

Taking the grass weed pressures off

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Graeme Callaghan, Stuart Davidson & Margie Pye standing in their La Trobe stubble at 'Calga', Coonamble NSW

The Pye Family, owners of Calga Pty Ltd, have been farming at Coonamble in the central-western plains of New South Wales since the early 1900s. The 16,134 hectare property is currently managed by Stuart Davidson with the assistance of agronomist, Graeme Callaghan.

The property presently crops 5,800 hectares chickpeas, 4,600 hectares wheat, 1,350 hectares barley and 500 hectares faba beans, with the remainder as Lucerne or native pasture.

The property has had an emerging issue with Annual Ryegrass and herbicide resistance, according to Calga's agronomist, Graeme Callaghan.

"We'd been using Trifluralin, but found it was difficult to incorporate into our cereal program with zero till.

"We started using Boxer Gold[®] as a pre-emergent herbicide in a few paddocks to start with, and we had good results.

"Our strategy really took the pressure off the grass weeds, especially Annual Ryegrass and Wild Oats.

"With areas of the property developing resistance to Axial[®], the switch to using Boxer Gold has

enabled these areas to remain a viable part of the cereal program again," Graeme said.

Boxer Gold is a soil-applied pre-emergent herbicide from Syngenta which is registered for the control of Annual Ryegrass.

Calga's farm manager, Stuart Davidson, said he too was impressed with the results from using Boxer Gold.

"Over the years, our Annual Ryegrass numbers have fallen, because we have been able to get on top of it using Boxer Gold," Stuart said.

"Boxer Gold really speaks for itself. We started off with 1,000 litres, and since then, we have increased our usage to 14,000 litres last year, and we've committed to 15,000 litres this year.

Rainfall within seven days of application maximises herbicide performance.

"Our average rainfall is 525 millimetres; however, last season we only got 325 millimetres.

"Despite the lower rainfall, we were able to reach higher yields with the barley crop because the rain fell at the right time for us.

Traditionally, Stuart has been sowing Hindmarsh, introducing La Trobe to the mix in 2015.

"Last season, we sowed a total of 1,350 hectares of the Hindmarsh and La Trobe barley varieties. This season it will be 100 per cent La Trobe," Stuart said.

"Our average yield is three tonnes per hectare, but with La Trobe we were able to achieve five tonnes to the hectare.

"All up, we harvested 5,000 tonnes of barley, of which we held 1,800 tonnes on farm," Stuart said.

La Trobe's main appeal is its malt accreditation, resulting in pricing premiums above Hindmarsh.

"We usually grow barley for the feed market, however, this season 700 hectares will be targeted towards the malt market," Stuart added.

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