



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# United Kingdom Variety List Trials: Trial Procedures for Official Examination of Value for Cultivation and Use (VCU) Harvest 2022

Minor Crop: Annual Ryegrass (Westerwolds)

Date: August 2022



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The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) is an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, and also works on behalf of the Scottish Government and Welsh Government.

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# Section A – Summary of VCU trial assessments required

**Bold = Obligatory**

*Italics = Additional. Assessed only if requested by the applicant*

| Observation           | Reference | Description of assessment  |
|-----------------------|-----------|--|
| Yield                 | Section C | <b>Total dry matter yield under conservation management in the year of sowing.</b> |
| Yield                 | Section C | <b>Spring dry matter yield under conservation management in the second year</b>    |
| Impact of environment | Section C | <b>Establishment</b>   |
| Impact of environment | Section C | <b>Ground cover in the autumn of the sowing year</b>                               |
| Impact of environment | Section C | <b>Re-growth (late heading)</b>  |
| Impact of environment | Section C | <b>Lodging</b>   |
| Impact of environment | Section C | <b>Winter Hardiness</b>  |

| <b>Observation</b>              | <b>Reference</b> | <b>Description of assessment</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|
| Resistance to harmful organisms | Section D        | <b>Mildew</b>                    |
| Resistance to harmful organisms | Section D        | <b>Crown rust</b>                |
| Resistance to harmful organisms | Section D        | <b>Drechslera</b>                |
| Resistance to harmful organisms | Section D        | <b>Brown rust</b>                |
| Resistance to harmful organisms | Section D        | <b>Ryegrass Mosaic Virus</b>     |
| Quality characteristics         | Section E        | <b>Digestibility</b>             |

### **Further measurements**

The following must be measured or recorded in all trials, following procedures in Section C.

**Sowing date**

**Harvest date**

**Pest damage (where present at a level which will affect results)**

**Plot size**

## **Section B – Seed handling procedures**

### **B.1 Seed handling procedures**

B.1.1 See GENERAL INFORMATION, SECTION 5 - Minor Crop VCU Procedures Introduction.

### **B.2 Authentication of VCU seed**

B.2.1 For every variety submitted for VCU trialling, the Seed Handling Operator must forward 200 g of untreated sample of seed, for authentication by the DUS test centre by the date specified by APHA. The Trials Organiser will notify the minimum quantity required to Seed Handling Operators annually.

# Section C – Growing trial procedures

## C.1 Responsibilities

C.1.1 The Growing Trial Operators are responsible for conducting the trials according to these procedures.

## C.2 Site suitability

C.2.1 The Growing Trial Operator will be responsible for providing a suitable site, which meets the following criteria:

C.2.1.1 Previous cropping should follow local best practice i.e.: no Annual Ryegrass (Westerwolds) grown in the previous two years.

C.2.1.2 Soil type should be typical of those on which Annual Ryegrass (Westerwolds) is grown locally. Soil fertility and texture should be uniform across the site. The soil should be sufficiently uniform to avoid variation in the growth of the trial.

C.2.1.3 The trial should be sited away from trees, hedges, headlands and other features, which are likely to cause uneven growth or encourage damage from wild fauna.

C.2.1.4 The trial area should be cultivated in the direction of ploughing and drilled across the direction of ploughing and cultivation such that each plot receives similar treatments. Cultivations should follow best local practice.

C.2.1.5 The frequency, direction and approximate date of all cultivations carried out since the last crop should be recorded in the site details record sheet.



## C.3 Sowing the trial

### C.3.1 Plot Size

C.3.1.1 Plots must be drilled to a greater length than required and then trimmed back to appropriate length prior to harvest. The plot width for calculating the harvested area is measured from outer row to outer row plus half the inter-plot gap on either side. The allowance for the inter-plot gap must be no greater than 0.45m. The plots must be sown at a size sufficient to allow a minimum target harvested plot area, after trimming, of 15 m<sup>2</sup>. There will be three replicates sown.

### C.3.2 Plant population

C.3.2.1 Plots should be sown to achieve a target final uniform plant population of approximately 300-325 plants/m<sup>2</sup>.

