

## SAGIT COL STOCK JOURNAL

### Combating the lentil disease threat

Lentil growers now in paddock-planning mode for 2004 will need to take into account the risk posed by the virulent disease, botrytis grey mould.

According to SARDI's senior pulse pathologist, Jenny Davidson, a strain of the fungus, *Botrytis fabae*, which causes chocolate spot in faba beans and vetch, is also responsible for grey mould infestations in lentils.

"Another strain, *Botrytis cinerea*, which also infects lentils, has a very wide host range including some pulse crops, vegetables and grape vines.

"All this means that lentils should be kept away from lentil stubble, and faba bean or vetch stubble," Ms Davidson said. "There is also a risk if the lentils are grown adjacent to an early sown faba bean or vetch crop as the botrytis can develop in these and then transfer to the lentils.

"If farmers can't avoid these situations then they will need to manage their lentil crops as high disease-risk propositions.

"We have done glasshouse experiments using botrytis gathered from difference sources and found that of the pulse crops, lentils are the most susceptible to botrytis grey mould – the ranking being lentils the worst, followed by faba beans, chick peas and very little on field peas.

"Lentils are a complete sucker for the disease which can also be spread on the seed making the planting of clean seed and the dressing of seed necessary."

Ms Davidson, whose lentil research is supported by SAGIT, said surveys had shown that botrytis grey mould infestation in SA lentil crops this year was not high. She said that for the disease to have a major impact in spring, high humidity and warm temperatures were needed and this had not generally been the case in 2003 when cold and dry weather conditions were experienced in early spring in many areas.

As well, many of the lentil crops she inspected had canopies which were more open than usual and so were less prone to botrytis infection.

"Perhaps farmers sowed them at wider spacings but generally the weather conditions have not been conducive to heavy canopy growth and the winds have also dried them out," Ms Davidson said.

"Growers are also putting out a lot of fungicides, the spray before canopy closure being especially important and the need and frequency of others being dependent on weather conditions.

“There is evidence that the fungus can develop resistance to carbendazim and procymidone (Sumiclex) on grape vines and once that resistance develops it is there for a very long time.

“We are hoping to do some work on this in lentils but meanwhile the message is to try and avoid multiple sprays of these fungicides.”

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