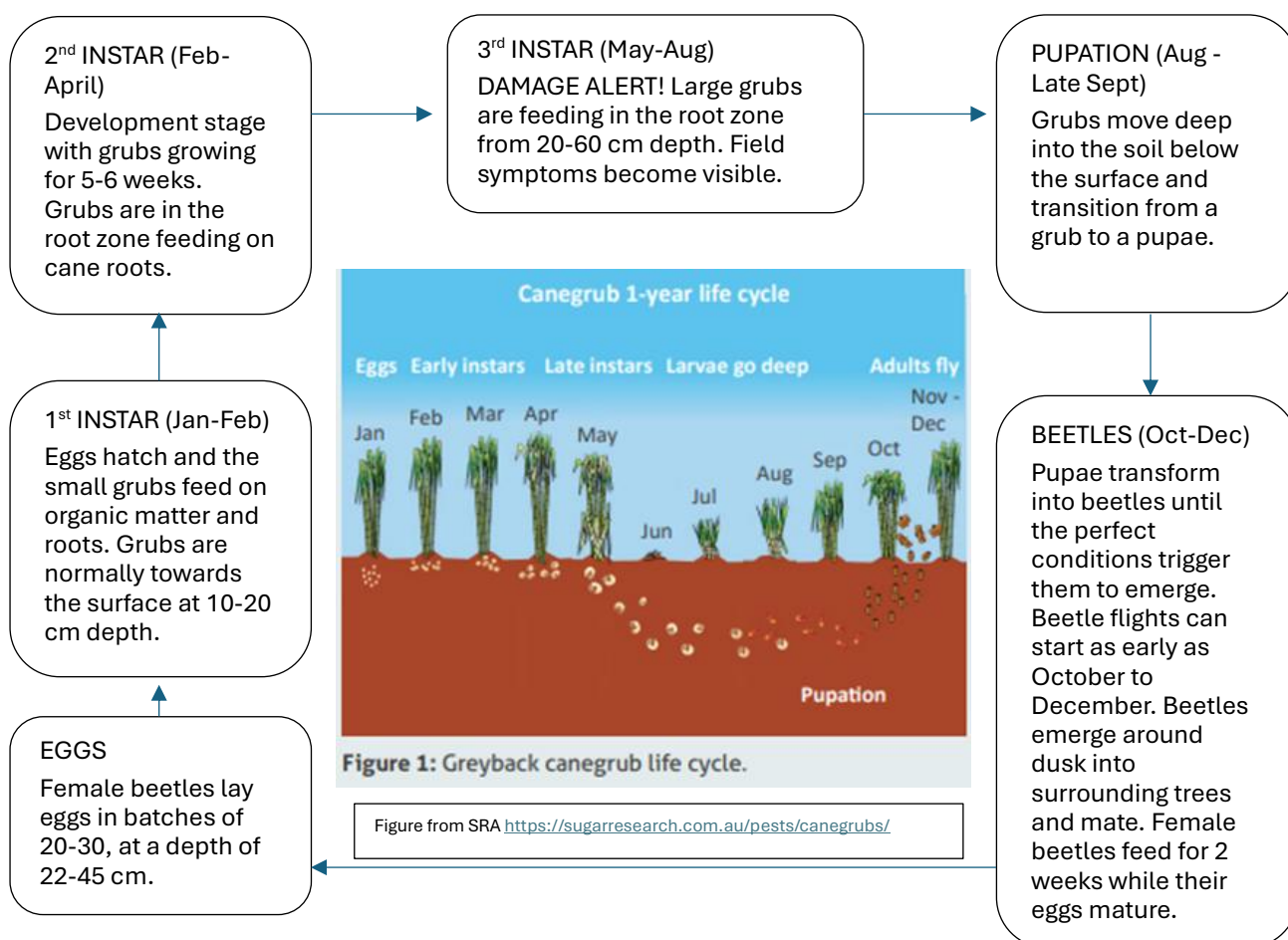
Early in the year BPS focuses on testing the approved seed cane plots and may not have the instant availability to test grower blocks. Once the wet season concludes BPS receives a large number of grower requests for a variety of services and by having RSD blocks tested earlier it will spread out requests which will allow a quicker turnaround of results.



