

CASE STUDY

Elliot Marshman

Elliot Marshman has a 100% cropping program spread between Scaddan, Grass Patch, as well as a small block at Gibson with livestock, all north of Esperance.

Running a canola, wheat, wheat, barley rotation, staying on top of weed numbers is paramount for him.



Elliot had tried narrow windrow burning, but saw that it was not a viable long term strategy. However, he felt that he should be doing something to manage weeds at harvest time, and so looked into other options.

"I really liked the idea of the chaff decks, because once it's done, it's done; there is no burning. Chaff carts might be better because you actually destroy the seeds by burning, but with a deck you are at least doing something. It's got to be better than doing nothing, and its easy, and that's why I went down that path."

Having seen first-hand some creeping glyphosate resistance in annual ryegrass on one of his cropping blocks, Elliot knew that something had to change. Knowing that an integrated approach could be part of a solution to the problem, he wanted to get involved in something that could 'keep the whole program in check.'

While there are other HWSC options that also fit this description, Elliot said that the other options such as a chaff cart or burning narrow windrows still necessitated burning prior to seeding, which was highly unappealing to him. Also, when he started using the decks to put weed seeds on permanent tramlines, the Harrington Seed Destructor was only available in a tow along unit. Irrespective of that, he said that he would prefer to let the integrated mills evolve a bit before he committed to one.

By contrast, the use of chaff decks didn't require any management after harvest, and seemed easy and cheap to both install and run.

"When it was delivered it was all installed and ready to go, and has been working ever since."

When asked if there had been any hassles with the decks, he said that during one season, the blades on his straw chopper had worn, and were making the chopper vibrate. This was causing the deck to also vibrate, which in turn caused some cracking around the mounting points for the decks. 'It wasn't due to any fault of the decks, and once we fixed the straw chopper and re-welded the decks it was right again. Aside from that I haven't had any dramas."

"I got into a new header (2 years old), which was a significant upgrade for me. I decided I would go down the route of a chaff deck, so I told the dealer that I wanted chaff decks on the machine, so they got James Buttle from EMAR to install it."



In terms of decreasing the weed burden, Elliot said that it was hard to gauge it properly as he hasn't done any density measurements or weed counts. But, he said he has definitely seen a concentration of weeds in the wheel lines where we are putting the chaff and weed seeds. "To me, that proves that it is working; stopping it getting spread across the whole width of the comb. All in all, I am confident it is doing what it should, and helping the weed numbers as a whole." This observation was reinforced when Elliot was swathing canola and noticed how much the density of ryegrass stubble varied across the width of the swath. "In what was typically a weedy area of the paddock, the wheel tracks were riddled with ryegrass stubble, but the rest of the width of the swath was nowhere near as bad."

Come seeding time, Elliot is not finding any problems with trashflow either. "Last year we had quite good crops, so this year's seeding would have been a good test for it. I don't think there was any difference in the chaff tramlines compared to the rest of the bar either for crop establishment. We did have blockages from the heavy stubble load, but I don't think the chafflines made it any worse."

However, one negative point about the chaff decks that Elliot has noticed is that after summer rain and the first round of summer spraying, the wheel tracks can germinate again. "Because you have the thick layer of mulch, it holds onto moisture, so you can get green wheeltracks which would have otherwise not been there." He had also heard of other people having the decks block up, but he presumed that was in high moisture environments, but he has never had these issues.



As for future aspirations, "The ultimate is the integrated seed destructor (iHSD) no doubt they come with a hefty price tag, and there could be all sorts of complications that people no doubt didn't think about. For the price of putting the decks on, I would still go down that path if I was even a little bit worried about going for the seed destructor."

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I can't see any real negatives to the chaff decks really. I don't think it's the ultimate way and burning probably removes more of the actual seeds themselves, but it's a good easy way, you are doing something, and I am happy to go with it.

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~ E Marshman