

# MGA TIMES



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Drilling at Town Barton



## POST EMERGENCE WEED CONTROL

The ever present threat of yield penalties resulting from weed competition for nutrients and light at this time of year should not be overlooked. Simon's post emergence weed control technical note provides specific advice, which can be used alone or as part of an ongoing discussion with your own agronomists. Members can always give Simon a ring via the office to discuss your specific needs.



Post maize emergence weed growth

The very low spring soil temperatures delayed drilling at Town Barton this year. Seed eventually hit the soil on the 26/27<sup>th</sup> April and is only now emerging. Seedbeds worked down very well and with temperatures now increasing the only thing holding the crop back now is lack of moisture. With such a high reliance on maize silage for the winter rations, it is a relief to see the seed bags empty at last. Our focus now it to ensure that maize left over from last winter is rationed carefully in the autumn to ensure we do not run out before the new crop has chance to stabilise.

## MGA FOLIAR FEED RESEARCH

The temptation to experiment with foliar feeds on maize crops is difficult to resist, particularly if the only evidence of their efficacy is that provided by the person who stands to gain from a sale! With this lack of objective data in mind, the MGA have this year commissioned a trial looking to provide some independent evidence as to the effect of different feeds on crop yield. The treatments, due to be applied in the next month or so, will be replicated and harvested with yield results published at the MGA maize conference in February 2010, before circulation to the membership as a whole, in plenty of time to aid next year's decisions.

## A POTENTIAL ROLE FOR WHOLECROP SILAGE

The soil temperature delayed start to maize drilling has for many been incredibly frustrating, particularly bearing in mind the dry ground conditions and the ability in many areas to maintain soil structure, while generating good seed beds. All eyes now will be on accumulating heat units, as the traditionally growing months of May, June and July take hold. We need to make up time with more than usual warmth if we are to avoid a late harvest. Growers looking to feed maize for all, or most of the summer should take account of the potentially late harvest when making their plans. Maize crops need to be monitored to see how they are developing, particularly as wholecrop harvest date (July in most cases) approaches.

As Chris Savery points out in his attached technical note, wholecrop cereal silage represents the best opportunity to make up for lack of starchy forage in late summer/autumn. In future mailings we will be issuing wholecrop harvesting guidelines. We are also trying to organise some practical on farm events to help those considering the crop, decide on its potential role and harvest management.



**MGA at CEREALS—Stand 807**

The steady trickle of new members growing grain maize for the first time continues. In recognition of this growing group, as well as the potential to recruit yet more, we are again attending the national cereals event in June at Royston in Cambridgeshire. As at all the shows we would love to see members old and new and would particularly welcome a chat with your neighbours who have yet to see the benefits of MGA membership. You will be able to find us on stand number **807** close to the pellet and pelleting arena.



**NIRS PROJECT UPDATE**

This very important project focusing on improving the accuracy and consistency of maize silage analysis is now in full swing, with over 20 samples of maize already having been delivered by Jean to Reading University. Making the most of her trip North to Scot Grass, Jean picked up two half tonne samples from North of the border to complement those already on site.

Alongside the chemical analysis the physical characteristics of the samples are also being monitored.

Maize sample laid out to review chop length



Members happy to supply maize samples are always welcome. Please give Jean a ring in the office if you would like to become involved in the project.

**SCOT GRASS 2010**

The MGA had a presence at Scot Grass last week. The setting at Crichton Royal Farms was perfect, not quite as much grass as Hugh McClymont, farm manager at Crichton, had hoped for, but considering the weather this year, more grass than most parts of the country. There were record crowds from all parts of the world, (including Devon!). Obviously most farmers had come to look at the latest machinery and new innovations, but quite a few visited the MGA stand where Jean, John Cottle and Neil Groom discussed maize under plastic and how maize is looking at present. Driving through the countryside, it was obvious that the use of plastic is a viable method of getting maize established in cooler climates. Hugh, also an MGA council member, told Jean that he would be cutting the rest of the grass at the end of the week and then planting maize conventionally, after the silage was taken off. Crichton Royal is low lying and has a warm climate, so is suitable for growing maize. As Scotland has longer daylight hours, the maize crop will catch up with crops in the south of England.



**FERTILISER REQUIREMENTS FOR MAIZE**

A recent conversation with a member keen to discuss his nitrogen predictor results reminded me that there is still some confusion as to the extent to which the soil and manures can supply crop nitrogen requirements. The conversation confirmed my belief that, while members do of course take account of soil and manure available nitrogen, they rarely take enough account of these two valuable sources. The lack of confidence is perhaps no surprise, bearing in mind the lack of specific numbers associated with both soil and manure nitrogen, however with the cost of nitrogen being so high considerable effort should go into getting nutrient supply right. The MGA Nitrogen Predictor software sets out to realistically take account of the nutrients available to a crop based on past history, seedbed and soil structure, weather and of course manures applied. While not perfect, its continued success over many years suggests the results it produces are not too far from the mark, particularly if the input form is completed carefully. N Predictor forms are available to download from the web site or via the office.

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