

Pyrethroid resistant grain aphids – a challenge for cereal growers in Northern Europe.

Recent surveys of the grain aphid (*Sitobion avenae*) in the United Kingdom and Ireland have revealed the presence of pyrethroid resistant aphids. If they spread, these resistant aphids could present a new challenge to cereal growers in other parts of Europe.

The grain aphids have been identified as being resistant by an adaption of the sodium channel, which forms part of nervous system in insects and is the site of action of the pyrethroid insecticides. This modification at the target site of pyrethroids is known as the L1014F *ksr* mutation. The mutation is well known in other agricultural and public health pests such as the green peach aphid (*Myzus persicae*) and house fly (*Musca domestica*). What is different to other species is that in this case all the aphids have been found to be heterozygous (single copy) for the resistance allele.

Although the aphids have been demonstrated as having only a relatively low level of resistance to pyrethroid insecticides (up to 40 times less susceptible than insects without the mutation) this shift in sensitivity has been shown to reduce the performance of pyrethroid sprays when the percentage of resistant aphids reach high enough levels. Since their first detection in 2011, resistant aphids have been identified in several English and Irish counties, but the frequency of resistant individuals has not been high enough to cause problems everywhere. Control problems have mainly been focused around Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. Surveys in other European countries have shown that resistant aphids are much rarer in mainland Europe, with only a small number of resistant grain aphids found in parts of Germany and none found in limited surveys of France and Denmark.

The grain aphid is only one of the key species of aphid considered to be pests of cereal crops in Europe. There is currently no indication of pyrethroid resistance in the other species, which include the bird-cherry oat aphid (*Rhopalosiphum padi*), the rose-grain aphid (*Metopolophium dirhodum*) and further eastwards in Europe, the Russian wheat aphid, (*Diuraphis noxia*) and the Spring green aphid (*Schizaphis graminum*).

The resistant grain aphids currently present a challenge to farmers in the UK and Ireland and the concern is that the problem may spread to other areas of Europe. At present, there are few registered insecticides with different modes of action available to farmers (seed treatment or foliar applications) for the control of cereal aphids. This makes it difficult to rotate insecticides with different modes of action, which is the most commonly recommended form of resistance and pest management. In the UK the only other foliar applied insecticides apart from the pyrethroids are organophosphates and carbamates which share the same mode of action (IRAC Group 1). In other countries other insecticide modes of action such as chlordotonal organ modulators (IRAC Group 9) and nicotinic acetylcholine receptor agonists (IRAC Group 4) are available. The situation might get more difficult, if further uses are restricted or insecticides are banned from the market.

If you observe the reduced performance of pyrethroid insecticides against cereal aphids in your region, please work with either your local plant protection organization or pyrethroid manufacturer to determine whether resistance is the cause of the problem and encourage them to report their findings to IRAC.

Resistance management advice for the UK provided by the Insecticide Resistance Action Group (IRAG) can be found at: www.pesticides.gov.uk/Resources/CRD/Migrated-Resources/Documents/I/IRAG_Grain_Aphid_Guidance_Sept_2012.pdf, whilst more details on the mechanisms of resistance can be found in: Foster *et al.* A mutation (L1014F) in the voltage-gated sodium channel of the grain aphid, *Sitobion avenae*, is associated with resistance to pyrethroid insecticides. Pest Management Science (2013) DOI 10.1002/ps.3683.