

MGA TIMES

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Chris Savery

2002 MGA CONFERENCES

Time to book your conference places!

WHOLECROP CONFERENCE

Wholecrop Conference

One of the main features of this year's wholecrop conference (being held at Harper Adams University College on Weds 6th February) will be an update on the 2nd year of the MDC funded dairy cow trial, conducted by Dr Liam Sinclair and his team at Harper Adams.* His colleague Simon Marsh will also be covering some wholecrop beef production work.

Under the chairmanship of Diana Allen (Principal Consultant Nutritionist, Promar International and Nutrition Consultant to MDC), David Douglas of the Yorkshire and Clydesdale Bank will present a paper entitled 'Challenges and Opportunities' in the present agri-economic environment.

Other speakers with a variety of interests in wholecrop forage range from a practical view, by farmer and contractor Peter King, of wholecrop alkali treatment from its early development to the present, to Dr Mark Palmer, Agrovista Technical Manager, who will outline the forage potential of small grained cereal crops.

MAIZE CONFERENCE

Annual Maize Conference

A full and varied programme for the Annual Maize Conference which takes place on Weds 27th February at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester.

Commencing with papers from Caroline Drummond (Chief Executive of LEAF) on Integrated Farm Management and the likely impacts for maize growers of NVZ's and Lyndon Edwards (MGA Member) on organic maize - a farmer's view, conference delegates will then be invited to take part in a member workshop - the aim of which will be to discuss and feed back ideas for the way forward for MGA.

As can be seen from the enclosed programme other subjects include an update on the Swiss Drilling System, prospects for maize growers from a bank perspective from HSBC and Ground Ear Maize by Prof Schwarz of Munich University.

As reported in the November MGA Times, in response to members requests, MGA commissioned a trial at the Centre for Dairy Research, Reading University, to evaluate the effect of different types of silage additive on the aerobic stability of maize silage - the preliminary results of this trial will be presented at the Conference by Dr Sarah Harrison and will be particularly beneficial to those using maize for summer feeding.

We are sure that members will welcome the more lighthearted presentation from Nuffield Scholar and dairy farmer Kevin Green entitled 'Mindset for Success'.

The livestock production end will be addressed by John Stratton, Semex Manager for Southern England, covering the potential of the 'Breeding and feeding of the modern dairy machine', linked to Richard Houghton's (Herd Manager for Strutt and Parkers world famous Lavenham Herd) proof supported by practice with 800 cows 'the Lavenham Way.'

Research, practice, developments and potential of the wholecrop scene are the main conference themes this year.

*An abbreviation of the MDC funded (MGA supported) whole crop cereal dairy cow trial which will be reported in full at the wholecrop conference by Dr Liam Sinclair, is included within this mailing - we hope our wholecrop growing members will find this of use.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Diary from the Chairman's farm

The start of a new year and DEFRA respond with their customary generosity by presenting us all with the NVZ consultation document to digest and get to grips with the implications for our individual businesses. I requested the detailed booklets on farming in NVZ's and Manure Planning in NVZ's so I could work out how it will affect us and what we may need to do to help us to follow the rules. At this stage of my understanding it doesn't look too serious as we have sufficient storage to cope with the closed spreading period and we currently have enough land to cover our stocking levels. However, as the herd grows we

will have to find more land and we will also have to separate parlour washings from our lagoon to minimise the slurry volume. Of course this all means more record keeping to keep the bureaucrats (or should that be Eurocrats) happy.

So this impending legislation has been in my thoughts as I have been planning capital expenditure and farm improvements for the coming year.

The talk of reducing milk prices is also curtailing my enthusiasm for spending money but the reality is that if we are to keep expanding the business and endeavouring to reduce costs at the same time some capital expenditure will be necessary. A borehole is high up the list and certainly gives the best return on capital on anything we can invest in - that is of course assuming that we find some water!

We need to get our heifers cubicle trained prior to calving so converting a loose housing barn to cubicles would be very beneficial. The water system around the farm is now getting too small for the volume of water the cattle will drink on a hot summers day so that needs addressing, and tracks and gateways need improving.

Various bits of machinery are starting to show their age and would benefit by being replaced. And I need to be looking out for another large bulk tank, as it is no good waiting until I am on the point of filling our existing one

and then expecting to find and install the right tank overnight. On the workload front we have a family wedding on the farm in August so we have a major tidying up session to get through before then and there are ongoing tweaks and modifications needed in the new parlour. Plenty of work to get our teeth into.

The parlour coped well with the frosty weather in the first week of the year which was pleasing because we were slightly concerned about this due to the openness of the surrounding building.

Milk compositional quality continues to boom with the first test of this year coming in at 4.3% fat and 3.6% protein but having thought that bactoscan problems had gone with three normal results I have been floored this morning by a sky-high result. We couldn't find anything wrong last time despite a full analysis of the bulk milk and a thorough look around the plant so it is back to the drawing board again and a hunt for the source of the problem.

Having spoken to our dairy consultant there is a suspicion that it may be strep. uberis affected cows which are excreting considerable numbers of bacteria just prior to showing clinical signs.

Intermittent problems are always the most difficult and frustrating to pin down but if we are to have any peace of mind, not to mention a half decent milk price,

we must sort this out. So, that's all for this month as I'm off to the lab with a milk sample!

With my best wishes,

David Christensen

PS: hope to see many of you at this years Conference, provided my wife isn't giving birth to our second child at the time!

VARIETY BOOKLET

Variety booklet

All members should have received their 2002 MGA Recommended Forage Maize Variety booklets. We hope that members are finding this booklet useful - please let us know if you have any comments.

COMMERCIAL INSERTS

Additional inserts

We would once again like to clarify that Commercial members of MGA can use our commercial mailing facility (inclusion of commercial information within MGA mailings for a fee) on the proviso that the content in no way implies support/recommendation by the MGA.

The proceeds from commercial inserts are directed straight back into MGA Research and Development to benefit our members.

This month includes commercial inserts from David Bright Ltd and Dalgety.