CANEGRUB MANAGEMENT

With Nufarm choosing to no longer produce suSCon Maxi Intel we are now relying on two liquid products for canegrub management. These are various formulations of imidacloprid (Confidor) or clothianidin (Shield). Both of these actives are group 4A insecticides which means they share the same mode of action and work in the same way. **You must not apply more than one soil application of a group 4A insecticide per sugarcane crop per season.**

In the Burdekin greyback canegrubs are the main species. They have a one year life-cycle with eggs being laid in December/January. These eggs hatch after about 2 weeks and the grubs start to develop. Small grubs tend to be higher in the soil, closer to the surface, but as they grow they gradually move deeper into the soil. Once they fully develop they move even deeper and pupate. The new beetles will then emerge late in the year when soil temperature and moisture levels are suitable.

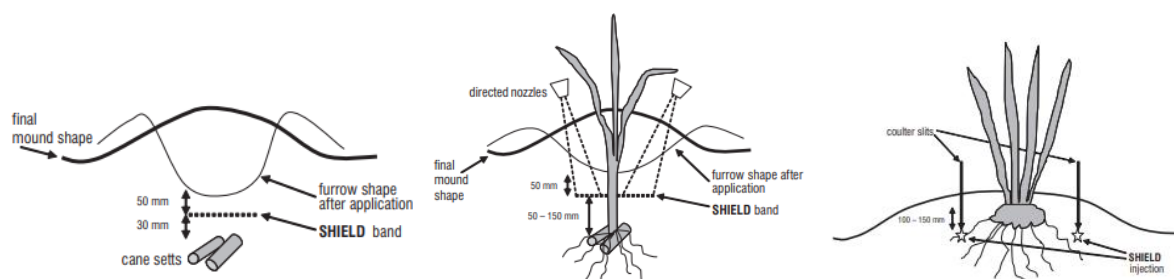


Because our liquid control products only provide protection for 1 year we need to be applying them as close as possible to when the eggs hatch and small grubs emerge. This will ensure that they are exposed to the highest concentration of chemical. It is much easier to control small larvae than big ones!

The following table summarises the key label points for applying both imidacloprid and clothianidin. It is also important to note that not all imidacloprid products are registered for plant cane, some only have a ratoon registration.

Plant Cane	Imidacloprid	Clothianidin
Application Window	August - November	October - December
At planting	50 mm soil over setts; insecticide in a 50-100 mm band; cover with another 50 mm; don't disturb band after application	30-50 mm soil cover over setts; band approximately 100 mm wide; cover with another 50 mm immediately; don't disturb band after application
At half-open drill / fill in	50-100 mm wide band directed at the base of the shoots; cover immediately with 50 mm soil; don't disturb band after application; need 100 mm total soil cover after final hill-up	2 x 50 mm wide bands to either side of the base of the shoots; cover immediately with 50 mm soil; don't disturb band after application; need 100 mm total soil cover after final hill-up
At final hill-up	2 x 50 mm wide bands to either side of the base of the shoots; cover immediately with 100 mm soil	
Ratoon Cane	Imidacloprid	Clothianidin
Application Window	September - November	October - December
Side-dress	Coulters should be spaced 220-500 mm apart; depth of application 100-125 mm; coulters slits should be closed immediately	Coulters should be spaced 310-500 mm apart; depth of application 100-150 mm; coulters slits should be closed immediately
Stool-split	Apply subsurface behind a single coulters in the centre of the stool	Apply subsurface behind a single coulters in the centre of the stool at a depth of 100-125 mm

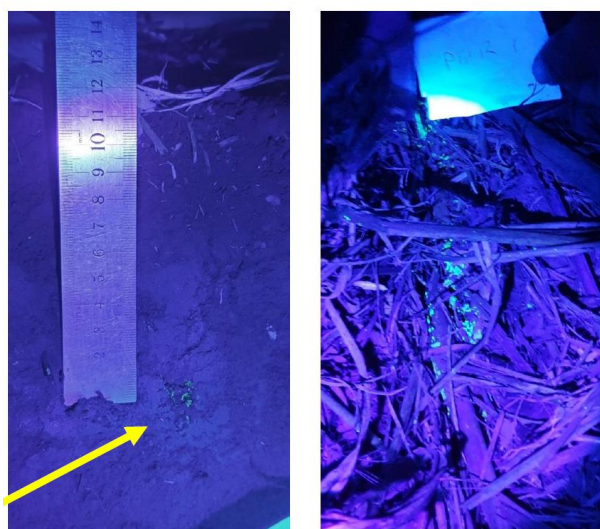
These diagrams are taken from the Shield label and show the correct placement. The same directions can be applied when using imidacloprid.



