

MGA TIMES

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NITROGEN PREDICTOR

Preparing for this years crop

The MGA Nitrogen Predictor is a service that enables members to be more precise when balancing nitrogen applied with nitrogen requirement. By making adjustments to the total crop nitrogen requirements according to answers submitted on the data input form, nitrogen application recommendations are generated. These could & have saved members a substantial amount of money spent on over-application.

The service is free of charge to MGA Members and can be accessed in two ways:

- 1) Complete the enclosed form and submit this to the office.
- 2) Access the service on the MGA website for an automatic prediction.

CONFERENCES

Conference Reports

We were very pleased with the response to both the Wholecrop and Maize Conferences, which took place in February. Members who did not attend the Maize Conference will find a copy of the Report enclosed.

Should any member require a copy of the Wholecrop Conference report or an extra copy of the Maize Report, these are available from the MGA Office.

WEBSITE

MGA on the Web!

We are pleased to inform members that the MGA Website is now up and running. The site contains current MGA information (as sent to you in your mailings), details of past publications and research reports etc. Simon Draper will soon begin a regular web site feature showing pictures of the maize crop, together with comments throughout the growing season.

Some of the MGA information, (such as the MGA Times), contained on the website is accessible by non-members, however, the majority of the information i.e. technical papers, research results etc. can only be accessed by members. The website address is www.maizegrowersassociation.co.uk

To use the Website - please follow the procedures below:-

Do we have your email address?

Yes - please see procedure 1 No - please see procedure 2

Procedure 1.

If you have informed us of your email address (for example if you supplied this on the questionnaire at the MGA Conference) then you will be recognised when you log on to the site. Simply type your surname in the Username box and your password will be emailed back to you. Alternatively you can telephone the office to obtain your password.

Procedure 2.

If we do not know your email address you will need to inform us of this to enable us to add your details to the system. You can inform us by email (mgal@globalnet.co.uk), or by faxing this to us (01189 761451). Once we have received this you will be informed of your password to enable you to gain full access to the site.

Members registered on the site will automatically be emailed whenever the site is updated.

MGA R&D

MGA Research

Simon Draper detailed the 2002 MGA Trials Programme in the last mailing. Members will receive notification of the demonstration site locations in the next mailing and details of the meetings planned.

Grain Maize

The MGA have undertaken Grain Maize trials for the past couple of years and will be doing so this year. The findings from work undertaken show the following advantages and disadvantages:-

Advantages of grain maize

- UK demand 1 million tons
- Yield 4 t/acre (10 t/ha)
- Average price £14/t premium over wheat
- Guaranteed market

Disadvantages of grain maize

- Seed cost
- IACS dividend less than cereals
- Drying costs (grain harvested at 30%)
- Harvesting problems with some varieties

Therefore grain maize looks a viable option in some situations with guaranteed markets and guaranteed prices it looks quite attractive this year. For further information please contact the office for the grain maize trial reports.

FUTURE EVENTS

Diary Dates

- April 15th - 17th

BGS/British Ecological Society Meeting '*Conservation Pays*', University of Lancaster. This is a British Grassland Society event, for further details please contact the BGS office on 01189 318189.

- 22nd & 23rd May

Grassland 2002, Crewe Farm, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire

- 12th & 13th June

Cereals 2002, Grange Farm, North Rauceby, Sleaford, Lincs

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Diary from the Chairman's farm

The occasional sound of a crying baby can be heard at Kingston Hill at the moment with my wife Catherine producing a second son for us some 4 weeks ago. Apart from being slightly deprived of sleep and walking around like a zombie half the time it is great to have a baby in the house again and Thomas is very proud of his little brother with no obvious signs of jealousy (plenty of time for that to change!).

It's also good to have a distraction from this wet weather because with the farm being as wet as it has been all winter we can't do any field work and with plenty to do it would be starting to weigh on me. Thank goodness for little boys!

After writing in last month's column that we were considering installing a borehole it was rather ironic that with the River Thames in full flood and some 40 acres under 3 feet of water, the well digger should phone from his mobile to say that he was trundling down the M1 with the drilling rig on his way to Kingston Hill.

After his arrival and a days drilling we now have a borehole some 26 metres deep and a seemingly good volume of water, certainly enough for our current usage. The actual drilling part was fascinating to observe although what a truly filthy mess with mud and drilling debris pouring out of a hole at the surface. I thought dairy farming could be a pretty dirty job but to see mud raining down on the father and son

team doing the drilling was a site to behold - and our drilling was clean apparently!

The local district council tested the water yesterday so we await those results with interest and when given the all clear and Environment Agency approval we will connect up the well to the farm system and see how we get on. The investment should provide a useful cost saving to us.

We have also just changed electricity supplier again to reduce that cost too with the buying group that we belong to having negotiated a very competitive price for its members.

I also wrote last month about some high bactoscan results we were having. After a lot of aggravation and time spent stripping down the plant and having full milk hygiene breakdown analysis performed I was rather taken aback one evening to get a phone call from a local dairy farmer on the same tanker run as me. It transpires that we were not the only ones getting high bactoscans and after some investigation it was found to be a sampling problem and not a farm issue at all. So that was a considerable relief - although has left me with a slightly wary regard for the testing procedure.

The milk price reductions seem to be making the decision for some that dairying is not in their future plans as more herd sales are seen in the Farmers Weekly.

From a situation where I was struggling to find a large second hand bulk tank I now know of three good tanks that have come on the market as a result of the restructuring plans either from farms expanding and buying bigger tanks or selling up and with a surplus tank. One of the tanks I have seen has an ice builder with it which would allow more ice to be built at cheaper night time electricity rates, again allowing us to save costs. Although it may be brutal to say it, this restructuring process is so necessary to allow those in dairying in the long term to thrive as opposed to just surviving.

The MGA Annual Maize Conference went very well and my thanks to all

who attended, particularly for your contributions to the seminars on the future of MGA. These will be discussed at the next Council meeting and the best ideas adopted. It was very heartening to see such enthusiasm especially in such an uncertain financial situation as we find ourselves in again.

With my best wishes,

David Christensen

GORDON NEWMAN AWARDS

Gordon Newman Travel Awards Update

A reminder to members - Gordon Newman retired from Agriculture in April 2000. In recognition of his passion for agriculture and those working in the industry his friends wished to recognise their gratitude by donating to a travel award. The objecting of the award to enable members of the industry to undertake short study projects, based on forage production and utilisation, the environment and welfare.

The first award recipient, Catherine Tytherleigh BSc, chose to study the promotion of rural youth groups in America & Europe with help from the National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs in order to assess how life for young people living in rural Britain could be improved.

Unfortunately, the events of 11th September prevented Catherine from travelling to America. Catherine therefore had to change her plans, she has undertaken desk research and will also soon be taking part as a delegate at the 4-H (Rural Youth Groups) National Conference in Washington DC this April, where Catherine has planned meetings with those responsible for marketing of the organisation on a national level. Catherine hopes to gain an insight into the structure and general ethos of the organisation.

Funds Available for future Awards

There are still funds available if anybody is interested in applying for an Award, please contact Noelle at the MGA Office.

