



PestFacts WA

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Contents

- [Armyworm and brown pasture loopers are causing damage](#)
- [Canola aphid and turnip yellows virus update](#)
- [Oat diseases](#)
- [EOIs still open for DPIRD's Crop Insect and Disease Identification Workshop](#)

Armyworm and brown pasture loopers are causing damage

Armyworm

- Beaumont
- Grass Patch
- Wittenoom Hills



An armyworm caterpillar curled on the ground (left) and stretched out on a barley stem (right). Photos courtesy of Quenten Knight (Agronomy Focus) and Lucy Burrows (Clarke and Stokes AgriServices).

Armyworm caterpillars have recently been found in barley near Beaumont, Grass Patch and Wittenoom Hills. Some feeding damage has been observed on leaves, however, most armyworm found were larger than 3 cm and are expected to pupate within the next week. Crops will continue to be monitored through grain-fill. Armyworms are typically more damaging closer to harvest when large caterpillars will either feed on individual grains in wheat or oats or can lop heads in barley.

Brown pasture loopers

- Gingin
- Badgingarra



Lupin plants (left) and canola plants (right) damaged by brown pasture looper feeding activity. Photos courtesy of Helen Lethlean (FarmCo).

Helen Lethlean (FarmCo) recently reported that brown pasture loopers were causing damage in canola, lupins and pastures in Badgingarra and Gingin areas.

Monitoring and identification

Caterpillar species vary in their behaviour and preferences for weeds and crops, so correct identification is important when determining whether an insecticide application is necessary. If you are unsure which caterpillar species are present in your crops or pastures, use the [PestFacts WA Reporter app](#) to request a diagnosis.



An armyworm caterpillar. Photo courtesy of DPIRD.

Armyworm caterpillars have smooth bodies and can be identified by three parallel white stripes on the collar just behind the head. The first sign of an infestation is often the presence of green to straw-coloured droppings, about the size of a match head, on the ground between cereal rows.

Armyworm caterpillars are most damaging in barley crops close to harvest. Large caterpillars may climb plants and chew through the stems, causing grain heads to fall to the ground. Damage in wheat and oat crops is generally less severe because only grains are consumed. Assessing armyworm numbers can be difficult, as their movement varies with weather conditions and feeding preference. Caterpillars may shelter on the ground under leaf litter, whilst on other days they will be high up on the plants or on the heads and easily picked up using sweep nets. Larger caterpillars often prefer to hide during the day and feed at night.



A brown pasture looper caterpillar. Photo courtesy of DPIRD.

Brown pasture looper caterpillars are slender and grey or brown, with distinctive cream or yellow stripes that appear once caterpillars reach 10 mm in length. Young caterpillars move with a characteristic looping motion and can be seen feeding on plant leaves during the day. When the caterpillars reach their full size at 30 mm, they cease this looping motion.

Management and considering beneficials

Growers are encouraged to monitor paddocks for caterpillar activity and only apply insecticides when caterpillars are present, actively feeding, and the crop is unable to outgrow the damage. Under favourable growing conditions, crops can outgrow minor feeding damage.

If caterpillar numbers warrant spraying, growers and consultants can refer to DPIRD's [2026 autumn winter insecticide guide](#).

The effectiveness of insecticides controlling armyworm caterpillars is dependent on good insecticide penetration into the crop. This can be difficult in high-yielding crops with thick canopies, especially when caterpillars are sheltering under leaf litter at the base of plants. Spraying late in the afternoon or evening is recommended, as armyworm caterpillars are predominately night feeders and are more active at this time.

If spraying is required, growers should consider using insecticides that are less harmful to beneficial predator insects. For information on insecticide toxicity to beneficial insects, refer to Cesar Australia's [Beneficials Chemical Toxicity Table](#).

Further information

For more information on armyworm and brown pasture loopers, refer to DPIRD's [Armyworm and their management in cereal crops](#) factsheet and Cesar Australia's [Brown pasture looper](#) PestNote.