The following formula will be used to calculate the seed rate for a given thousand seed weight:

$$\text{Seed rate (kg/ha)} = \frac{(\text{Target population} \times \text{Thousand seed weight}) \times 100}{(\text{Establishment \%} \times \text{Germination \%})}$$

The likely establishment should be judged carefully depending on soil conditions and seedbeds. Growing Trial Operators are responsible for achieving the correct target populations.

### C.3.3 Trial layout

C.3.3.1 The Trials Organiser following consultation with APHA produces provisional sowing lists. The Trials Organiser will make final sowing lists available to Growing Trial Operators, along with the trial plans produced by the Trial Design and Data Handling Operator.

C.3.3.2 The trial should be sown according to the plan produced by the Trial Design and Data Handling Operator and may be an incomplete block design. In an incomplete block design each replicate is split into a number of sub-blocks. Any splitting of replicates must be between sub-blocks and not through sub-blocks. Varieties can be moved within a sub-block but must not be moved from their sub-block. Varieties must not be moved around within the plan eg if drilling errors occur. If plots are moved out of their original sub-block they will have to be treated as missing plots. If there are any queries please contact the Trials Organiser.

C.3.3.3 Buffer plots may be required in some instances. The Trials Organiser will advise if this is the case.

C.3.3.4 If there is a need to replace a planned variety e.g.: if varieties are withdrawn, affected plots must be sown with any of the standard control varieties. Any such replacements must be agreed with the Trials Organiser. The control varieties are listed in [Appendix 5](#).

#### C.3.4 **Drilling**

C.3.4.1 Care must be taken with drill settings and drilling speed to ensure satisfactory and uniform establishment and plant population from plot to plot. It is also important to ensure that there is no carryover of seed between plots.

C.3.4.2 At least two rows of discard should be drilled on either side of the trial with the same drill and at the same time that the trial is drilled

C.3.4.3 Precautions must be taken to avoid any missing rows. Any missing rows or parts of rows must be noted on the drilling plan and reported to the Trials Organiser within one month of emergence.

### **C.3.5 Confirmation of trial layout**

C.3.5.1 After full establishment, and within one month of sowing, the Growing Trial Operator must confirm that the trial has been sown to plan or give details of any changes to plan. This should be done by clearly highlighting the changes in the electronic plan and returning it to the Trial Design and Data Handling Operator.

C.3.5.2 Return a completed Site data 1 sheet including the following information:

- Site location details including how to get to the field.
- Sketch showing the layout of the trial in the field, in relation to other trials and showing access roads, gates, etc. The location of the access gates should utilise the navigation platform [What3Words.com](https://www.what3words.com).
- Trial sketch showing plot numbers and variety codes and/or names.
- A short post-establishment report of the condition of the trial.

## **C.4 Husbandry**

### **C.4.1 Agronomy**

Where not specified in these procedures' agronomy should follow best local practice.

### **C.4.2 Fertiliser and spray application**

Applications of fertilisers and sprays should be uniform. It is normally best to apply these across the direction of the plots. The precision application of chemicals post-drilling down the rows is permitted where appropriate, but wheelings within or between plots post drilling are not acceptable unless they consistently occur in the same place in each plot.

### **C.4.3 Fertiliser application**

Applications of fertilisers should take into account inherent fertility, previous cropping, winter rainfall, the best local practice. All fertiliser applications should take account of the AHDB Nutrient Management Guide (RB209), the corresponding advisory publications in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and past trialling experience.

### **C.4.4 Herbicides**

The Trials Organiser must be consulted. Application should be across the direction of drilling.

### **C.4.5 Pest and disease control**

#### **C.4.5.1 Pest control**

Appropriate seed dressings must be applied as approved by the Trials Organiser. The chemical seed treatment applied to the trial seed should control some soil-borne pests and may provide some early-season control of insect-borne-virus vectors. However, appropriate pesticide treatments should be undertaken to control virus vectors through the season. Precautions should be taken against attacks by, for example, birds, deer, rabbits, hares, mice and insects.

#### **C.4.5.2 Disease control**

Trials should be treated with a fungicide according to the instructions in [Appendix 7](#).

### **C.4.6 Irrigation**

Irrigation will not be permitted without the specific agreement of the Trials Organiser.

