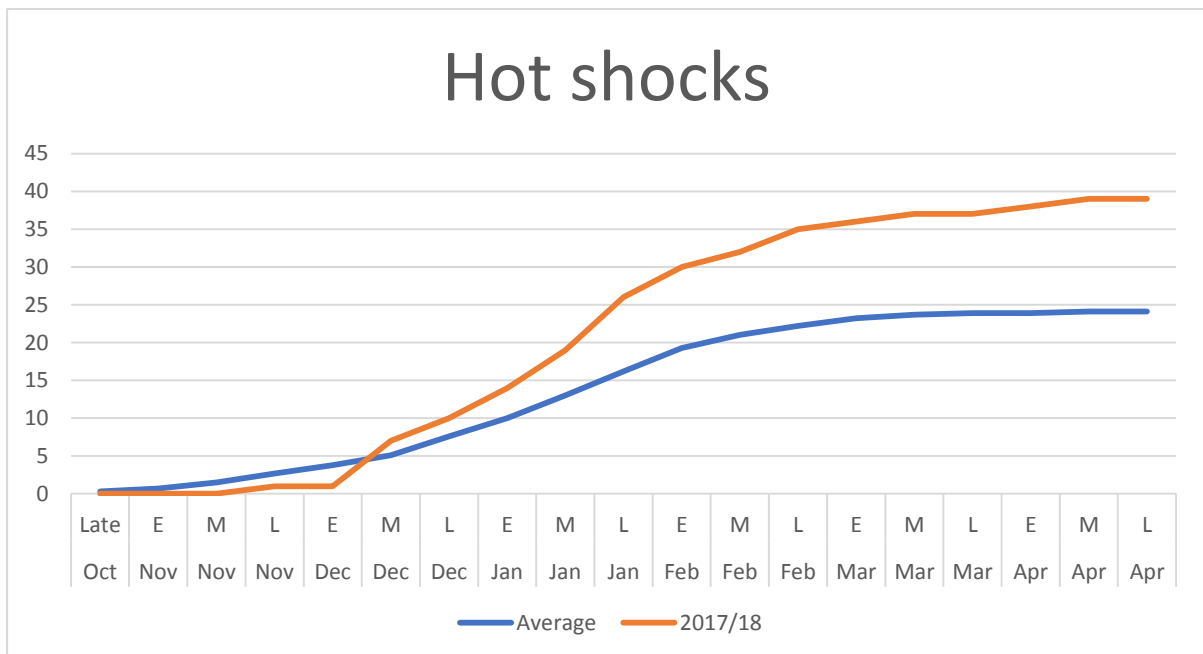
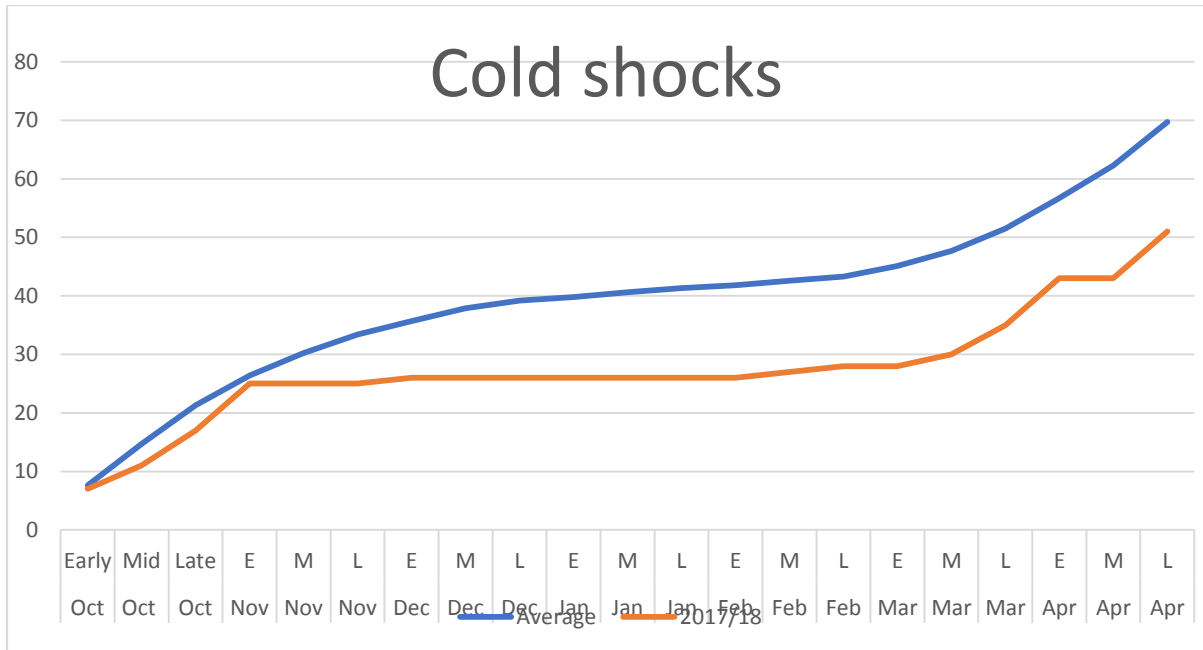


The 2017/2018 cotton season review

Most growers experienced a reasonable start to the season in late September and the first two weeks of October. Cold shocks ($< 11^{\circ}\text{C}$) were below average for the year with hot shocks ($> 35^{\circ}\text{C}$) well above average (see graphs).

