



drill where it needs to be. We joined up with our Stocks AG team to satisfy the need of the customers who were asking to apply Avadex at the same time as drilling.

“The farmers that have asked for it tend to be in a transition from tillage based to a no-till system. The EasyDrill is about moving less soil which benefits grass weed control by not encouraging seeds to germinate. It can do this by sowing into a stale seedbed or directly into stubble, cover and catch crops.”

Last year Opico saw a decline in demand for Avadex spreaders however, this summer there has been a ‘significant’ increase in inquiries. Mr Bootman believes this is due to a difficult season for black-grass control, and farmers are turning toward a reliable herbicide in Avadex to aid management.

Last autumn, Philip Webb, who farms 400ha in Buckinghamshire, purchased a six-metre EasyDrill with the Stocks Ag Turbo Jet fitted, deciding on the combination because it saved an additional pass at a busy time. Mr Webb

used the EasyDrill to sow and apply Avadex to 180ha of winter wheat last season.

“We applied the Avadex in combination with Liberator (flufenacet + diflufenican) and Defy (prosulcarb),”

he said. “Some teething problems meant we applied Avadex at a two-thirds rate on two fields. There was a noticeable difference in the levels of black-grass between those fields and the ones which had full rate. So far, we have mainly used the EasyDrill following min-till cultivation, which has worked well. However, we planted our spring oats directly into the stubble because the conditions favoured it. It is great to have the flexibility to do either.”

Tips for applying Avadex Excel when drilling

Gowan, the manufacturer of Avadex Excel, has issued guidance for application when drilling to maximise crop safety and efficacy

The most important requirement when applying Avadex is that the product is applied according to the label and, being a pesticide, the drill operator must be PA4G qualified if the application is to be made in the same pass as the drilling operation, according to Gowan UK and Ireland business manager Hank King. “The granulator applicator also needs to be calibrated in its own right and include patternation testing. The aim is complete coverage across the drill width for best efficacy,” he adds.

When using Avadex, Mr King advises operators to sow below 40mm. The crop seeds can potentially germinate within the herbicide residual layer in the soil if it is sown shallower than this. It is also essential that the drill slots are adequately closed and the seed covered before Avadex is spread at the back of the drill.

“Drills can often be run at a decent forward speed, but operators must remember that they need to drill at the speed of the slowest operation. In some cases, this means slowing down to ensure optimum Avadex coverage. It is the same for weather conditions. Drilling can carry on in substantial winds without a problem, but this is not true for Avadex spreading,” Mr King adds.

He has seen no issues with rolling after a drill-applied Avadex Excel application so long as the seed depth is not compromised due to the rolling action. Rolling will consolidate the seedbed, which aids crop establishment, reduces slug activity and provides better conditions for the efficacy of pre-emergent herbicides. However, the 40mm drilling depth needs to be maintained to ensure the safety of the crop.

“The benefits of applying Avadex with a drill-mounted applicator are that a farmer

is guaranteed to have a robust start to their herbicide programme in case the weather changes and compromises following pre-emergence applications, and it saves the cost of an additional pass to apply Avadex Excel separately. Given the uncertain weather we have seen over the last few years at drilling time, it makes complete sense to take this approach where possible,” Mr King says.

Machinery distributor Opico recently announced that the Stocks AG Turbo Jet can now come factory fitted to the Sky EasyDrill, allowing separate metering and accurate application of Avadex through an additional set of outlets behind the press wheel. It can be fitted to their 4, 6, or 8m EasyDrill, with a hopper capacity of 240 litres.

Opico territory and product manager Glenn Bootman says: “We offer a small seeds hopper on the machine, but that does not allow a blanket coverage out the back of the



Hank King