## **C.4.7 Pathways**

A gap (pathway) at the end of each plot of at least 1m is required.

## **C.4.8 Plot assessment**

Plots should be assessed at the time of the population count to determine whether they are suitable for harvest. Weak plots may occur due to mechanical or varietal problems. If the problem is considered to be varietal the plots must remain as part of the trial. If the problem is considered to be mechanical the plots should either be treated as missing or as half plots.

Plots affected should be notified to the Trials Organiser at the time of detection

### **C.4.8.1 Half plots - plots with gaps or poor uniformity may occur**

If plots have gaps due to mechanical or agronomic problems, it may be necessary to eliminate the poor area by reducing the plot to a uniform length. Removal must be across all rows - whole rows cannot be discarded. These plots should be measured and pegged at the time of the population counts

### **C.4.8.2 Missing plots - plots with gaps or poor uniformity may occur**

If plots are weak due to mechanical or agronomic problems throughout their entire length, it may be necessary to make the plots missing. These plots should be pegged at the time of the population counts and should be entered in subsequent data records with a symbol indicating there is no recorded value associated with this plot (see C.6.2.5). The plots should be clearly indicated when the data is sent to the Trial Design and Data Handling Operator.

## **C.5 Harvesting**

### **C.5.1 Timing of harvesting**

C.5.1.1 Date of harvesting will be according to a schedule which will be drawn up by the Growing Trial Operator. Six harvest cuts to be taken, five for growth in the year of sowing and one for spring growth in the second year (timings to be determined by the trials Officer).

C.5.1.2 Plots can be topped over at the discretion of the trials operator in the autumn/winter following sowing to provide a uniform plot canopy. Plots should be trimmed to their final harvest length as described in C.4.7 above. The plot dimensions must be measured prior to harvesting. If it is necessary to reduce the harvest size as described in C.4.8.1 above give clear details with the yield file. Individual harvested plot lengths should be recorded.

### **C.5.2 Harvesting method**

C.5.2.1 All trials will be harvested by harvesting equipment approved by the Trials Organiser. There will be two harvest dates, a main cut and regrowth to be determined by the Trials Officer.

### **C.5.3 Samples**

C.5.3.1 A sample of the chopped material (minimum 500 g) should be taken for dry matter analysis from each plot. A composite sample from all rows should be taken. Make every attempt to ensure that the sample is well mixed and representative of the plot.

C.5.3.2 All samples should be labelled with the labels provided by the Trials Organiser.

C.5.3.3 The samples should be delivered to the appropriate Quality Testing Operator as soon as practical after harvest.

### **C.5.4 Submission of data and samples**

C.5.4.1 [Appendix 6](#) lists the records, with deadlines, to be sent to the Trials Organiser. Diary sheets and any other field records should be returned to the Trials Organiser within 5 working days of harvest.

C.5.4.2 All plot records should be transmitted to the Trial Design and Data Handling Operator following the deadlines set out in [Appendix 6](#). The Growing Trial Operator should ensure that data are free from errors before transmission. After scrutiny, copies of results will be returned to the Growing Trial Operator for action as agreed by the data handling operator.

C.5.4.3 All samples should be sent to the Quality Testing Operator following the deadlines set out in [Appendix 6](#).

## C.6 Records

C.6.1 There are four components:

1. Diary: field notes of trial status, recording and inspections
- 2.\* Site data part 1, including full location details:
  - i) Map of site location - showing nearby settlements and roads;
  - ii) Sketch - showing the layout of trials in the field with access points;
  - iii) Trial layout - showing plot numbers and variety codes/names.
- 3.\* Site data part 2, details of agrochemical applications and irrigation.
4. Plot records and data.

*\* Template available from Trials Organiser*

C.6.1.1 An entry in the Diary sheet should be made on every trial visit and any observations relevant to variety performance should be recorded. If the trial is in good condition, with no problems, this should be recorded.

## C.6.2 Plot records

C.6.2.1 Plot data may be recorded direct onto a data logger using a system approved by the Trials Organiser or recorded on paper then entered and validated onto a computer using an approved system. A system of ensuring that data are recoverable, in the event of loss of original data, must be implemented, e.g., copy and safe storage. Whichever method is used, individual plot data will only be accepted by the appropriate Trial Design and Data Handling Operator in an approved format using the measure names and units as listed in Section C.6.3.

