

### STALK WALK

We will hold our Cane Variety Walk at the Mill Farm looking at the varieties in the 2024 Mother Plot and ASP.

**Date:** Tuesday, 26 August 2025

**Venue:** Harwood Mill Farm  
Access from Watts Land  
HARWOOD ISLAND

**Time:** 10.00 AM

**Parking:** Depending on weather conditions we may need to park at the Mill Dump Pad and walk down to the Mother Plot/Approved Seed Plot—bring your gum boots/wellies as it will be wet under foot.

We will look at how the current varieties are performing in the field and compare their historical yields and returns. It is also a great opportunity to discuss variety preferences with other growers; how the different varieties are performing for them and what that might mean in your own situation. This information that we can share with each other can be the most valuable information of all and we recommend anyone that can make it come down. If you are unable to make it, but would like to look through the plots at another time, please don't hesitate to call me and we can arranged it.

### GOING TO SEED

Seed Cane Order Forms have been sent in the same email as this Newsletter. Please complete them and email or post them back to me as soon as possible. Because of the late harvest last year, we don't have as much clean seed available in the plots as we have done in some previous years. However, there is a good volume of most of the common varieties available. The Seed Plot will open from the first week in September but if anyone has ground ready to go before that, just let us know and we should be able to arrange something. Our current soil temperature at the mill farm is around 11—13 degrees Celsius, so we have a little to go yet.

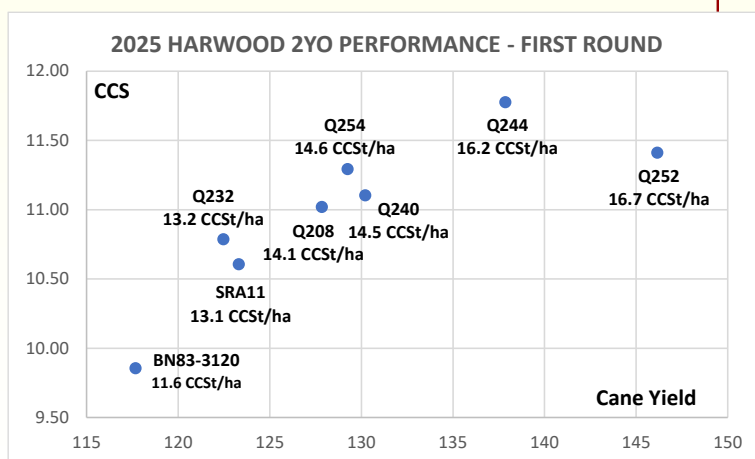
### TAKING A DEEP DIVE INTO VARIETIES

We have included a copy of the 2025 Variety & Planting Guide with this Stalk Talk. The guide provides detailed information on the past performance of each of the major varieties available in the Harwood Mill area with a focus on the 2024 season results. This year we have also taken a closer look at Ratoonability for many of our major varieties. We also have some tips for choosing varieties and minimising disease impacts to get you ready for the planting season.

With the first round of the 2025 crush now completed, we now have some early data, about how varieties are performing so far this year. But before we start, a word of caution, the first round is generally when we get rid of our worst performing hectares, late ratoons and flood damaged cane, so consider this when you are making your comparisons. The graph below shows the 8 largest varieties, in terms of tonnes harvested. The left hand axis, shows CCS and the bottom axis tracks Cane Yield. This allows us to compare varieties and how they get their sugar.

Q252 is our best performing variety to date. It is on the far right of the graph with a sugar yield of 16.7 CCS tonnes/ha. It does this with a very high average cane yield of 146 t/ha and CCS of 11.4. Q244 has the highest average CCS this year of 11.8 and the second best cane yield of 138 t/ha, giving it sugar yield of 16.2 CCS t/ha.

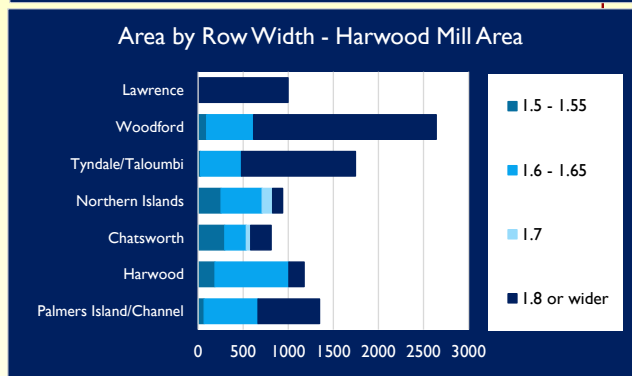
SRA11, which had the highest cane yield in 2024, is behind the pack this year but there are some big SRA11 crops still to come in, so we expect this to change. Q208, Q232, Q254 and Q240 are clustered in the centre of the graph, delivering between 13 -14.5 cc tonnes/ha.



