



ZULULAND NORTH EXTENSION NEWS



HAIL DAMAGE ON SUGARCANE

Severe storms, marked by powerful winds and hail, battered the Empangeni and Heatonville regions recently, resulting in localised damage to sugarcane crops, from the damage to the stalks, growth points, as well as shredding of leaves and bruising of the stalks.

Fortunately, the hailstones were quite small, and the cane can very often recover quite well provided the growing points have not been damaged, stalks not broken and there is no serious bruising. The extent and level of damage can only be assessed two to three weeks after the incident.

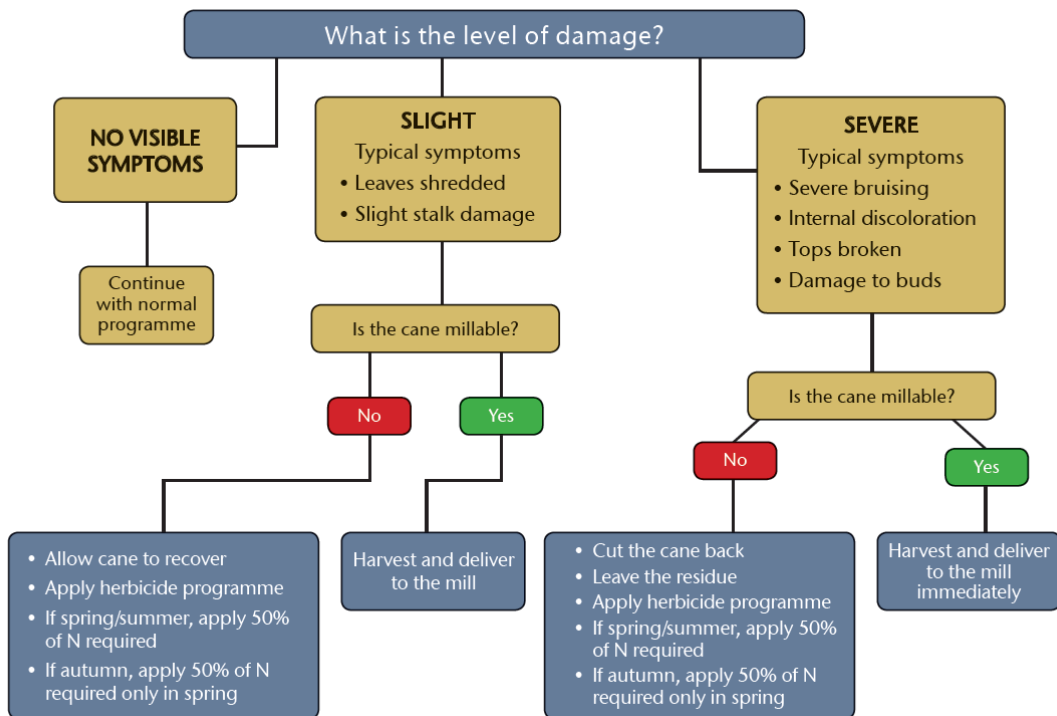
Observations made so far:

- **DAMAGED GROWING POINT AND BROKEN STALK:** Side shooting will take place. Sucrose will be mobilised from the stalk to fuel growth of side shoots, and this will have a detrimental effect on cane yield and quality.
- **BRUISING:** Inspection for damage due to bruising of the stalks can be done 14 to 21 days after the hail incident. Stalk damage due to bruising will make it difficult for the plant to recover. Stalks will then become infected with several fungal pathogens, especially those that can cause red and sour rot.
- **SHREDDED LEAVES:** Sucrose production in the leaf canopy will be compromised. Stalk growth will be delayed until new leaves are formed. Chemical ripening will not work in this situation.

Recommendations:

- **UNMILLABLE YOUNG CANE:** Where the growing points are completely damaged, and stalks are seriously bruised, cut the cane back and allow it to regrow. Damaged leaves will regrow where there is no stalk formation. No further action is required except applying fertilisers.
- **OLDER CANE:** Where a large percentage of the growing points are damaged, stalks are broken and seriously bruised, harvesting should take place before the development of side-shoots.
- **WIND DAMAGE:** Where the stalks are broken or snapped due to wind, the cane should be harvested as soon as possible. Chemical ripening will not be effective when cane is lying flat on the ground.

Should you need any assistance please contact me.



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