

MGA TIMES



Lloyds TSB
Agriculture



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HAVE YOU TAKEN YOUR TEMPERATURE TODAY?

Once again a few of our members are recording the soil temperatures for us. I am putting the last five day temperatures on the MGA website. If anyone else would like to help, we could do with recordings in Scotland, Northern England and the South East.



WHAT A PLONKER!

In the last mailing we included a Nitrogen predictor form, which quite a few members have already filled in and sent back to the office. If you are in an NVZ area and want to know the N Max limit for your proposed maize area, we are able to calculate the figure for you. Unfortunately Jean printed and sent out old forms that don't include quantities of FYM & Slurry applied to fields, if you require this figure, please ring the office for a correct form.

2012 MGA CONFERENCE "ONE OF THE BEST YET"

Well so said one of our longstanding commercial members following the event!. This year the MGA Conference was back at The Royal Agricultural College. We had a very successful day, with all the speakers contributing to an excellent event.

A varied programme this year included papers on ruminant nutrition, maize varieties for biogas production, new thoughts on feeding dairy cows, a members experience with growing and utilizing maize in his low cost system plus the all important MGA trial results. While full copies of all the papers presented at the conference will be sent to you once printed we have summarised some of the MGA trial results presented by Simon Draper and Neil Groom in the hope that they may be useful when planning this year's cropping.

A returning feature this year was the popular "Short & Sweet" session, which allowed our commercial members the chance to promote themselves or a product for 5 minutes, not a minute more! The MGA Vice Chairman, Hugh McClymont was the Samantha of "Sorry I haven't a clue" fame with the bell.

The MGA would like to thank, once again Bayer for their main sponsorship, Biotal & CLAAS for their support and Syngenta for sponsoring the conference papers. The papers are being printed now and will be sent to all members in the next mailing.



Bayer CropScience



CLAAS

syngenta.

CONFERENCE PAPER LOOKING AT RUMINANT NUTRITION DIFFERENTLY!

Andrew Holland from Ontrak Nutrition is an independent ruminant nutritionist and has been advising farmers in Wales, Midlands and Scotland for over 15 years. In recent years, as a consequence of his own and others research he has started to question some of the traditional views on cow diets and is now putting his theories into practice with his clients.

While difficult to summarise Andrews paper in a few words, his focus was on the role of forage and in particular "Active Fibre" in rations. He emphasised the importance of Dry Matter Intake and the impact or rumen throughput on DMI. He challenged the use of straw and protected fats in high production rations suggesting that both can impact on overall DMI.

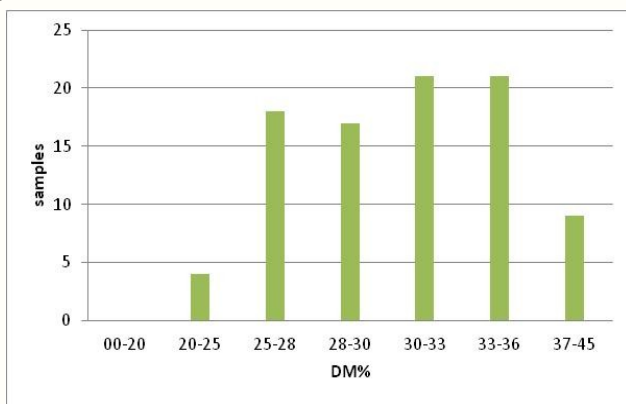
His paper really hit the spot with the farmers in the room, judging by how many were bending his ear over lunch!



CONFERENCE PAPER IMPROVED MAIZE SILAGE ANALYSIS

Jonathan Blake from the Forage Analytical Assurance Group gave details of the NIRS LINK project, sponsored by Defra. The project aims to develop reliable NIRS-based prediction equations of the energy content and degradability characteristics of maize silage for the UK farming industry. The equations will be quickly implemented by silage laboratories within the FAA group. Part of the project also investigates the use of a gas production method to obtain these degradation characteristics more rapidly and cheaply than the current polyester bag technique. Over the last 2 years the MGA have been collecting and delivering to Reading University, half tonne samples of maize silage from different parts of the country.

A wide range of silages were analysed with samples ranging from the low 20's DM to well over 40% as shown in the graph below.



A key point from the work was that the quality of maize silages varies considerably and that as a result samples should be analysed if rations accuracy is to be maintained.

Jonathan concluded his talk by thanking the MGA and participating farmers for playing their part in what has become the most comprehensive review of maize silage quality in the country. We look forward to more accurate silage analysis's in the future.

CONFERENCE PAPER WELL DONE GAVIN

Gavin Fowler, Farmers Weekly, Dairy farmer of the year 2011, farms in North Devon on a marginal farm, with low rainfall, due to sand dunes and nothing between him and America! Gavin was asked to review his low cost farming system and the role of maize within it.

Gavin has an autumn calving system for his 280 cross bred dairy herd. All the cows calve outside on grass in September and October. The breeding in Gavin's herd is a particularly interesting story, over many years of cross breeding he now has a three way cross of Friesian, Swedish Red & White & Montbeliardes, which I got the impression are Gavin's favourite breed. Conception rates have improved massively, lameness is low and longevity is vastly improved.



Montbeliarde

Gavin went on talk about the role of maize explaining that due to climatic conditions it is not easy to grow consistent yields on the farm. He pointed out that on the basis of the success of last year's maize under plastic all 105 acres of the farms crop will be established this way in 2012.

It was a fascinating story and with Gavin's attention to detail, I can quite understand why he was Dairy farmer of the year. As a footnote, his father, Ranauld was a founding member of the MGA and still contacts the office every now and then to catch up with the latest news.

CONFERENCE PAPER MAIZE VARIETIES FOR BIOGAS

John Burgess from KWS (UK) Ltd gave delegates an insight into how maize varieties for biogas production have developed and improved over time. He questioned the general assumption that bulk yield of crop was the only criteria and talked about the importance of maturity at harvest and methane production per kg of DM.

John explained very clearly why the varieties chosen for ruminant nutrition where methane loss is not are not always suitable for Biogas production where methane production is king.

John also gave us an insight into other crops that are suitable for biogas, noting that whole-crop cereals are a useful crop in rotation with maize and that energy (sugar) beet has a huge fresh yield and ferments rapidly.

Maize Drought BUSTER

Last year was one of the driest for maize growers. Low winter rainfall suggests this year will be worse. Crops treated with Take Off last year:

- Emerged faster
- Started photosynthesising earlier
- Closed rows sooner
- Matured quicker
- Produced more YIELD
- Produced more ENERGY
- Produced more STARCH



LESS THAN £2/acre

This year Take Off is only available on two varieties:

- ES Capris (Sister line of ES Regain) for late September harvest
- DKC3301 for a higher yielding early October harvest



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