2026 Virus Yellows Risk Forecast: North

Newark Area

Issued March 3rd 2026

Headlines:

Aphid migration is predicted to begin on the **02 of May** (+/- 18 Days) across the Newark factory region

VY Risk: Assuming a 30th March sowing date, the model is estimating **49%** of the sugar beet crop could become infected with Virus Yellows (in the absence of any control measures).

Risk to crops is higher than 2025 but lower than other recent seasons.

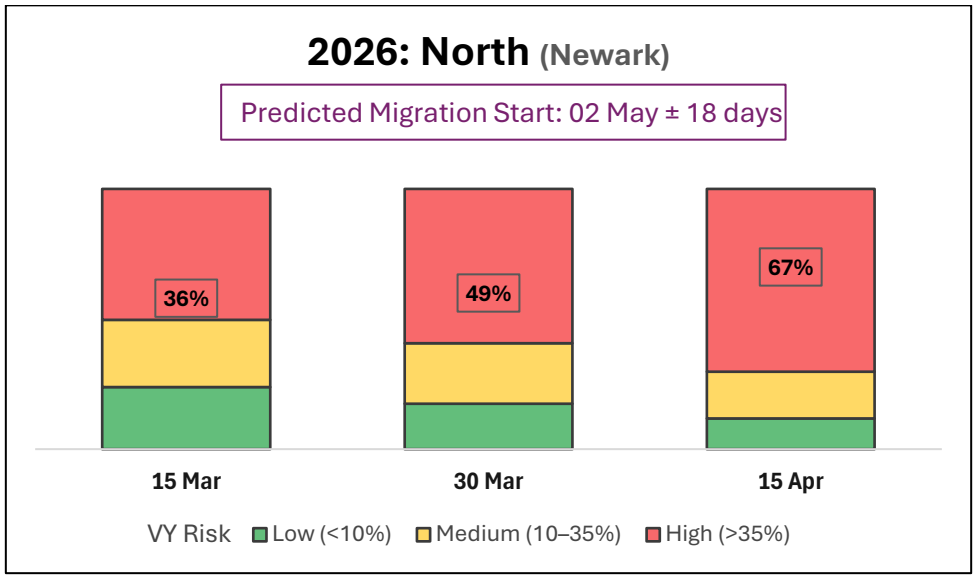

Figure 1 – 2026 forecast Virus Yellows risk in the northern factory region. The % figures indicate the average risk estimated for each sowing date.

2026 Forecast:

Virus Yellows (VY) continues to be a major threat to UK sugar beet production. Forecasting VY risk and estimating aphid migrations can target when crop observations for aphids should begin and prepare interventions to limit virus spread.

Rothamsted Research have processed air temperature data from January and February at Kirton, Lincolnshire to forecast the virus yellows risk in 2026 for the Newark sugar beet factory region. Earlier sowing will reduce VY risk and later sowing dates will increase risk. *Note: the model forecasts the proportion of plants which would become infected with virus **in the absence of any pest management** using observed data since the 1960s.*

New for 2026, The model is now run 1000 times to estimate the variability in the risk of sugar beet crops becoming infected with virus yellows. The chart above shows the forecasted risk at three sowing dates (15th March, 30th March and 15th April) with the proportion of the 1000 forecasts which fall into low, medium and high-risk categories for each date and allows for estimations in the range of dates when aphids may begin to migrate this year.

Comparisons with previous forecasts:

Figure 2 shows a comparison of the expected VY risk and aphid migration start dates at Kirton for *Myzus persicae* (peach-potato aphid) between 2020 and 2026.

In 2026, VY risk will not be as great as 2020 but is higher than 2025 due to warmer average daily temperatures experienced in January and February (+0.95°C vs 2025).

Earlier migrations indicate an elevated risk to crops as the plants will be more attractive to aphids and further away from developing mature-plant resistance.

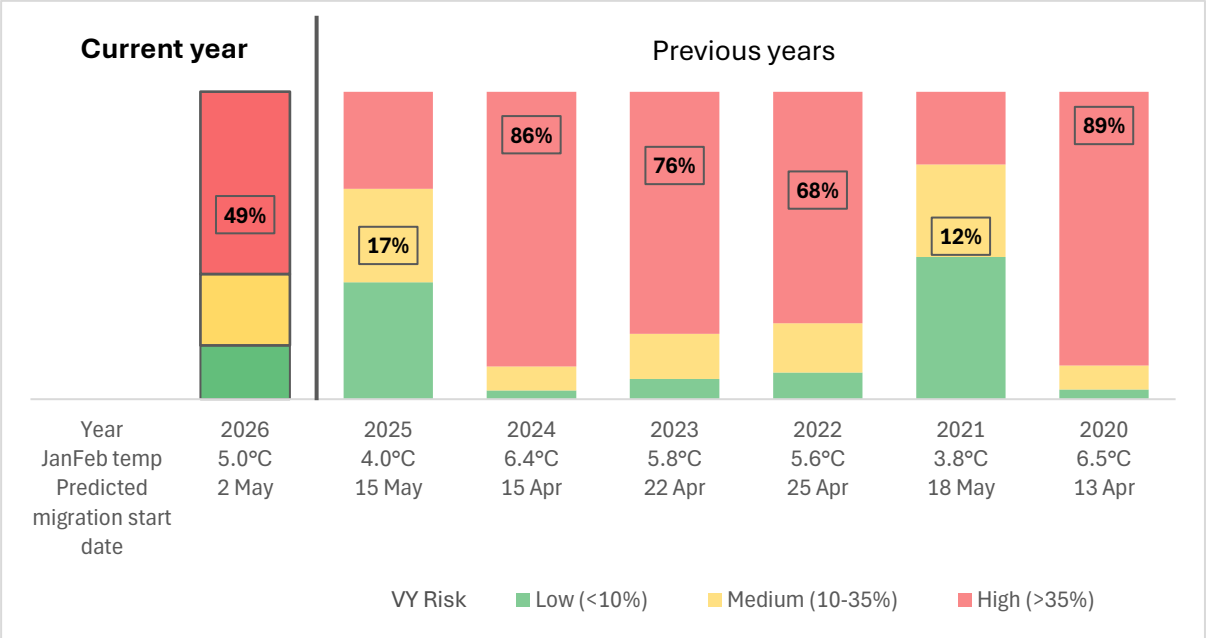

Figure 2: Comparisons of VY forecasts from Kirton in 2026 and previous years for crops sown on the 30th of March.

2026's VY risk appears is lower than 2024, 2023 and 2022 when VY risk to the crop was mitigated by >50% of the crop being treated with neonicotinoids. This is not an option in 2026 and vigilance is still required. Timely and appropriate use of aphicides will be required if crops reach the spray threshold of one aphid per four plants (up to the 12-leaf stage). In season advice will be issued by BBRO as aphid pressures build.

BBRO Resources for VY & aphid management:

Factfile: Aphicides for 2026

BBRO Aphid ID Guide

Sugar Beet Review Aphid Model Article

BBRO CropWatch - AphidWatch: In-season monitoring of aphids – Live from Mid-April

In-season revisions will be made throughout the spring and updates issued by BBRO if significant changes are forecast in either migration start date or VY risk. Keep an eye out for BBRO emails, texts and WhatsApp alerts when this happens.

British Beet BBRO Research Organisation

This forecast is made as part of the BBRO funded StatBeet project, a collaboration between BBRO, Rothamsted Research and Keele University to develop localised, reactive aphid/VY forecasts for the future

Keele UNIVERSITY

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