C.6.2.2 All observations should be checked at the time of recording to ensure that they lie within acceptable limits for the character recorded. Observations that have been designated as exceptional by the recorder should be identified with a note on the approved data file or hard copy medium describing the possible causes together with a recommendation for their exclusion or inclusion in the trial analysis.

C.6.2.3 Plot numbers on record sheets must correspond with the numbering on the field plan.

C.6.2.4 If a character is not recorded or is missing the Growing Trial Operator should indicate in the diary and on the recording sheet the reason why it has been excluded.

C.6.2.5 Where a plot record is missing the Growing Trial Operator should record this in any data file or hard copy medium as a symbol thereby indicating there is no recorded value associated with this plot.

C.6.2.6 Specific plot records must be made as counts or on the scales shown for each character. Only the character names as listed may be used. All records should be returned to the Data Handling Operator as soon as possible after they are completed.

C.6.2.7 All records must be returned as soon as reasonably possible and when complete for the whole trial. Indicative deadlines are given in [Appendix 7](#). All records must be returned by the final deadlines.



### C.6.3 Procedures for recording characters

C.6.3.1 The following procedures must be followed for measuring all characters to be used in NL decision-making.

C.6.3.2 **SOWING DATE** (OBLIGATORY) (Day/month/year)

This is recorded in Part 1 of the Site Information Form.

C.6.3.3 **FRESH YIELD** from all plots (OBLIGATORY) (kg)

Enter the total harvested weight in kg per plot and provide the harvested plot dimensions with the record. If the plot lengths or widths are not the same for every plot, a separate record must be submitted.

C.6.3.4 **DRY MATTER WEIGHT** from all plots (OBLIGATORY) (kg)

A detailed procedure for the assessment of dry matter content is given in Section E. Also specify the fresh weight taken for the sample. If the figures are DM% then enter the fresh weight of sample as 100.

C.6.3.5 **ESTABLISHMENT** from all plots (OBLIGATORY) (Count)

Record the number of plants in the plot after full emergence by using a quadrat. Record the plot length counted and indicate any rows that have a low population.

C.6.3.6 **MILDEW** from all plots (OBLIGATORY if present) (%)

Record if the most affected variety has over 5% of the leaf area affected using the foliar disease assessment key.

C.6.3.7 **CROWN RUST** from all plots (OBLIGATORY if present) (%)

Record if the most affected variety has over 5% of the leaf area affected using the foliar disease assessment key.

C.6.3.8 **BROWN RUST** from all plots (OBLIGATORY if present) (%)

Record if the most affected variety has over 5% of the leaf area affected using the foliar disease assessment key.

C.6.3.9 **RYEGRASS MOSAIC VIRUS** from all plots (OBLIGATORY if present) (%)

Record if the most affected variety has over 5% of the leaf area affected using the foliar disease assessment key.

C.6.3.10 **HARVEST DATE (Main)** (OBLIGATORY) (Day/month/year)

C.6.3.11 *ESTABLISHMENT* from all plots  
*plots*  
*IONAL)* (ADDITIONAL)  
(1-9)

1 very thin  
9 very thick

C.6.3.13 *WINTER HARDINESS* from all plots (ADDITIONAL) (1-9)

1 complete loss  
9 no damage

Scored following the key given in [Appendix 7](#). Scores should be made 7-14 days after a cold period, to allow for expression of symptoms.

#### C.6.3.14 **Site Factors**

Any factors which may have affected the yield of the trial or individual plots must be noted and accompany the yield data.

Where varietal differences are seen in pest or disease attack, records should be made either as an estimate % of plants affected or as % leaf area attacked in accordance with the procedure in Section D for disease.

Records for other scores should be taken as % plants affected or on a 1 to 9 scale. Include definitions of 1 to 9 on the scale.

