

Are you ready for locusts?

According to the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI), this spring and summer will likely see the largest locust infestation in Victoria and southern NSW since 1973. They have estimated that 9.6 million hectares may be infested.

Nufarm key account manager Alex Ford says that this includes key dairy regions of the Murray and Goulburn Valleys, with irrigated pasture and cereal crops at extreme-high risk of damage this spring.

“Millions of locust eggs per hectare have been deposited in the soil, and are currently expected start hatching in late September to late October across northern Victoria,” Alex explained. “There have actually been some isolated reports of hatching taking place already along the Murray.”

The exact time of hatching will be determined by soil temperature and moisture. Once hatched, the nymphs’ (immature locusts) go through a series of growth stages until they mature to develop wings and the ability to fly. During this time they will feed on crops and pastures and can cause significant losses.

“It is the landholder’s responsibility to control locusts on their own property,” said Alex. “The most effective time to spray locusts is approximately two to three weeks after they’ve hatched. At this point they are unable to fly and group together in thick bands on the ground.”

“As there are a number of chemical control options available, it is important for landholders to consider a number of factors before making a decision.”

These factors include the product’s:

- registration for locust control in that particular pasture or crop
- efficacy or residual control activity
- cost effectiveness of the solution
- withholding periods (WHP) for grazing and/or export intervals

Nufarm have developed a Product Registrations Chart which details all the products available for locust control use this season.

“Astound Duo and Fastac Duo are both excellent all-round products for locust control,” explained Alex. “They are registered in a wide range of crops and pasture, low cost and offer some short term residual activity, as well as having a very short grazing WHP.”

“The other benefit of these two products is that the label allows for any amounts left over – that is not needed for locust control this year – can be used to control common pests such as redlegged earth mite.

“Another excellent option for pasture use is Regent 200SC, providing excellent control. It can be reapplied after 14 days, is very cost effective and delivers some residual activity.

“Compared with other products, it has very short export intervals and the 14-day grazing WHP allows paddocks to be rotationally grazed around spraying.”

Regent 200SC is not registered for use on crops. Other products registered for pasture include Chlorpyrifos 500EC, Maldison and Fenitrothion.

“We are really encouraging growers to plan for their insecticide requirements well in advance. They really need to act now, and consider purchasing what they would regularly need as well as what they anticipate they will need to tackle locusts.

DPI is providing a 100% rebate on chemicals that are used for locust treatment.

For help to plan your locust strategy, talk to your local Murray Goulburn field officer. Information about Nufarm’s registered products for locust control can be found at www.nufarm.com.au/locusts.

Figure: Reported Locust Activity (source: DPI, 2010)

