

MGA TIMES



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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE—Graeme Cock

At the association's AGM in May we welcomed Graeme Cock as our new chairman. In keeping with tradition Graeme introduces himself to members and sets out his views on the ongoing development of the society.

I farm along with my brother Patrick, in a family partnership close to Ashburton in South Devon. The business runs an expanding herd of high yielding Holsteins, which are milked 3 times a day. We also rear replacements and grow cereals for on farm use. A key strength of the family business is our membership of the South Hams Dairy Co-operative Limited, a local buying discussion Co-op.

While being fully involved with the running of the home unit, both Patrick and I believe in doing our bit on a wider scale and as a result, since February 2005 I have been a director of Mole Valley Farmers and in May this year I took on the role of Maize Growers Association Chairman, having been on MGA council for around 4 years.

On becoming chairman of the MGA, one starts to reflect on the organisation, the seriousness of the role and the people that have been in this position before.

In my view the MGA has always operated on the fairly simple concept, that information is made freely available to members through regular mailing and practical demonstration meetings. A strong mix of research based data and expertise from a practical team including Simon Draper, Gordon Newman and more recently Ruth Baker and Chris Savery, has always represented exceptionally good value for money to the members of the association.

Key to achieving this success has been the strong and committed leadership of past chairman. I feel we have plenty to be proud of at present and am pleased to report that we continue to gain members at a good rate.

However, complacency must not be allowed to set in and increasing membership must continue to be our key target. Challenge your neighbours or contacts as they should all benefit from membership of the MGA.

Looking ahead I would suggest we work in an industry that seems to continually undersell itself. The prophets of doom always seem to get a good airing, I feel this is often counter productive. Blind optimism is also a handicap, but it is worth remembering that we operate in a robust industry, which seems to keep adapting and changing to meet the need and requirement to be profitable and compliant. We need educated and committed young people to be attracted to our industry for all the right reasons, such as further development, a good lifestyle and fair remuneration package. The basis for an exciting and rewarding career exist, however they are not always sold very well and in doing so we do agriculture an injustice.

When considering maize specifics, challenges keep coming. Atrazine has gone, grain maize is in the ascendancy and renewable energy may prove to be an option in the future. Add to these, the fact that the GM debate continues and that NVZ's are in the process of being revised and you will hopefully agree that the role of the MGA to provide clear and practical guidance continues.

I strongly feel that agriculture is quite capable of meeting all the challenges it is presented and am convinced that the task would be easier if one arm was not tied behind our backs with red tape.

As Chairman, I will do everything I can to make sure the MGA is as relevant, up-to-date and progressive as it always has been. I believe that as a consequence of its past success and my ongoing confidence in its future, I feel the MGA is at the very top of value for money organisations. Finally I look forward to meeting as many members as possible at the demo site meetings, conferences and other meetings to be held throughout the forthcoming year.

MINERALS FOR MAIZE

Manufactured by Mole Valley Farmers, Formulated by MGA

Winter ration planning is fast upon us and as a result, members will hopefully have no problem with being reminded of the MGA range of minerals. The range, which includes:

- MGA Super Spec 200 for milking cows in winter
- MGA Grazing for cows at grass
- MGA Dry cow
- MGA Youngstock

The mineral range was originally formulated by Gordon Newman and subsequently updated by Chris Savery, John Morgan and Mole Valley Farmers. Due to the increasing cost of raw products, especially copper, the price of the minerals has had to increase by approximately 10%. That said they are still competitively priced. Don't forget, MGA minerals are designed for high maize/wholecrop inclusion diets and are formulated to 100% of the stated specification.

ORDERING PROCEDURE

The same procedure applies to members and non-members of MGA. Minerals are ordered direct from Mole Valley Farmers and designated telephone/fax numbers have been set up for this purpose only - it is **not** possible to order any other MVF products on the numbers given below.

You can either telephone or fax your order on the following numbers:

Telephone 01278 444829 Fax: 01278 446923

Please remember if you have an order to make, a query about delivery, invoicing or product then please contact the Mole Valley contacts given above.

If you need advice about mineral feeding, or if you have a formulation query you should telephone the MGA office on 01363 775040.

HSBC SPONSORED MAIZE EVENT REPORT

On a sunny evening in mid July, the MGA held a very interesting and informative meeting at Town Barton Farm in Devon. After a welcome by Tim Archer, Agriculture manager of the HSBC Bank, Simon Draper



and John Morgan led discussions on all aspects of establishing and growing successful maize crops. At the Town Barton demonstration field this year, we have used three different drills to establish the crop, grown two grain maize and one energy variety and used various different combinations of seed dressings. These are not the official MGA trials but are examples of the work that is undertaken by the Maize Growers Association for the benefit of members, to grow economical and successful maize. There is a follow-up meeting on Thursday 14th September, details are included in this mailing.