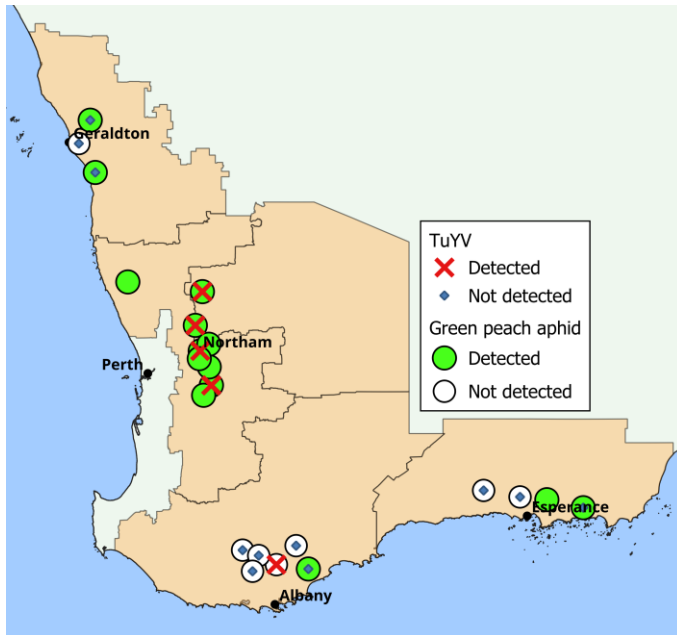
To read about earlier caterpillar activity this season, refer to the 2026 PestFacts WA Issue 3 article [Weed web moth and other caterpillars are damaging crops](#) and Issue 7 article [Caterpillars are active](#).

For more information, contact Senior Research Scientist [Svetlana Micic](#) in Albany on +61 8 9892 8591.

Article authors: Cindy Webster (DPIRD Narrogin), Bec Severtson (DPIRD Northam) and Svetlana Micic (DPIRD Albany).

Canola aphid and turnip yellows virus update

- Geraldton port zone
- Kwinana West port zone
- Albany port zone
- Esperance port zone



Findings from green peach aphid and turnip yellows virus (TuYV) monitoring sites, current to 16th July 2026. Map courtesy of DPIRD.

DPIRD's plant virology and entomology surveillance teams have recently detected low levels of green peach aphid (GPA) infestation in canola crops around the Geraldton port zone (Nabawa and Yardarino). Turnip yellows virus (TuYV) has not been detected yet in this region.

In the Northam area of the Kwinana west port zone, GPA infestation rates are nearing 100% in some canola crops and TuYV has been detected at most monitoring sites. Some crops in the region are displaying symptoms consistent with TuYV infection.

In the Albany port zone, GPA is present at some monitoring sites, but at low numbers, and TuYV has not yet been detected in crops.

In the Esperance port zone, GPA is infesting up to 16% of plants in canola crops at Howick and Condingup, but TuYV has not been detected. However, widespread GPA infestation has been reported at a crop near Neridup that is also exhibiting possible TuYV symptoms and will be tested in the laboratory. For more information, refer to the map above.

This aphid and TuYV surveillance work is co-funded by the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) project DAW2305-003RTX "Effective virus management in grain crops".



Cabbage aphids clustered on canola plants. Photo courtesy of Tyrone Henning (TekAg).

The PestFacts WA team has also recently received reports of GPA in canola crops near Wongan Hills and cabbage aphids in canola crops east and northeast of Ballidu.

To view recent reports of canola aphid activity submitted to the PestFacts WA team, refer to the [PestFacts WA map](#) and select 'canola' as the host and the relevant aphid species as the disorder from the drop-down menu.

Monitoring and management

The risk of TuYV in canola plants is higher when the GPA is present, especially during early crop development (emergence to 7 leaf stage), when crops are most vulnerable to yield loss. Infection occurring after stem elongation is unlikely to cause yield loss.

Growers are encouraged to monitor canola crops, including those sown with neonicotinoid treated seed, for GPA using the guidelines outlined in the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) [Manage turnip yellows virus in canola](#) factsheet.



