Blackspot alert

Growers must stay on the lookout for blackspot in peas this year, according to South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) researcher Jenny Davidson.

Jenny said the dry summer and autumn had increased the risk of a blackspot outbreak occurring in-crop. "We recommend field pea crops should be sown so that the majority of blackspot spores have been released prior to the crop emerging," she said.

"With the current dry conditions very few spores would be out there at present, and as we approach sowing this is increasing the chance of the fungus occurring in emerging peas."

Jenny recommended growers 'road test' the newly released *Blackspot Manager*, an on-line decision-making model which helps growers to identify optimum sowing times for peas. It is supported by growers and the Australian Government through the GRDC and can be accessed on-line at www.agric.wa.gov.au/cropdiseases. ■

Blackspot infection.

Wanted: Rust samples

Recent rainfall in south-eastern Australia has created opportunities for re-growth of cereal stubbles resulting in a 'green bridge' that may harbour rust pathogens.

Dr Colin Wellings, a NSW DPI scientist on secondment to the University of Sydney's Plant Breeding Institute, has asked growers and advisers to be vigilant in looking for rust samples on self-sown cereals in stubble, and also in locations such as roadsides and grain storages where isolated plants may be growing.

"If rust samples can be collected during this pre-cropping phase, it will give us an opportunity to capture vital information on rust distribution and the potential for rust problems in the 2008 winter cereal season," Colin said.

Samples can be mailed in paper envelopes to: Australian Cereal Rust Survey, Plant Breeding Institute, Private Bag 11, Camden, NSW 2570.

The Australian Cereal Rust Control Program is supported by growers and the Australian Government through the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC). Growers can access detailed information about rust management by visiting www.grdc.com.au/rustlinks.pdf. ■

Flower power, bacteria style, makes wheat fungus wilt

By Jan Suszkiw, ARS–USDA

Flower-dwelling bacteria could soon join the fight against *Fusarium graminearum*, the fungus that causes Fusarium head blight disease, or scab, in wheat, barley, and other cereal crops.

According to David Schisler, a plant pathologist in ARS's Crop Bioprotection Research Unit at Peoria, Illinois, the bacteria colonise the flower's anthers, or pollen-making structures, which naturally exude a smorgasbord of nutrients. One of these, choline, is rich in carbon that the bacteria need for growth.

But what does the wheat plant get in return? Protection, it turns out.

Typical premature whitening of a wheat head infected with the fungus that causes Fusarium head blight. (Photo: Crop Bioprotection Research)