#### C.6.3.15 **Trial Inspection**

*All trials will be inspected by the Trial Inspection and Technical Validation Operator and, in some cases, it may be necessary to visit on more than one occasion.*

*The requirements for Growing Trial Operators in respect of inspections are to:*

- 1. Give inspectors reasonable access to trials and provide full location and site details (if not already given with site data 1)*
- 2. Provide the inspector with information (for example pesticide sprays applied etc) within seven days of a request*
- 3. Co-operate with the inspector in making any non-routine assessments required to establish the validity of the trial (for example population counts)*
- 4. Carry out any action agreed in consultation with the inspector. In particular it is important that any requirement to shorten plots is undertaken. (Establishment% x Germination %).*

# Section D – Disease testing procedures

## D.1 Assessment of natural infection

D.1.1 The Growing Trial Operator is responsible for carrying out these procedures.

### D.1.2 Naturally occurring disease in VCU growing trials

D.1.2.1 Naturally occurring disease is normally recorded in the growing trials.

Confirmation of the identity of a disease should be obtained from an appropriate plant pathologist if required.

#### D.1.2.2 Recording methods

D.1.2.3 Diseases are assessed using the timings and appropriate assessment keys given in [Appendix 7](#). All disease records to be sent to the Trial Design and Data Handling Operator as soon as they are made.

# Section E – Quality testing procedures

## E.1 Responsibilities

E.1.1 The Quality Testing Operator appointed by the Trials Organiser is responsible for conducting approved quality tests according to these procedures. The Growing Trial Operators are responsible for producing representative samples for quality assessment as indicated in Section C.

## E.2 Quality assessment methodology for obligatory and additional tests

### E.2.1 Dry Weight determination **(OBLIGATORY)**

The treatment of samples and the time interval between cutting and weighing should be such that there is no significant moisture loss between the weighing of the plot fresh yield and the weighing of the fresh weight of the sample.

A fully representative sub-sample (min 500 g) of well-chopped fresh material is accurately weighed, or an accurately recorded catch weight (min 500 g recorded to one decimal place) taken. Although in some instances all of the sampling and weighing of fresh material may be carried out in the field, it is acceptable for samples to be brought to the laboratory for weighing. If the latter option is followed the representative sample is immediately sealed in a 500 gauge polythene bag and kept out of direct sunlight and as cool as possible until transported to the laboratory. Each sample is identified with a label.

The sample is placed in the drier which must be at a temperature of  $100\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 4\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  with the air recirculator set in the range 80-100 % recirculation in order to restore the temperature to  $100\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 4\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  as rapidly as possible. When the temperature is restored to  $100\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 4\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  the air regulator is set at 80% recirculation i.e. 20 % fresh hot air. The air regulator is critical for even rapid drying. The samples are dried  $100\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 4\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  for such time as is necessary for complete drying.

The dried sample is carefully removed from the drier as soon as the sample is cool enough for accurate weighing. The dry weight is recorded to one decimal place.

# Section F – Trial design and data handling procedures

## F.1 Plan validation and storage

F.1.1 After the trial has been drilled, the Growing Trial Operator must:

- a) Confirm that the trial has been drilled according to plan and provide the sowing date, by returning site data 1 and associated trial sketch to the Trial Design and Data Handling Operator.
- b) If any amendments to the plan have been made, return a hard copy of the plan to the Trial Design and Data Handling Operator with any amendments clearly indicated. Alternatively, amendments may be notified electronically with the agreement of the Trial Design and Data Handling Operator.

F.1.2 The Trial Design and Data Handling Operator will check these for statistical validity and, once this has been done, will load the plan on the database.

## F.2 Data recording

F.2.1 Data are recorded using the methods and characters given in Sections C, D and E.

F.2.2. Site information is recorded for each trial including, for example, data on previous cropping, cultivations, soil details and fertiliser applications.

F.2.3 Details of any agrochemical applications are also recorded and forwarded to the Trials Organiser.

## F.3 Data processing

F.3.1 Processing of individual agronomic and disease variates

F.3.2 A list of the agronomic, yield and disease variates, which may be recorded and processed, are specified in Sections C, D and E. After scrutiny, copies of the results will be returned to the Growing Trial Operator for action as agreed by the Trials Organiser.

