

# Lentils

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## Summary

Good October rains and mild weather in spring ensured relatively high yields, especially in the Mallee, and good whole seed quality. However, there were several cases of poor quality seed from late infection by ascochyta blight. Growers are urged to treat seed for sowing in 2006 with a fungicide seed dressing and remain vigilant in controlling this disease.

Following a moderately hot and windy day in early November there were several reports of premature leaf death in lentil crops in the Wimmera, similar to that which was causing more widespread damage in South Australia. Fortunately it did not appear to result in significant yield loss or poor quality grain in Victoria.

Aphids were prevalent in some crops and seed borne virus could potentially be a problem for 2006. Seed should be tested, especially if aphids were present in seed crops.

Minor diseases of lentil that were observed during the spring of 2005 were the result of the very humid conditions experienced during October, and are not often seen under drier conditions. Stemphylium blight, caused by the pathogen *Stemphylium botryosum*, was seen in many lentil crops throughout Victoria and South Australia. This disease, identified by the pale tan blotches on the upper most foliage, is not known to cause significant yield losses. The causal pathogen can also be seed-borne but is considered to be a minor disease under Australian conditions. Sclerotinia stem rot was also seen in many lentil crops and was often mis-identified as botrytis grey mould. This disease is identified by the white fungal mycelium growth on infected stem and pod tissue, unlike botrytis grey mould which has grey mycelial growth. Botrytis grey mould was seen in some lentil crops throughout the Wimmera, but generally this was very late in the season and was unlikely to cause yield losses.

The large amount of grain produced in Victoria, and a quiet international market, put downwards pressure on the prices for the larger volume medium sized grey lentil types at harvest.

Splitters have identified Chalky white spot in split lentil samples in 2005. In the USA this is associated with feeding by Lygus bugs. Unfortunately this cannot be identified in the whole seed and export standards are very strict on the levels of "chalky white" allowable. This issue will further be investigated in 2006 for likely causes and control.