Canola plots with a high level of turnip yellows infection and exhibiting symptoms (left) compared with plot with very low TuYV infection (right). Photos courtesy of DPIRD.

Potential symptoms of TuYV in canola include stunted plant growth and purpling or yellowing of the lower leaves, particularly on leaf margins.

If GPA or plants showing symptoms of TuYV are found, growers can contact [PestFactsWA](#) or Senior Research Scientist [Benjamin Congdon](#) to arrange TuYV testing and discuss management options.

For more details on monitoring and managing canola aphids and TuYV, refer to the 2026 PestFacts WA Issue 9 article [Canola aphid and turnip yellows virus update](#).

Further information

For more information about GPA, TuYV and earlier seasonal activity, refer to the articles in 2026 PestFacts WA:

- Issue 10 [Green peach aphids detected in Esperance port zone](#)
- Issue 9 [Canola aphid and turnip yellows virus update](#)
- Issue 7 [Green peach aphids and turnip yellows virus detected in canola crops](#)
- Issue 5 [Check canola crops for green peach aphids to assess virus risk](#).

For further information, contact Research Scientist [Benjamin Congdon](#), in Perth on +61 488 904 480.

Article authors: Benjamin Congdon (DPIRD Perth) and Cindy Webster (DPIRD Narrogin).

Oat diseases

Bacterial blight

- Northam
- Cuballing

Senior Research Scientist Kylie Chambers (DPIRD) has reported finding bacterial blight (stripe blight) in oats near Northam and Cuballing.

There are two types of bacterial blight that affect oats in Western Australia: stripe blight (*Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *striaefaciens*) and halo blight (*Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *coronafaciens*).



Stripe blight on oat leaves. Photo courtesy of: DPIRD.

Stripe blight is the more common form of the disease in WA. It forms long, red-brown stripes on leaves during winter, which can join into blotches and cause leaf collapse.

Halo blight causes pale green or yellow coloured, oval-shaped spots surrounded by a pale halo with a water-soaked appearance. As the disease develops, these spots turn brown and join together to form blotches. Halo blight is not commonly seen in WA crops.

Both bacterial blights need cool, moist conditions, to infect plants and spread. Normally the infection will stop spreading as canopies dry, and crops are able to outgrow the infection in spring.

It is important not to confuse bacterial blight with fungal diseases like *Septoria avenae* blotch or red leather leaf, as fungicides are not effective against bacterial blight. Currently there are no crop protection chemicals suitable (or registered) to control this disease.

Septoria avenae blotch

- Cuballing



Septoria avenae blotch symptoms on oats. Photo courtesy of: DPIRD.

Technical Officer Glen Schindler and Senior Research Scientist Kylie Chambers (DPIRD) recently found septoria avenae blotch in Bannister oats near Cuballing. The plants were at growth stage Z32.

Septoria avenae blotch is the most prevalent oat disease in Western Australia. Under high disease pressure, it can impact both hay and grain yield and quality. Septoria symptoms can appear as brown to purple oval shaped spots on leaves. These lesions then develop into larger brown blotches up to 2 cm in size, which can coalesce to cover most of the leaf. Severe infections can lead to plant lodging. Florets and glumes of plants can also develop blotches, which can cause black staining of seed in some varieties.

The main source of infection is infected crop residue from previous seasons. The sexual stage of the fungus occurs on infected stubble following rainfall, whereby the fungus produces ascospores which are spread moderate distances by wind. The ascospores are the source of infection in new crops. Secondary spread occurs when the asexual spores formed in the lesions are spread through the crop canopy by rain splash.

In high disease pressure scenarios, such as continuous oat crops, growing susceptible or very susceptible varieties, and in favourable environments (such as higher rainfall regions) where disease develops into the upper canopy, yield and grain quality losses can occur. In these circumstances, foliar fungicides can reduce disease severity and reduce potential losses to disease.

For a list of registered fungicides to use as foliar sprays for managing Septoria in oats, refer to DPIRD's [Fungicides](#) page.