## F.4 Other tests and trials

F.4.1 Any additional or alternative designs required for the assessment of additional VCU characters not detailed in Annex D of the **MINOR CROPS VCU TRIAL PROTOCOL** will be added to these **Procedures** as and when approved by the NLSC.



## Appendix 1 – Approved Trial Organisers/ Operators for annual ryegrass

| Activity   | Organisers / Operators Responsible |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Trials Organiser                                   | BSPB                               |
| Trial Design and Data Handling Operator            | NIAB                               |
| Growing Trial Operator                             | NIAB, DSV, DLF, IBERS              |
| Seed Handling Operator                             | NIAB                               |
| Trial Inspection and Technical Validation Operator | NIAB                               |
| Quality Testing Operator                           | NIAB                               |
| Data Review and Standard Setting Operator          | NIAB                               |

## **Appendix 2 – Seed treatment products for use on NL trials**

Approved products compliant with restrictions, manufacturer's guidance and Trials Organiser's approval.

## Appendix 3 – Seed despatch deadline

VCU seed must be delivered to the Seed Handler by 5<sup>th</sup> February.

# Appendix 4 – VCU Growing Trial Operators and trial locations for annual ryegrass

| Growing Trial Operator | Seed Handling Operator (If not trial operator) | Location of Trial |
|------------------------|--|-------------------|
| NIAB                   | DSV  | Gloucestershire   |

# Appendix 5 – Control varieties for VCU assessments for annual ryegrass

Peleton  
Jivet

# Appendix 6 – dates by which records should be submitted

## To Trials Organiser

| Record                                       | Latest date of receipt by Trials Organiser   |
|--|--|
| Site data part 1 (including site sketch)     | Within 1 month of drilling trial   |
| Site data part 2                             | By the time trial is harvested   |
| Plot records (in approved electronic format) | Growing Trial Operator should notify Trials Organiser that trial has been harvested within 2 days of harvest |

## Plot records to Data Handling Operator

| Record  | Date                                 |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Plot records should be sent to Data Handling Operator | Within 10 days of record being taken |

## Plot samples to Quality Testing Operator

| Samples   | Date                     |
|---|--------------------------|
| Plot samples for quality testing Should be sent to Quality Testing Operator | Within 2 days of harvest |

# Appendix 7 – Assessment keys for annual ryegrass diseases

The control varieties are:

| Early perennial ryegrass   |
|----------------------------|
| Glasker (D)                |
| Genesis (D)                |
| AberTorque (T)             |
| Boyne (Common)             |
| Merifest (for festulolium) |

| Intermediate perennial ryegrass |
|---------------------------------|
| Glasker (D) (Common)            |
| AberTorch (T) (Common)          |
| Boyne (D)                       |
| Dunluce (T)                     |
| AberMagic (D)                   |
| Drumbo (D) (Common)             |
| Glenstal (T) NL2                |
| Seago (T) NL1                   |
| AberBite (T) (Common)           |

### Late perennial ryegrass

Drumbo (D)

AberChoice (D)

Twymax (T) NL2

Meiduno (T) NL1

AberBite (T)

Dunluce (Common)

AberMagic (Common)

### Hybrid ryegrass

Pirol (D)

Solid (T) NL2

Astoncrusader (T) NL1

AberEcho (T)

### Italian ryegrass

Muriello (D)

Alamo (D)

Hunter (T)



### **Timothy**

Comer (Early)

Motim (Int)

### **Meadow fescue**

Merifest

### **Tall Fescue**

Dulcia

Sparta

Lidacta

## Maturity class

The applicant must allocate varieties to the correct heading group for perennial ryegrass and Timothy trials. The heading date of each candidate is checked as part of DUS testing procedures and candidates will have to re-start VCU tests and trials if they head more than four days outside the allocated group.

**The heading group classification used is as follows:**

### PRG

| Heading Group              | Classification   |
|----------------------------|--|
| Early heading group        | Heading date earlier than or equal to Lilora.            |
| Intermediate heading group | Heading date later than Lilora but earlier than Barplus. |
| Late heading group         | Heading date equal to or later than Barplus.             |

### Timothy

| Heading Group       | Classification                             |
|---------------------|--|
| Early heading group | Heading date earlier than Motim.           |
| Late heading group  | Heading date equal to or later than Motim. |