DIABROTICA UPDATE 2006

Dominic Eyre (Plant Health Biologist at the Central Science Laboratory) has very kindly given the MGA an update on what is happening with the diabrotica survey this year.

Defra survey for *Diabrotica virgifera virgifera*

Defra is conducting its fourth national survey for *Diabrotica* in 2006. Sticky traps with pheromone lures are being put up in 340 maize fields in England and Wales. Surveys are also being conducted in Scotland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. This year there is a greater focus on south-east England to try and delimit the outbreak area with greater confidence. Approximately 120 fields are being sampled in a larger buffer zone of 50 km around sites of previous finds to the west and south of London. The number of sites in south-west England (70) has also been increased to reflect the large hectareage of maize in this area.

The first traps were put out into the field in the third week of July. The survey is at a very early stage, but there have been two confirmed findings so far, the first on 27th July. These findings indicate that the adult beetles are active slightly earlier in the summer in the UK, than previously thought. Maize fields and game cover that has not been rotated is at higher risk and continues to be the priority for the survey.

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For more information, please consult your Masstock contact or call Brendan Paul on 01280 848848

Is the leading supplier of inputs and technical advice to farmers. We provide a range of services to help maximise the profitability of your business. Please visit www.masstock.co.uk for details of your local Masstock company.

We have agreed to advertise via the MGA Times for a whole year. During the next 12 months we will keep drawing your attention to pages in the enclosed manual. Hang onto your copy and you could save £ ££s during the year.

MAIZE DRY MATTER TESTING

Microwave method

- Weigh 500 g of freshly chopped maize, and place it in a thin layer on a shallow 'microwave-safe' plate.
- Place a half-full 250 ml glass of water in the back corner of the microwave to prevent the sample from igniting.
- Heat the sample on high for several minutes. If it feels dry, weigh it, and then record its weight. Stir the sample and repeat the heating, for another minute before reweighing.
- Continue the process, weighing every 30 seconds until the weights are near constant but before the sample begins to char. If it does char use the previous reading.
- Calculate dry matter content as:

$$\frac{\text{Final weight}}{\text{Original weight}} \times 100 = \text{DM\%}$$



There are quite a few methods of testing for dry matter content, the microwave method appears to be fairly accurate. If you prefer the finger nail test and need more information, please give us a ring at the office and we will send you more details.



!!!WARNING!!!

After the MGA Office experience last year, it is important to have a half full glass of water in the microwave. Actually a microwave safe plate is also essential!!!

ADDITIONAL FUNDS FOR the MGA

The MGA Office would like to thank Masstock for taking up our offer of advertising in the MGA Times, we also continue to have a great response from companies wishing to include inserts into the mailings. The money generated from commercial mailings enables us to finance the cost of the postage and stationary as well as providing further funds for other MGA R & D activities. Please take some time to read them, we limit the number to keep the mailings in balance. Using our database we can also offer companies regional mailings if they are required with the cost depending on the number of members in that specific area.

MINI CONFERENCE in SUSSEX

Jeremy Courtney, for the past few years has organised the successful MGA/BGS mini conference in Sussex. Due to other commitments he feels unable to run the event this year. Having talked to the British Grassland Society (BGS) who co-host this event, Jessica Buss, BGS Director is going to run this years Sussex conference and the MGA will organise a similar meeting in Devon on behalf of both organisations. The MGA would like to thank Jeremy for all his hard work in the past and would encourage MGA members to support Jessica on the 18th October.

Last word:- The grass at Town Barton has all but dried up now, with the cows calving they are getting half their winter ration and set stocking the grass fields. I think we have been luckier than some parts of the country. July rainfall in Sandford was recorded at 32mm. The wheat is fit for combining but the last few days have been dull and humid, keeping the moisture of the grain up at 17%. If you are on holiday or just passing through Devon at any time, we would be pleased to show you the farm and MGA Office, just give us a ring and give me half an hour to tidy the office, there's already half a bale of straw in the Hoover. Might come in handy if we run out of bedding!



Chris Savery has written an excellent article this month. With most dairy farmers having to buffer feed and some even on winter diets with the dry summer, this note is very timely. Chris will be presenting a paper at our meeting in Devon on 14th September. This will be an ideal opportunity for members to ask questions.

DIARY DATES

Thursday 14th September
MGA/BGS Demonstration site meeting & mini conference at MGA Office Farm, Devon. More details included in this mailing.

Wednesday 20th & Thursday 21st September
DAIRY EVENT at Stoneleigh.

Wednesday 4th October
SW Dairy Show at Shepton Mallet

Wednesday 18th October
MGA/BGS MINI CONFERENCE at Ardingly, Sussex. More details in the next mailing.

Thursday 16th November
MGA GRAIN MAIZE OPEN DAY at Elveden Farms, Suffolk.