Work conducted by SRA has found some key areas to check with liquid insecticide applicators. These include:

- Checking that the sprayed band is not too wide. The **maximum** width should be 100 mm.

- Checking that coulters are correctly spaced for side-dressing, the **maximum** width is 500 mm apart.
- That the nozzle/s be positioned to ensure delivery at the bottom of a 100-125mm deep slot **before** soil comes back in. When the nozzle is placed too far back soil can fall in before the chemical is applied, the sprayed band then ends up in the wrong place.
- If fertiliser is being applied at the same time, then the fertiliser should be ahead of the grub control product.
- That the slots be completely closed.
- That there should be moisture at coulter depth, or the soil should receive 15 mm of rain or irrigation within 1 week.



Using UV dye to show where the product was being placed.

Left: correct placement 100 – 150 mm deep

Right: soil has fallen into the slot ahead of the chemical leading to chemical on the surface



Correct nozzle positioning at the bottom of the slot and before soil flows back in

Photos courtesy of SRA

Imidacloprid products currently registered in sugarcane

Product Name	Company	Registration	
		Plant	Ratoon
AC Impressor 350 SC Soil Insecticide	Axichem Pty Ltd	No	Yes
Apparent Picador 350 SC Insecticide	Titan Ag Pty Ltd	Yes	Yes
AW Irrupt 350 SC Soil Insecticide	Agri West Pty Limited	No	Yes
CropSure Confidant 350SC Insecticide	CropSure Pty Ltd	No	Yes
Imiguard 350 Insecticide	Shandong Rainbow International Co Ltd	Yes	Yes
Imtrade Imidacloprid 350 SC Insecticide	Imtrade Australia Pty Ltd	No	Yes
Kenso Agcare Savage 350 SC Insecticide	Kenso Corporation	No	Yes
Komondor 200 Insecticide	Crop Culture Pty Ltd	No	Yes
Sabakem Imidacloprid 350 SC Soil Insecticide	Sabakem Pty Ltd	No	Yes
Sindor 350 SC Insecticide	Sinon Australia Pty Ltd	No	Yes
Surefire Spectrum 350 SC Soil Insecticide	PCT Holdings Pty Ltd	Yes	Yes
Titan Confide 350 SC Insecticide	Titan Ag Pty Ltd	Yes	Yes
Trespass 350 Insecticide	Sipcam Pacific Australia Pty Ltd	Yes	Yes

Clothianidin products currently registered in sugarcane

Product Name	Company	Registration	
		Plant	Ratoon
Sumitomo Shield Systemic Insecticide	Sumitomo Chemical Australia	Yes	Yes
Cropsure Siphon 200 Insecticide	CropSure Pty Ltd	Yes	Yes

SOIL TESTING

With an early finish to the season being predicted, now is a great time to plan for soil testing.

Regular soil testing is the best way to monitor your soils nutritional and chemical status. This guides not only fertiliser requirements but also whether there are chemical problems that could be affecting productivity. In the Burdekin the most common problem is excessive sodium in the profile, referred to as sodicity. We also see some soils that have high salt levels, salinity, and a few that are both sodic and saline.



Managing sodicity is relatively straightforward using either gypsum, lime (acid soils only) or in some cases mill mud. But, all of these products work best if they have time to dissolve/breakdown and release calcium into the profile well before planting. Arranging to get your soil tests as soon after harvesting as practical means there is more time to organise and apply any required ameliorants. Wet season rainfall will then help to dissolve gypsum into the soil and flush the excess sodium through the profile.

To arrange for soil testing please contact any of the BPS staff.

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