

MGA TIMES

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EVENTS

Hope to see you at the Dairy Event

We hope members will come & visit us on the MGA stand at the Dairy Event (Weds 19th Sept). Our new stand location is a corner site in Cattle Shed 1.

David Christensen, Tim Gue, Ruth Baker, Chris Savery, Angus Golightly & Noelle will be on the stand & hope to see members for a chat.

Competition - Guess the dry matter & win a year's free membership!

Ruth will be demonstrating dry matter testing & also running a 'guess the dry matter' competition - all correct guesses will go into a hat & the overall winner will get a years free membership!

MGA & BGS Meet up again

Following the success of last years joint MGA/BGS meeting we have organised another to take place at Ardingly, W Sussex on Wednesday 24th October. Full details are enclosed.

One harvest Workshop to go

The last of the series of harvest workshops takes place on Tues 18th Sept in Chester (full details in last mailing - please contact the office if you would like to attend.

MAIZE HARVEST 2001

Stop Press!!

Simon Draper has today (11th Sept) notified us of crop Dry Matters of 28% in Suffolk, Essex, Kent, Hants & Surrey. Enclosed with this mailing is further information from Simon & Chris about harvesting & ensiling.

MGA MINERALS

MGA Minerals Upgrade

Following feedback from mineral feeding farmers & Chris Savery (MGA Ruminant Consultant) two formulation improvements are about to be incorporated in to the MGA Mineral range.

Key changes to the MGA SuperSpec 200 are an increase in Salt & Copper proportions with Calcium & Magnesium levels dropping slightly to make room for the extras.

Reasons for the re-mix are linked to observed ration formulation changes & the clear demand last winter for MGA 200 specials containing more copper. MGA Dry Cow Minerals have also been reformulated with Phosphorus levels increasing from 6 - 8% & salt dropping from 23% to 16%. The new formulation for the MGA SuperSpec 200 can be seen alongside the old below.

MGA SuperSpec 200		
	Old	New
Calcium %	28	26
Phosphorus %	4	4
Salt %	2	8
Magnesium %	6	4
Manganese %	6,000	6,000
Copper %	1,750	2,500
Zinc %	6,000	6,000
Cobalt %	75	75
Iodine %	750	750
Selenium	40	40
Vitamin A iu/kg	600,000	600,000
Vitamin D3 iu/kg	120,000	120,000
Vitamin E iu/kg	2000	2000

To order any of the MGA mineral range please contact the dedicated MGA mineral lines:- Tel 01769 576231 or fax 01769 576260. A further note by John Morgan on minerals is enclosed.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Diary from the Chairman's farm

I can't ever remember having as much grass at Kingston Hill in September as we have this year. We are positively flush with it even to the extent of making some big bale silage last week on a paddock which had got away from us. With 800 plus months to feed I have no doubt that it will come in useful at some stage in the not too distant future.

We finally finished getting straw home from our neighbours this last weekend so I am pleased to have that operation behind us. It seems to have dragged on having started in late July & only now finishing although I guess that is probably more to do with my impatient nature!

Maize harvest is now imminent & looking to be about a week earlier than usual so we are busy getting the clamps prepared & making sure everything is in place so we can try to do as good a job as possible in clamping it. Last year we had some wastage on clamp shoulders so special attention will be paid to those areas this time around.

With virtually all the crop to be harvested across a public road I am also hoping for a spell of dry weather, otherwise it will mean having someone on a road brush more or less permanently in order to placate Oxfordshire's intolerant drivers. That someone is usually me as I am probably the most diplomatic on the farm when it comes to dealing with the public - although I am sure some people would question this! I will let you

know how we get on with a harvest report in the next mailing.

Lungworm in the cows has been a problem again this summer with the resultant extra cost of worming them to contend with. As much as the financial implication of the treatment it concerns me that any long term damage could have been done to the herd before they were treated.

Lungworm never used to be a problem within the herd & so we are trying to work out if changes in our management of both cows & heifers have contributed to this increasing worm burden. As so often with the management of cows the picture is never clear with few of the contributing factors being definitive.

