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All of the Farmer Johns staff wish you and your families a safe and happy Christmas and New Year.

Christmas gatherings provide everyone an opportunity to reconnect with family and friends. This will be especially important this festive season after a very challenging 2025 year.

We wish you well for the rapidly approaching New Year and look forward to continuing to work "with you in the growing business" in 2026!

Fertiliser

We are keeping a very close watch as the global phosphate market continues in a soft trend at the moment.

The four big suppliers agree that the phosphate market will remain soft until forecast demand ramps up at the end of December or early in January 2026 from other parts of the globe.

Fertiliser affordability is still not great given global grain prices.

Our forecast is that the price will continue to soften a little more, to a point when MAP is close to the cost of production. When that point is reached both Brazil and North America will start to purchase and the price will begin to trend upwards.

Speak to FJs for additional details and to flag your required tonnes.

Seasonal reminders

- Castrol oils will keep your engines in top order over the harvest and horti season. Call our stores to sort all your lube requirements.
- Vaccinate all sheep prior to turning them onto stubbles. Fatal outbreaks of Pulpy Kidney can result from a sudden change of diet and increased grain consumption.



Well, the BOM was correct again - we have just had one of the best springs for years!

A couple mates and I organise a monthly Men's Shed meeting here in the Barossa. Each month

somewhere between 75 to 100 blokes turn up for a bbq and chat. We interview a "normal" bloke at each of these gatherings. Some preparation for these interviews is also required. Over the course of time, it has become quite evident that suicides have been a problem for generations.

A significant number of blokes have spoken in confidence about how they have had to deal with either a close friend or family member taking their own life – not just in recent times. It is also recognised that suicide is more common in regional areas and typically a male rather than females. Mental well-being is a common theme on TV, magazines and newspapers. Although very commendable, I am not sure that some of this effort is very successful and may even be perceived by some as having reached overload levels. I have been involved in the ag industry for a very

long time. Experience tells me that to successfully manage mental wellbeing, action needs to begin well before the point of crisis when serious self-harm or suicide is contemplated. The [ifarmwell](https://www.ifarmwell.com.au) website has been designed by Australian farmers to help their farmer peers to cope effectively with life's challenges and get the most out of every day. It also contains a number of modules, tips and strategies that can assist in building mental health awareness and resilience. Earlier in November our Men's Shed group supported the screening of the Kick Off Your Boots movie. Some of our Landlink readers will have seen the movie at one of the regional screenings in the last year or two. The KOYB movie is also a suggested initiative on the [ifarmwell](https://www.ifarmwell.com.au) website.

As we rapidly count down the days to Christmas and close out another challenging year on the farm, check out the [ifarmwell](https://www.ifarmwell.com.au) website when you have a spare minute. The site might provide a few valuable tips to help your reset for the 2026 year!

Greg Schubert

Quote of the Month

"Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans."

- John Lennon

Viticulture

The **viti growing season continues to move very quickly** with what seems a shorter flowering season now done and dusted.

Spray programs have generally kept pace with the growing season however there have been a few short cuts taken especially in blocks where fruit doesn't have a home at the time. Recent warm, wet and humid conditions might test the integrity of a few spray programs.

Our agro's have been vigilant across a range of locations in both the Barossa and Riverland and have seen some early Powdery mildew outbreaks and the likelihood of a couple primary Downy Mildew infections. A Miravis and Revus tank mix was a popular option in vineyards over the course of flowering. Some second Revus applications have been made as a result of the recent higher disease pressure. Higher label rates have also been maintained during these follow up applications to counter the increased risk of disease development.

Botrytis sprays have also been applied over the last few weeks on those more susceptible varieties. Botrytis is an insidious disease and can enter the developing fruit via the wound remaining after cap fall. Botrytis prevention is always better than cure should conditions favour its development.

It is also most important to rotate botryticides between the available chemical actives in all programs to avoid the onset of resistance. In addition, rotations carry across from one season to the next. ...cont page 2/

- **Protect ripening fruit crops from bird damage** – bird scarers, gas guns and netting in stock. Check out the laser Bird Control system.
- **Burning sulphur** is available for the fruit drying season, call any if the FJ stores.
- **We have a full range of turf care products** available for your lawn – get it up to speed for Christmas!