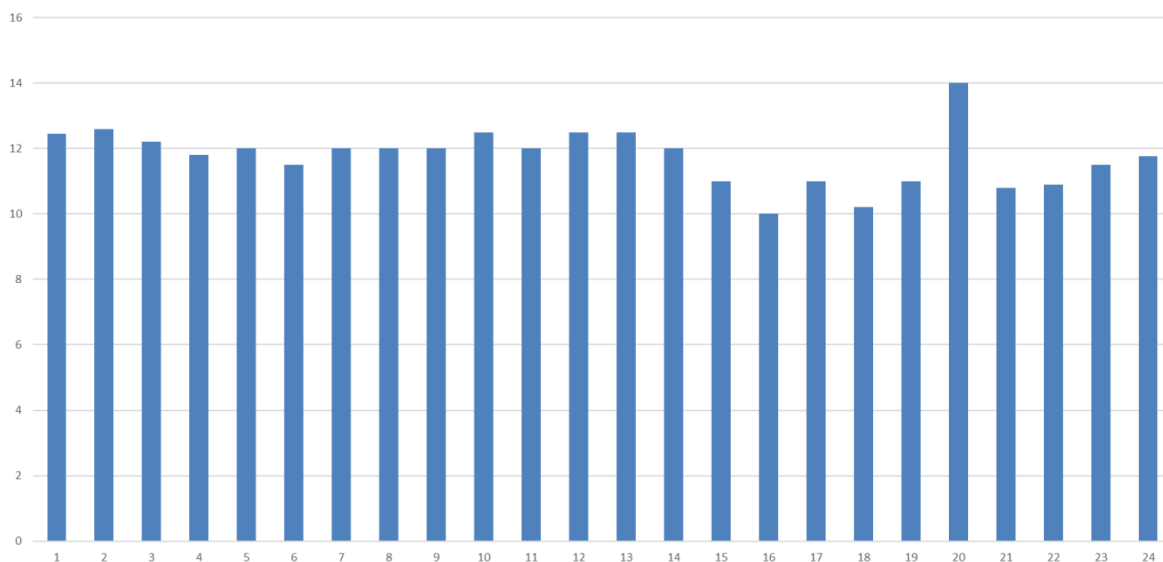


Some large storm events in late November and early December impacted crops in some regions and early season Alternaria leaf spot set some crops back. It was a very dry and warm finish which was helpful to mature crops and provided excellent picking conditions.

Over 40,000 ha was reported on in the survey with the highest yielding field at 16.2 bales/ha. A lot of growers had at least one field that went over 12 bales/ha.

The true indication of the season performance is shown by overall farm average yields. Farm averages ranged from 10 to 14 bales/ha with most in the 11-12 b/ha range. The survey average was 11.76 b/ha with the final southern NSW average likely to be around 11.2 b/ha. This is above the long-term average of 10.8 b/ha.

Farm averages b/ha 2018



The good to average yields combined with exceptional lint and cotton seed prices saw average Gross Margin/ha returns of \$2,460/ha. The average GM/ML return reported was \$322/ML but with a big range of \$477 to \$220/ML due to different contracted prices and actual water use.

	Income/ha	Variable costs/ha	Gross margin/ha	GM/ML
2016	\$7,200	\$3,895	\$3,305	\$330
2017	\$5,458	\$3,404	\$2,058	\$205
2018	\$6,310	\$3,850	\$2,460	\$246

Another good benchmark on performance is bales produced/ML of water applied. The top ten crops in the survey are shown in Table 2. The five-year average is 1.4 b/ML but it will vary depending on the season from 1.1 b/ML to 1.6 b/ML.

Crop	Yield (b/ha)	Irrigation system	ML applied #Estimated	Bales/ML
1	16.2	Bankless 1m hills	9	1.8
2	15.7	Bankless 90 cm beds	9	1.74
3	15.4	Siphons, 1:2000 1m hills	7.95	1.94
4	15.3	Siphons 1:1500 1m hills	11.2	1.37
5	15.2	Siphons 1m hills	11	1.38
6	15.1	Siphons 1: 1800 90 cm beds	11	1.37
7	14.5	Siphons 90 cm beds	11	1.32
8	14.23	PTTB 1m beds	9.52	1.49
9	14.18	Siphons 1m hills	12.5	1.13
10	14	Bankless beds	13	1.07
Average	14.98		10.42	1.46

Table 2. Southern NSW survey Top ten crops Bales/ML

When asked to comment on why this season's crop was a success two consistent themes came out. Attention to detail during the planting operation was a key to success and excellent irrigation management (water on and off bays quickly, timing during peak demand and well-maintained layouts).

When asked what their biggest challenge was to remain profitable the obvious response was around water. Water availability and water affordability was mentioned by over 80 % of the respondents. Disease build up, with Black Root Rot specifically mentioned, came in second.

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