With the Dairy Farming Event imminent I hope to meet as many members as possible on the MGA stand, which is in a different, more prominent position this year. If you have ideas for research that you would like to see conducted or are critical of what we are doing then this is a good opportunity to meet with some of the Council & staff of MGA.

Our consultants will be available at certain periods during the day so again please use the opportunity to meet with them. However, you may just want to use the stand as a meeting point or just have a chat to someone - everyone is welcome & I hope you will seek us out.
David Christensen

GRAIN MAIZE

2001 Grain Maize Tour to France

The 2001 Grain Maize Tour was in conjunction with David Bright & Maisadour to the Landes region of south-west France. We flew into Biarritz airport & the sight of kids skateboarding on the runway alerted us at once that we were no longer in the UK!

The Landes region is well suited to grain maize production; it has adequate rainfall, (being adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean) is virtually frost-free & has predominately light soils. While a few landscapes were, as we may imagine, smallish plots or small fields, there were plenty of examples of large-scale farming.

There was really very little else grown in the region apart from the occasional field of carrots or tobacco. There were hardly any livestock apart from the ducks that provide the famous foie gras (fed of course on maize).

As ever the French system of co-ops is impressive, the Landes region is dominated by Maisadour, but I'm sure that other region's co-ops are equally impressive. Dotted around the region are conveniently sited collection depots that consisted of a weighbridge & a couple of bins where farmers could bring their harvest before it was transported to large central stores for drying & cleaning.

We were lucky enough to be shown around Maisadour's flagship store, ten years old but still looking state of the art. It handles 150,000 tonnes of maize grain & was of course built with the aid of a large E.U. grant. The 2 storage sheds alone occupied one hectare!

Attention to detail was impressive, the grain comes in at 25-30% moisture & must be thoroughly cleaned, dried & cooled for safe storage. Varieties were not stored separately, as this did not seem to be a customer requirement. The store had a rail link to the ports where most of the maize was destined for export. It is sold for many uses including human consumption, starch production & animal feed.

There were 2 production systems, with or without irrigation. The non-irrigated farms yielded 9-10 t/ha. while the irrigated farms produced 12-13 t/ha, however fertiliser rates had to be adjusted accordingly.

Water was readily available in most regions for little cost. As maize was continuously cropped, weed control was the biggest problem with complex sequential herbicide programmes incorporating mechanical weeding the norm.

The biggest difference to U.K. practice was fertiliser application. While rates were similar after allowing for yield potential, the French would, as a rule follow up placement at drilling with at least 2 later applications. This was routinely incorporated whilst inter-row cultivating or through

irrigation systems. The last application/cultivation being at around 6 leaves. It was felt by farmers that the cultivation not only controlled weeds but the action of cultivating allowed the soil to warm, leading to faster & greater growth. It also leant itself to fertiliser application without scorch.

We saw very little fertiliser being applied with a surface spreader although there was some, which, as in the UK did cause scorch. Although growers were concerned about scorch the benefits of the fertiliser outweighed any crop damage.

We were fortunate to visit a very large grower of grain maize in the north of the region. He was German & had 20 years earlier purchased a large block of forest on sandy soil.

He had cleared & sold the timber & installed linear irrigators over the years, & now grows 600 ha, most of which is irrigated. He was obviously an innovator & farmed to a very high standard, routinely achieving yields of 13-14 t/ha. Being innovative he was trying a block of organic maize using poultry manure (organic?) & mechanical weeding with four passes.

We saw nothing to dissuade us from pursuing grain maize in the UK especially when the rapid expansion of grain maize in Belgium is considered. Our best crops would compare favourably, although they would be ten days behind. We felt that while both yields & quality were likely to be lower than the French we should pursue the advantages we have with traceability, GM free & UK produced product, into niche markets.

CHOP LENGTH SURVEY

Does chop length matter?

Biotol would like to survey dairy farmers this winter to see if there is a link at farm level between chop length & maize & factors such as milk quality & rumen health. If you are interested in taking part in the survey, please contact Noelle at the office.