- **Give the vegie garden a rev up with one or more of the Neutrog products** available in our stores. includes Sudden Impact, Rapid Raiser and Who Flung Dung!
- **Rabbit populations have built up** over the better than expected spring season. Bait them over the summer time with oat-based Bunny Bait!
- **Please return all Chep pallets.**

"with you in the GROWING business"

from page 1/... Although the heavy lifting in regards to disease prevention should have been completed earlier in the growing season, it is quite likely that we will encounter some disease outbreaks in the next few weeks – we always see some disease issues later in December. Unfortunately, as a result of the difficult oversupply issue facing all wine grape growers short cuts in spray programs will also become evident in the coming weeks.

Please contact any of the FJs agro's if you discover any disease issues in your vineyard.

Insect pests have been at relatively low levels however there is some evidence of Light Brown Apple Moth numbers building. Pheromone traps have identified a recent flight that presumably took place during the last cooler week of November. Closely inspect blocks that have historically experienced LBAM damage and treat with an appropriate insecticide if necessary. Chemical options have narrowed a little as we head closer to the close of the season. Again, check in with our agro's for further advice relevant to your situation.

Salinity symptoms are showing up in the canopies of more vineyards than we have seen in past seasons. Low winter and spring rainfall hasn't been sufficient to leach salt deposits through the soil profile.

Poor quality ground water represents the only available water supply for some farm enterprises and will in turn compound the accumulation of salt deposits. Applications

of calcium nitrate in various forms will assist in leaching salt deposits through the soil profile. Natural rainfall and ground recharge over the winter months is more effective in shifting salt than utilising irrigation water in the summer time. Check in with our agro's to discuss nutritional options that might also assist your vines with any salinity present in your patch.

Orchard Citrus and Horticulture

Fruitlets are beginning to size with most oranges sitting in the 20-30mm range and 10-14mm range for Mandarins. Nutrient supplements will keep the growth plane moving up. Some Foliar ZM applications have been completed with additional supplements scheduled further into December until the developing crops reach the 40 – 45mm range and Gibberellic Acid applications begin.

Insect pressure has been elevated due to the mild weather in recent weeks. Light Brown Apple Moth, katydid, earwigs and thrips have all been present in orchards. Insecticide applications should be included in the spray program to manage these populations when they reach threshold levels. Methomyl at lower rates has not provided sufficient control of katydids. Those growers that have opted for Trivora as their preferred active have achieved a far better outcome.

Please speak to either Mete or Georgie for detailed advice for your pest management program and the species you are targeting in your blocks.

Snail activity has also continued

in orchards during the recent rain events. Snails will work their way into the canopy prior to their summer estivation where they seal themselves inside the shell and slow their metabolism to prevent dehydration. Snails need to be baited whilst they are actively foraging on the ground.

Check in with our agro's to formulate a snail management plan for 2026 if numbers have built to concerning levels on your patch.

How Polymers Behave in Soil

When used as a soil moisture solution, polymers don't just stay still, but rather respond to environmental conditions. When moisture levels change, the polymer can swell, shrink or interact with soil particles to improve water and nutrient distribution.

For example, in lighter soils, polymers help reduce water loss by slowing infiltration and evaporation. In heavier soils, they can improve structure and aeration, allowing roots to grow more freely. They can also help retain nutrients in the root zone and reduce leaching.

Different polymers are suited to different purposes. Some are designed for cooler, wetter seasons to help manage water movement, while others are better suited for hot, dry conditions. Choosing the right product for the right job is key to success.

Over approximately 6-8 weeks, these polymers break down safely, releasing carbon back into the soil. This means no residue concerns, but it works instead like a supplement, improving soil performance over the season.



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Broadacre

Wet days and subsequent mild (even cold) temperatures in November have frustrated all broadacre croppers. These conditions will drag the finish line out for most.

Four weeks ago, it looked as though the dry September would see crops finish off rapidly and result in a generally poor grain quality across the board. November has seen an uptick in desiccation applications across pulse and canola crops that have been slow to go off. Cereals have also been prompted back into a growth phase with additional green heads standing above the ripened original crops.

In addition, we have also seen a late flush of Milk Thistle, Prickly lettuce, Skeleton Weed and other nuisance weeds in crops ready to



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harvest. These in-crop weeds can be desiccated with an appropriate herbicide to allow unhindered harvesting to take place. Late germinations of ryegrass and cereal re-growth on hay paddocks should be managed to halt seed set and the potential impact that could take place next season. Summer weeds have germinated as a result of the good November rain events. It is worthwhile noting the number of weeds that have germinated particularly considering that we really didn't have any serious volume of weeds in either of the past two summers. This is a timely demonstration that any escapes will set a viable seed bank requiring close attention for many years into the future!

