

A seed treatment for oilseed rape is a big, up-front investment in a crop that, if establishment conditions are poor, may not survive or may not even be drilled. **Dominic Kilburn** asked two leading agronomists for their views.

# Site and crop threats drive seed treatment choice



A seed treatment will be a good investment for many, but not all, oilseed rape crops this autumn.

**G**rowers considering seed treatment options for oilseed rape crops this autumn have new chemistry at their disposal. On offer is greater persistence and more broad-spectrum pest and disease protection compared with older products.

Modesto (clothianidin+beta-cyfluthrin) and Cruiser OSR (thiamethoxam + fludioxonil + metalaxyl-M), both from the newer generation neonicotinoid group of chemistry, have increased active ingredient loadings over seed treatment standard Chinook (beta-cyfluthrin+imidacloprid), extending the period and type of activity growers have come to expect from an oilseed rape seed treatment.

According to UAP technical manager Chris Bean, both products have looked similar in UAP trials and both have delivered a 0.4 tonnes per hectare yield benefit over Chinook.

"To be fair, we've had more experience to date with Modesto compared with Cruiser OSR, but they are the next stage in seed treatments and they come with differing attributes," he says.

## Greater persistence

While there is little difference between the two in terms of cabbage stem flea beetle control, Modesto comes with a 19 per cent higher loading in terms of active ingredient, which may give greater persistence where aphids are concerned. "When there is a short fly-in of aphids, they are both similar. But, in the case of a longer fly-in, Modesto is a better option," says Mr Bean.

He warns there has been a massive influx of myzus persicae (peach potato aphid) into the country in recent weeks, and with a lack of foliar spray options in rape, growers are effectively tied-in to a seed treatment.

Direct feeding is only part of the issue - for rape crops the biggest problem with peach potato aphid is its potential to transmit turnip yellows virus (TuYV).

"Because of resistance issues, the best control measure is via a seed treatment and although TuYV is not a particularly visual problem, it can result in yield losses of up to 25 per cent. It could be one of the main factors why rape yields have stayed relatively static in recent years," says Mr Bean.

Cruiser OSR currently has no

**A seed treatment on OSR is a big investment**  
DAVE ROBINSON

label approval for aphid vector and TuYV control, but Syngenta is supporting its use for this purpose and says it is likely to extend data to include it on the UK label in the near future.

For later drilled crops emerging in mid-September into warm and dewy conditions, Mr Bean suggests Cruiser OSR is suited for downy mildew control.

Lincolnshire-based TAG regional manager, Dave Robinson, also believes there is little to choose between the two treatments.

"Modesto will give control of cabbage stem flea beetle, aphids potentially carrying TuYV, useful control of turnip sawfly and control of cabbage root fly (a potential problem in very early sowings)," he says.

Every season will have a threat of some kind to oilseed rape but, despite this, it is not a foregone conclusion that every crop is treated prior to drilling, he adds.

"A seed treatment on oilseed rape is a big investment on a crop that is difficult to establish when you get a poor autumn. Lots of seed bought last year already dressed, either didn't establish, or wasn't even put in the ground. But he questions whether a seed treatment for oilseed rape should be an automatic decision.

"The necessity of a seed treatment on rape all depends on timeliness of inputs following drilling, and whether or not later treatments work out more efficient than a seed treatment. If you can get the crop in the ground at the right time, and in good conditions, maybe it's better to treat on emergence."

Location and main threats to crops will determine final product choice and method of crop protection. "Where there is a threat from aphids and flea beetle, then a seed treatment makes sense, as it would, for example, for growers south of Yorkshire whose crops suffer from phoma in a wet October," says Mr Robinson.

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