For more information on Septoria avenae blotch, refer to DPIRD's [Diagnosing Septoria avenae blotch in oats](#) and the DPIRD and AgriFutures [Septoria avenae blotch disease management guide](#).

Red leather leaf samples wanted



Red leather leaf on oats. Photo courtesy of DPIRD.

Red leather leaf (RLL) is a foliar disease caused by the fungus *Neospermospora avenae*. It was first detected in WA oat crops during the 2021 growing season. The distribution, incidence and severity of RLL in WA, is still relatively unknown. So far it has been found in oat crops near Narrogin, Piesseville and Pingelly in WA.

Symptoms include distinct lesions on leaves, featuring a lighter centre (white/grey/blue) with dark margin (red/brown). Over time, these develop into red, irregular shaped lesions that spread across the leaves. As affected leaves age, they take on a leathery appearance and a red-brown colour. Symptoms of other diseases or abiotic stresses can easily be mistaken for or confused with RLL symptoms.

If you have any oat leaf samples that you suspect may have RLL, please contact Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) Senior Research Scientist [Kylie Chambers](#) on +61 8 9690 2151.

Crop rotation, along with sowing uninfected (clean) seed, is the primary management approach for RLL.

Selecting moderately susceptible or better oat varieties is another option. Disease resistance assessments for RLL are not currently conducted in WA. For RLL disease ratings please refer to the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) [National Variety Trials \(NVT\) online disease ratings](#).

Applying a registered foliar fungicide, particularly at early plant growth stages and during early infection, can also reduce the incidence and impact of this disease. For more information on registered fungicides and application timings please, refer to DPIRD's [Fungicides](#) page and the product label.

Further information

To check your oat variety susceptibility ratings to these diseases, refer to DPIRD's 2026 WA Crop Sowing Guide.

For more information on oat diseases refer to:

- DPIRD's Leaf diseases and their management in oats factsheet
- AgriFutures Australia's Red leather leaf of hay oats disease management guide
- Agriculture Victoria's Red leather leaf of oats page.

For more information contact Senior Research Scientist Kylie Chambers in Northam on +61 8 9690 2151 or Principal Research Scientist Geoff Thomas in Perth on +61 428 947 287.

Article authors: Cindy Webster (DPIRD Narrogin), Bec Severtson (DPIRD Northam), Kylie Chambers (DPIRD Northam) and Geoff Thomas (DPIRD Perth).

EOIs still open for DPIRD's Crop Insect and Disease Identification Workshop



Attendees participating in a hands-on plant disease component of the 2025 workshop. Photo courtesy of DPIRD.

There is still time to register your interest in DPIRD's annual broadacre crop insect and disease identification workshop, with Expressions of Interest (EOIs) remaining open until Friday 24 July 2026.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) will again deliver its popular workshop for agronomists and grains industry representatives looking to strengthen their insect and disease identification skills relevant to broadacre crop production in Western Australia.

Date: Tuesday 18 August to Thursday 20 August 2026.

Venue: Metro Hotel Perth, 61 Canning Highway, South Perth WA.

The three-day program combines practical, hands-on learning with expert instruction from experienced presenters. Participants will gain valuable skills in identifying crop insects and diseases and learn about integrated management approaches, supported by comprehensive take-home reference materials.

The workshop will cover:

- Tuesday 18 August: Insect identification and integrated management.
- Wednesday 19 August and Thursday 20 August: Disease identification and integrated management.

Participants can choose to attend either individual modules or the full three-day program.

Course fees (including GST and ticket fees) are as follows:

- \$460.45 for the full three-day program.
- \$345.61 the two-day disease module.
- \$173.35 for the one-day insect module.

These fees include a course reference book and catering each day.

The workshop is co-funded by the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) through the “DPIRD Seasonal status of pests and diseases delivered to growers project” (DAW2404-005RTX).

Training places are limited. Please submit your EOI by Friday 24 July 2026.

For further details, or to register your interest in attending, contact Research Scientist Cindy Webster in Narrogin on +61 8 9881 0201 or +61 404 819 534.

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