## MANY HAPPY RATOONS

As part of our analysis for the 2025 Variety & Planting Guide we looked at a number of different methods of analysing ratoonability of our most common varieties using historical milling data. What we are trying to do is to show which varieties repeatedly perform over the full lifecycle of the crop and what will deliver the best returns for you over that time. The costs of a ratoon crop are substantially lower than planting costs, and squeezing out an additional ratoon at a good yields can make a substantial difference to your profitability. Firstly, we looked at the proportion of a variety's plating area makes it through to third or fourth ratoon—Q232 delivered the best result there with 16% making it through to a fourth ratoon. We also looking at longer term average yields (both sugar and cane) as well as Net Returns over a plant and three or four ratoon cycle and Q244, Q240 and Q232 delivered the best results, with Q232 delivering the most even distribution. Q232 along with Q252 had the smallest drop in yield as a percentage, with cane yields at fourth ratoon around 90% of the yield at plant cane—for Q208, in comparison this was only 76%,

We also applied a Ratoonability Index, adapting the work of Dr Brayden Blanchard from the Louisiana State University Ag Centre. Dr Blanchard developed this method to compare varieties using trial data in the Louisiana Sugarcane Variety Development Program. We have adapted it to use our commercial data. We create the index by aggregating the yield of a variety over plant and four ratoons and then dividing that by the aggregated yield from our standard variety. In this case we have used Q208 as our standard because it is the variety with the largest area planted in the mill area. If we look at cane yield, three varieties, Q232, Q240 and Q244 come out on top with a ratoonability index of around 110%, suggesting they perform around 10% better than our standard, Q208. But if we look at sugar yield over time, Q244 and Q240 come out ahead. However, we need to take into account where these varieties are mostly grown on the farm. Because of its issues with CSD and waterlogging and flooding, Q244 is generally confined to river banks. This is also our best drained ground with our most nutrient rich soils, and it is also the least likely to get bogged out in a wet harvest. Q232, on the other hand, is regularly grown on poorer ground, where it has fewer of those advantages, so it's strong ratoonability result is more impressive than it might look and it can certainly mount a very strong case for being our best ratooner.

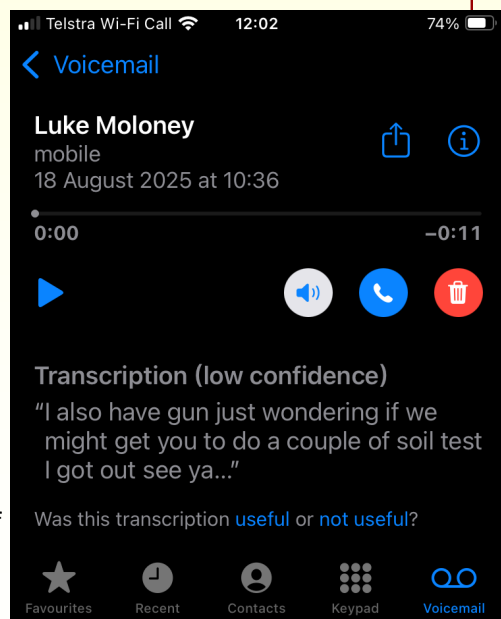


## TRANSITIONING

More growers in recent years have moved to a wider row spacing and, at the beginning of 2025, for the first time, the majority, around 57% of our Production Area Entitlement in the Harwood Mill Area, is being farmed at, or in the process of moving to, 1.8 metre or wider rows. Lawrence is leading the charge, with all of the growers in that area, now planting their new crop area at 1.8 metre or wider. The percentages for the other areas in the mill are shown in the second graph on the right with the area at 1.8 metre rows or wider shown in the dark blue. This does not include some of the growers who have indicated they are moving to the wider rows when they plant later this year.

## SOIL TESTS AT GUN POINT

I recently received a Voicemail from Luke Moloney, which after going through the voice transcription on my phone, came out as **"...I also have gun—just wondering if we might get you to do a couple of soil tests..."**. I checked with Luke and he assures me this is not what he said but I have listened back a few times and I am still not sure. It certainly did grab my attention. We are quite keen to support regular soil testing and Ag Services supports this by subsidising 50% of the cost, with an average soil test costing you around \$60 each. Also, I am very happy to come out and take the test or assist you in doing so and, if you would prefer to collect your own, to provide bags etc. No threat of weapons or other forms of violence necessary. However, this definitely did spur me into action, and the soil tests are on their way.



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