

Weather Watch: Spring has Sprung  
Dr Trevor Atkins, HortPlus

Well thank goodness winter is over, and Spring is well and truly upon us. I have to admit though that for awhile I considered if I was going nuts thinking that a rain cloud was following me around personally! It wasn't until I looked over the rainfall data from MetWatch that I realised why the Waikato is so green, and that we were indeed getting a bit more rain than many of the other districts around the country!

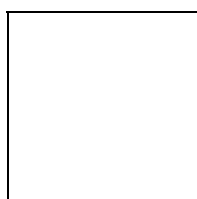


Figure 1. Overview of weather conditions around the country and associated Black Spot disease risk courtesy of HortPlus MetWatch.

(A guide to interpreting MetWatch disease risk screenshots. The screenshot for each region is made up of three panels. The bottom panel shows rainfall (bars) and air temperature (red line), the middle panel shows relative humidity (red line) and leaf wetness (blue bars), and the top panel shows the interpretation of the hourly weather information from the weather station interpreted for disease - in this case black spot (Mills Periods). The disease risk is shown both by colour and by abbreviation with S being Severe, M - Moderate, L -Light, Mar - Marginal.)

Showery Spring conditions can make disease risk estimation challenging as the numerous short periods of leaf drying can significantly impact on Black Spot development. Figure 2 illustrates the difference in estimated disease risk under the assumption of 4 vs 8 hours estimated dry period required to dessicate ascospores under these conditions. Many growers opt to run the MetWatch models at a higher number such as 8 hours drying time at this time of year in order to be risk-averse.

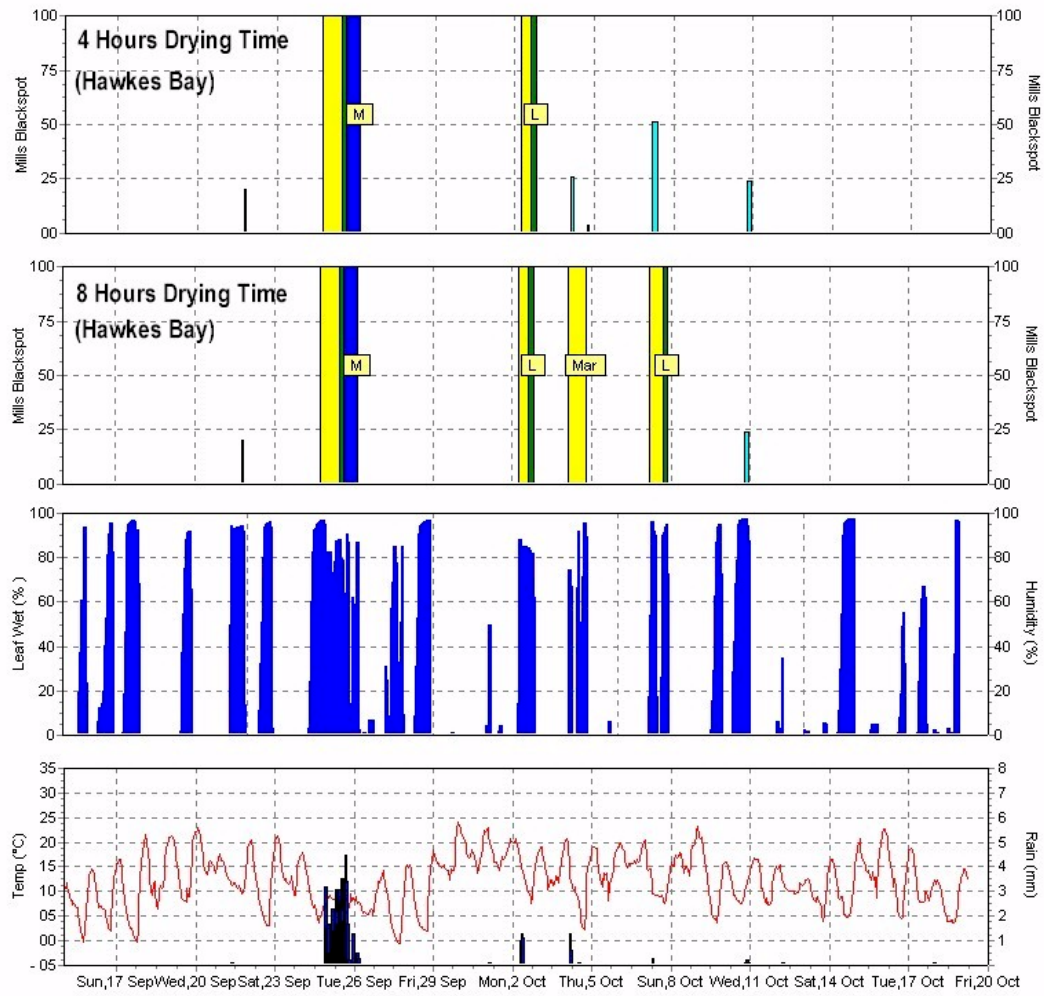


Figure 2. Effect of assuming 8 hours vs 4 hours drying time during showery Spring conditions.