Summer grasses, potato weed, caltrop, melons, wire weed and skeleton weed are thriving beneath the canopies of crops yet to be harvested. It appears that most paddocks that are intended to be included in the 2026 sowing program will need some sort of herbicide treatment in the next few weeks. It is also a pertinent time to remind broadacre croppers to be aware of the risks associated with herbicide drift onto off target viticulture and horticulture crops in many of regional areas. We have inspected significant damage as a result of careless applications in recent summers. A couple of our stores have been contacted by PIRSA this year and have advised that they will be conducting random on farm audits to assess farmer application practices and nozzle selections in the weeks ahead. They believe that farmers have been provided enough warning and should have the tools and skills to manage drift to a safe level this summer. To avoid any issues when applying volatile herbicides such as 2,4D or Ester we remind customers to;

- Avoid application during inversions or periods when inversion is at risk (often first thing in the morning late in the evening)
- Use Ultra Coarse or Extremely Coarse nozzles to minimise fine droplets
- Utilise quality 2,4D with low volatility and droplet optimisation such as Dropzone.
- Keep boom heights 50cm or below
- Not to apply in wind speeds exceeding 15km/hr and ensure positive breeze away from off target crops
- Abide by label buffer zones
- Maintain up to date spray records

Please speak to any of our agro's for specific summer weed control advice relevant to your property and weed profiles.

Pasture Paddocks have also experienced a longer spring flush this season compared to the last couple seasons. This flush also includes a range of broadleaf weeds. **Weeds can be managed utilising a spray/graze technique.** A low rate of MCPA 750 will stop these weeds growing and setting seed. It will also increase their palatability for stock to graze them off. Spray drift should also be considered during any summer spraying. Hay yields have been outstanding however a lot of hay has suffered serious damage as result of the prolonged wet spell. **Our team are testing a lot of hay to determine its quality** and in turn sale value. We recommend that any hay transaction should be accompanied by a feed test result for the benefit of both the seller and buyer. A wide range of prices are on offer at the moment. A hay test will aid in negotiating a fair price.



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Animal Production & General Merchandise

Fire safety around the farm has been highlighted over recent weeks with a number of fire incidents in our regions. Spontaneous combustion fires in hay stacks have been a bit too common on the back of the challenging baling season. **It might be prudent to check hay stacks and stored rolls** by simply spearing a few random bales with a steel bar. The bar will assume the temperature of the hay over time.

Make sure your fire prevention and bushfire plan are up to scratch. We stock a full range of fire equipment including pumps, tanks, hoses and requisites. We also have fully assembled tray ready fire units in stock. Give any of the FJs stores a call to help get your gear up to standard.

Flies, flies, flies!! Fly populations seem to have escalated with the damp cooler weeks of spring. **Blowfly strike has been a problem** for a number of graziers. Prevention is always better than the cure especially when discussing fly strike in sheep. The range of products that are available to manage this issue should negate the real pressure of flies particularly as sheep are still worth reasonable \$\$\$'s. Our store teams can assist in product selection for your flocks and take into account wool harvest and slaughter withholding periods.

Nuisance flies are also an ongoing problem on cattle, both dairy and in beef herds. Nuisance flies can be a major cause of pinkeye infections and in the transmission of mastitis. Infections aside, the loss of milk production, reduced weight gain, blood loss and stress in cattle as a result of fly activity is significant. Give your herd a break from flies with a simple pour on application of Easy-Dose at 5ml per 100kg.

Flies around the house and farm yard are also a pain! Spray around the house, verandah and pet shelters with a product such as Coopex or Ficam to knock down the fly and other crawling insect population. Adding a little sugar to the backpack will also attract flies to ensure an even more effective kill is achieved. Fly bait can be made available near stables and poultry housing to provide ongoing relief as well as reducing the overall fly population. We have a range of baits and fly traps in stock.

Fencing projects might have been dropped down the farm priority list a few spots as a result of the tough season and financial resources thrown at stock feed budgets. Despite this, there are still a stack of maintenance jobs that should be attended to over the quieter months of summer. Replacing the old bent gate, fix the short runs that have been damaged by falling tree branches, sort the broken posts resulting from badly timed boom spray turns and replace the damage caused by the persistent kangaroo sharefarmers!

We always have a full range of fabricated fence, plain and barbed wire, posts and steel droppers, gates, fittings and accessories in stock. Call any of our FJ stores for all fencing quotes and to arrange deliveries.

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