

MGA TIMES

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PEST CONTROL

Look out for Aphids

Until the recent thunderstorms, aphids were building up dramatically on the maize crop particularly in the southern half of the country.

Aphids generally are not a problem to the maize crop unless they get onto the tassels in such high numbers as to interrupt the pollen flow to the silks and then this can cause poor grain set and result in yield losses.

Therefore be prepared to monitor the crop as soon as it reaches the tasseling stage to check the level of aphids present on the tassels and silks as soon as they appear. If there are more than 10 aphids present on the tassel or ear then control should be considered. Best control is through the use of Aphox at 140 gm/ha.

Clearly at this stage application of aphicides is difficult and therefore the levels of aphids may need to be higher than 10 per tassel to take into account the 'aggravation factor' of getting contractors with high ground clearance sprayers to get the aphicide on.

TRAVEL AWARD REPORT

How the most successful people sell

The Gordon Newman Travel Award combined with The Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust to support an MGA member's son, Edward Dale, 24,

MGA OFFICE MOVE



We're on the move ...

As reported in the last MGA Times, Noelle will be leaving at the end of July, after 10 years with the MGA, to move to pastures new. In light of Noelle's departure, MGA Council have decided to relocate the MGA Office to Town Barton Farm in Devon. Town Barton is a 450 acre farm run in partnership by Dave Munday (MGA member and previous member of MGA Council) and his sister, Jean Howard. Dave and Jean grow 100 acres of maize and wholecrop, 150 acres of cereals and milk 150 cows.

The office move will take place on Monday 26th July; thereafter the MGA Office address and telephone number will be: -

Town Barton Farm, Sandford, Crediton, Devon. EX17 4LS.

Tel: 01363 775040. Email and Website addresses remain the same.

Members will continue to receive the same service that they have enjoyed in the past together with access to Simon Draper and Ruth Baker for agronomic advice and Chris Savery for ruminant advice. Jean will take on the MGA's administration and Dave, together with John Morgan will be responsible for the proactive development of MGA as approved and directed by the MGA Council. John's re-involvement with the MGA in a technical capacity, ably supported by Dave is welcomed.

This restructure will enable MGA members to benefit from an improved technical service, enabling individuals to optimise the growth and utilisation of maize and alternative forage crops.

Members may also have heard that MGA and BGS have been talking about ways in which the two organisations could work more closely in the future. We are looking for opportunities to add value to the benefits offered to members of both organisations to enhance membership. This could include such initiatives as staging joint conferences. If members have any comments, we would be very pleased to receive them.

who works on the family farm in Cheshire. The scholarship was to see 'how the most successful people sell' and what makes them succeed. Edward was mainly looking at the dairy industries in other countries, but included a large number of industrialists that were successful in other fields, his report follows: -

'I have just returned from a two month visit to the USA and New Zealand. My focus was on dairy farming but I also saw sheep and arable farms, and a calf rearing unit, which had 3500 calves on milk in hutches. I was introduced to a property developer, an import and distribution company, a potato

and onion exporter, a goat farmer - the list is endless. I even interviewed the chairman of Air NZ, who incidentally was a Nuffield Scholar and a fruit farmer.

I was given the chance to visit the Chicago board of trade, which is where the price is set for most of the commodities we feed to our cows. I stayed with a trader who lived in the centre of the city, which was like being in a movie for a farm boy from Cheshire! I actually stayed with most of the people I interviewed and was shown a huge amount of hospitality.

It is amazing how much you can

learn from like-minded people even if they are in a different industry to your own; the same basic principles seem to apply:

- Knowing what drives your business profitability
- Being efficient
- Being market led not production driven.

Having been fortunate to meet some of the most efficient farmers both in the USA and New Zealand I found on the whole they focused more on simplicity and whole farm profit rather than on individual cow yield and gross margins. I have noticed that farmers across the world share similar problems and there are plenty of very progressive and profitable farmers right on our doorstep both in the UK and Ireland.

The most progressive farmers who could think outside the box seemed to be able to make farming pay, regardless of the climate, they just adapted. The way a farm is managed seems to be far more important than where in the world it is situated.

I tried not to get too bogged down with the politics of the different countries. They are important and cannot be ignored. It seems that if you focus on the things out of your control too much then you can be missing the opportunity right under your nose with your own business.

One of the people I met was Jim Vanderpoel. He is a director of Frontera, the largest company in New Zealand and the biggest exporter of milk in the world. He has 6000 cows on various units and stood out as one of the most switched on people I met. He had built a business from nothing starting as a share milker. One of the main points he stressed to me was: "make sure you get your own house in order before looking at other things". In other words he made sure he had a solid profitable core business before doing anything else.

He told me you have to really understand your own business and also grow your knowledge but this alone is not enough to make things happen. He illustrated it like this:

The bottom 25% of farmers don't know what to do to make their business profitable, unfortunately they have little hope of long term sustainability. For the rest of us there is hope; the next 50% know what's got to be done they just put it off until tomorrow or never get around to it, whereas the top 25% know what's got to be done and they do it now!!

Get out there and MAKE IT HAPPEN, it's that simple!

Granted I wish it was that simple and when we have looked at our business we have realised how complicated it is. We now look at every operation we do on the farm and ask ourselves is there a simpler way of doing this or more to the point, should we be doing it at all?

Simplicity came across in both New Zealand and the USA the farmers I was meeting often had a good lifestyle and good businesses even though at times they were very busy. The point is they would face the facts about their individual situations and had the equipment they could justify. Sometimes big fancy shining tractors are justified and will increase efficiency but they have to be there for the right reason otherwise they are a millstone round your neck.

I spent short periods away from farming because I was bombarded with such a lot of information and I needed time to reflect. The most effective people I met worked exceptionally hard but they made time to get away from the everyday grind and have fun. They were also able to step back from their businesses occasionally and look at it from a strategic viewpoint.

The trip away from home has made me realise time spent away from the farm can sometimes be

the most profitable work you do as long as you MAKE THINGS HAPPEN on your return.

A few final thoughts:

I found it fascinating that of the 50 to 60 people across the world I interviewed - almost all of them mentioned the word integrity. They had not got to where they were by being dishonest and doing dirty tricks on people.

One man said to me: "When I am thinking of going into partnership with someone above all else, above all the other factors I first look at their integrity - would I trust this man to go on holiday with my cheque book and sleep in the same bed as my wife and not have *!***! with her?" An interesting way to evaluate someone!!

I would like to end by saying having had the chance to see agriculture across the world I don't think the grass is any greener on the other side. There are as many opportunities here as anywhere else it is just up to us to work out what they are.

I am very grateful to the MGA Gordon Newman Travel Award and the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust for giving me the opportunity to undertake this trip. It has been a great experience and I would recommend anyone considering something similar to go for it, you won't regret it.'

A full copy of Edward's report will be available from the MGA office soon. He will be one of the speakers at the MGA's Annual Conference next February when he will be giving us more information, with slides.

Members interested in a Gordon Newman Travel Award to study forage production and utilisation, the environment or rural welfare should contact the MGA Office for an application form.