

BLACK OATS

Black oats is universally the most devastating weed of cereal crops. Although sprays have been developed to control black oats, they are expensive and not always effective. The use of weed free ploughed seed beds compared with minimum tillage seed beds requires a complete economic analysis to determine the optimal bed. In some favoured areas minimum outlays and herbicidal control of weeds gives the farmer more flexibility however, in drier areas long fallows are recommended as common practice. The land may be ploughed in late winter and cultivated after each fall of rain until the wheat is sown following winter. Not only does cultivation kill weeds, it also conserves moisture and improves the structure of the soil.

Some farmers lightly graze a growing wheat crop. This practice provides fodder for livestock and holds back a crop which may be too advanced. If crops flower and frosts are severe then serious damage may be caused to the young wheat embryo when fertilisation has taken place. Farmers frequently make hay from the "headlands" in a paddock which lack uniformity in growth.

