

Lettuce IPM VG05044 05/06 report summary

July 2006

Current Lettuce Aphid, *Nasonovia ribis nigri* (CLA) is currently throughout Tasmania, in the lettuce growing areas in and around Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney basin. CLA is found in central western NSW and Tamworth. As yet it has not been found in Queensland or WA. It will be difficult to detect in Queensland as all growers are treating their lettuce with Confidor®.

The project funded by HAL with AUSVEG levy contributions and contributions from the various state governments has demonstrated on commercial field head lettuce sites that a biologically based IPM strategy can successfully manage CLA and other lettuce pests in Victoria and Tasmania. A babyleaf trial in Tasmania was less consistently successful. Demonstrations in NSW and SA will be conducted this season.

The fact that babyleaf is harvested within 4-5 weeks of planting is a particular challenge. CLA produces a proportion of winged forms all year round and they quickly colonise new plantings, whereas beneficials tend to stay in an infested planting until it is 'clean' of aphids then move so there is a 'lag' between the aphid pest and the beneficials.

Predatory mites found in the soil and on lettuce plants also offer some potential as thrips, aphid and small caterpillar predators. Soil samples from a number of lettuce crops in Victoria, SA and NSW yielded low numbers of predatory mites but one species that was found could be promising. Work with a similar species in citrus showed increasing soil organic matter was very important in increasing the predatory mite numbers. Trials are planned to test whether adding various soil amendments increases the predatory mite populations in lettuce.

Some of the IPM demonstrations are also including plantings of plants that either encourage beneficials or are non-hosts of western flower thrips (WFT) or both within or near lettuce plantings as part of the pest management strategy. In WA routine monitoring of pests and beneficials in lettuce will soon begin to identify when and to what degree beneficials are present in their system.

Two surveys have been conducted as part of this project. One is of Lettuce growers from around the country and covers the basics as to their pest management practices, particularly for CLA, it also covered attitudes towards and degree of adoption of IPM. The second survey was of consultants serving the lettuce industry and it covered what level of IPM service they offer growers, their attitudes towards and ability to deliver a biological IPM service, it also covered what training or support materials they would find useful to improve their skills in IPM and hence their service to growers.

Given many of the concerns about IPM by non-IPM growers are the very reasons IPM growers like IPM, a series of more detail IPM Case Studies are being conducted. These case studies are of IPM businesses and similar businesses that are non-IPM from a few lettuce growing areas. They are covering attitudes towards pest management, levels of crop damage and an economic comparison.

All lettuce growers and allied industry people have been receiving bimonthly Lettuce Leaf newsletters, these are also available from the NSW DPI web site.

More detail reports are available on the Tasmanian and Victorian IPM Demonstration sites, the Mite field survey, Grower IPM telephone survey and Consultant IPM telephone survey.

Project Leader: Sandra McDougall (NSW DPI)

Team: Kathryn Bechaz (NSW DPI), Greg Baker (SARDI), Sonia Broughton (DAWA), Virginia Brunton (NSW DPI), John Duff (QDPI&F), Lionel Hill (Tas DPIW), Paul Horne (IPM Technologies), and Tony Napier (NSW DPI)

Advisory Committee: AUSVEG leafy committee and some other industry representatives.

Leafy Committee: Eddie Galea (NSW), Denise Harslett (QLD), Lorry De Ruvo (SA), Colin Houston (TAS), Tom Schreurs (VIC), Maureen Dobra (WA), Patrick Ulloa (IDO)

Other industry reps: Michael Bergman (GSF), Arie Baelde (Rijk Zwaan), Peter Dal Santo (Ag Aware), Brad Wells (HAL)