British Beet BBRO Research Organisation

Advisory Bulletin

Issue:1 11th March 2026

Virus Yellows (VY) Forecast released

Rothamsted Research are forecasting the 2026 VY Risk for 2026:

- East – Bury St Edmunds, Cantley & Wissington 62%.
- North – Newark 49%.
- This risk is higher than 2025 but lower than 2024.

Aphid migration:

- Predicted to begin towards the end of April (Eastern areas) or beginning of May (North).
- BBRO will issue updates as AphidWatch network goes live and aphids are found in crops.
- Warmer weather during March will ultimately determine the migration dates.

Aphids can currently be found in autumn sown oilseed rape and shows they have successfully overwintered and may also survive on beet spoil heaps. Remove from areas near 2026 sugar beet fields and be prepared to start in-crop aphid monitoring early.

Drilling & Conditions

Warmer daytime temperatures are encouraging and the possibility of a prompt start to drilling is an option in some areas whilst patience may be required in others.

- Destruction of cover crops & volunteers may have been delayed due to wet conditions, timings or cultivation options may need to be adapted to manage residues and seedbeds.
- Ensure varieties being drilled are suitable for early sowing, avoiding varieties with a **X** or **X** to minimize bolting, as cold weather windows are still a possibility.
- Heavier soils are likely to still be wet from high winter rainfall, ensure soil conditions are suitable for effective cultivations and that compaction from wheeling's is being removed.

Hygiene

With the last of the 2025-26 heading to the factory, there is a chance to have a clean break between crops.

- Ensure spoil heaps have been returned to field or are being managed properly, either killing off re growth or covering clamps to limit growth and contain pests.
- As field conditions improve, loading sites that previously have been too wet to deal with can be ploughed, this is especially important in high pests or disease pressures areas.
- As spring cereals/crops are being established post sugar beet, please consider management of ground keepers through cultivations or herbicides as these can also provide disease and pest carryover into a new season.

Further Information:

Virus Yellows Forecasts: East & North

Factfiles: Drilling, On-farm Hygiene & Aphicides 2026

BBRO CropWatch

Beet your Best – Target 2: Drilling

BeetCast:

listen to this month's BeetCast

It's our 50th edition with updates on our new website & 2027 RL.

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Drilling

Early sown bolter trials have gone in the ground on favourable soil types, BBRO are yet to start drilling yield plots.

Discussion with growers & contractors has shown a normal start to the season with light land able to travel, but heavy land still unable to carry machinery weight.

Having machinery field tested and ready to go is an obvious win for maximising drilling efficiency. Pre-assigning your seed and varieties to their fields will help organise drilling and management later in the season.

Pay attention when deploying Conviso® SMART varieties and make sure operators/contractors are aware when switching to and from these.

Key points to think about are outlined on the Beet your Best card (Right).

Hygiene

We continue to see spoil heaps around the growing area with high levels of regrowth from root remnants.

Please be sure to manage any remaining heaps sooner rather than later. Either remove, incorporate or turn regularly to prevent re-growth and disease & pest carry-over.

Events:

BeetField – join the BBRO team in-field May 2026:

Morley (Norfolk), Linton (Cambridgeshire) and Navenby (Lincolnshire) – further details will be in the next Bulletin