

# MGA TIMES

## WITH THIS MAILING

- January Devon farm visit circular
- January Glastonbury evening meeting circular
- Maize quality at what cost to the environment? Paper presented by Simon Draper at the European Maize Meeting

## DIARY DATES

### 2003 Events

#### Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> January, 1.30 p.m.

At MGA members Dave Munday and Jean Howard's farm, Sandford, North of Crediton, Devon.

The successful 'maize and graze' system will be featured, followed at the local cricket club by discussion with Chris Savery, MGA Nutritionist on maximising forage energy. Meeting ends with tea at 4.30 p.m.

#### Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> January, 7.30 p.m.

Courtesy of Orchard Veterinary Group, Wirral Park Rd, Glastonbury. 'Fertility and Nutrition', with partner Martin Green MRCVS speaking on fertility, why is it such a problem? and Chris Savery on maximising your forage energy from grass, maize and wholecrop silages.

#### Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> February, 1.15 p.m.

Visit to MGA member Andrew Shakeshaft's farm at Colemere, Shropshire. 'Maize and wholecrop forage, home-grown treated protein.' With dinner and overnight accommodation at Lilleshall Sports Centre, Nr Newport, Shropshire for those who wish to attend the **Annual Wholecrop Conference at Harper Adams University College on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February, 9.45 a.m.** Full details in January. The Conference will include current MDC trial and NEW wholecrop beef trial.

#### Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February

MGA Maize Event at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, Gloucester, with visit to 500 cow Kemble farms unit, accompanied by Dr Dirk Zaijjer.

Full details of the February events will be circulated in January.

## BEST WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR MEMBERS



*The MGA Office will be closed from Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> December until Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2003.*

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

### Chairman's update

The theme running through this year orientated around health, nutrition, and cost control. Our meeting in January on Dave Munday and Jean Howard's farm will, I am sure, demonstrate all three elements.

Dave and sister Jean have been following their system since an MGA trip to Brittany. I highly recommend this visit! The theme continues in the evening along with the Orchard Veterinary Group and our own Chris Savery.

The conference will take on a new style next year with a farm visit included, continuing the theme.

We have just returned from another excellent trip to Holland, and I would like to thank all those who participated in making it such a success, especially Angus for his organisational skills.

I am encouraged by the enthusiasm of those on board, who are rising to the challenges faced by the industry today. The message I came back with is this: - 'There has never been a greater need for a farmer controlled organisation like the MGA than there is now.'

My thanks to Noelle and her band of helpers at the Smithfield show, a first for MGA, supporting the RABDF's new dairy section.

I am sure you will find the new variety booklet (which will reach you during the first week of January) helpful in selecting next year's crop.

Simon has some advice on selection for harvest date etc. Thanks to Tim and his team for getting this done.

Finally thank you for your continuing support, when every budget line is being closely examined it is encouraging that you are supporting your organisation's efforts. Please feel free to contact our consultants for technical advice. If you are satisfied please tell your non-member friends, if you are not please tell me!!

I hope that you and your families all enjoy the festive season and look forward to a more prosperous New Year.

*Charles Moore, Chairman*

## MGA VARIETY BOOKLET

### Variety choice made simple

Two years ago MGA introduced the MGA Recommended First Choice Forage Maize Variety booklet, containing NIAB variety trial results, ME/ha values and guidance on how to choose varieties for individual farm circumstances.

Feedback from members indicates that this publication helped them through the minefield of variety selection.

The 2003 booklet is currently in production and will reach you early in the New Year.

The booklet contains new results from NIAB and features improved steps to variety selection, as well as nutrition tips from Chris Savery, MGA Nutrition Consultant.

## WINTER TOUR

### Netherlands Study Tour

A brief report of impressions of what you missed!

The Dutch continue to be focussed on the value of excellent forage. Maize silage with high starch (up to 40%), grass silage with high dry matter (50%) and very high sugars from short-cut material – all highly palatable. These materials were very stable with immaculate clamping and no side or top waste even on steep sides, in some cases without side walls. How do they do it? - A small group plans to return at harvest time to investigate. They will probably video it for the membership.

High emphasis on dry matter intake with use of a variety of straights and co-product (by product) feeds with attention given to levels of degradability of both starch and protein components. Lowering of protein levels to around 16%. Our guide on three farms, Dr Dirk Zaaijer, does not favour oil seed rape, 'not more than one kilogram or preferably less!' Inclusion of vital amino acids in most rations.

Great attention given to physical texture of the ration in its preparation through TMR machines – 'no mincing but thorough mixing' with attention to levels of long fibre (scratch factor) through use of fresh grass seed, hay or long straw.

Strong emphasis on transition rations to prepare for next lactation, keeping rumen capacity high with no check to ad-lib intake especially pre and post calving.

Good attention to cow cubicle comfort and auto scrapers over slats to keep feet clean, dry and free from infection. Foot dip routines in operation.

Systems were high output / high cost and driven by the high cost of land and small size of holding. Grazing having limited input in many situations.

Good utilisation of own slurry and manure, often by injection and driven by economic pressures which include fines on farm gate balances

of input: output ratio of nitrogen and phosphate. This included export to other farms and imports of forage as well as supplements. Use of clover seen on one arable dairy farm, which is new for Holland.

Excellent support and information was provided by Dr Dirk Zaaijer (attached his good feeding/breeding guide) who speaks at MDC and other meetings in the UK. Come and hear him at the maize event at Cirencester on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2003 and the afternoon farm visit at Kemble farms.

If you know farmers who travelled with us pick their brains, as they will have other views as well and consultants Howard Hughes, Barrie Audis and Robert Bull will be passing views to their clients I'm sure.

Next tour where? Your views! We have a lot of experience at home now which needs sharing – volunteers!

Angus Golightly

## OUTSIDE NOTICE

### Three Week EU Trip

Plymouth College of Further Education will be submitting an application for funding to send farmers to Italy, Belgium or Lithuania for a three-week placement on a farm. The aim of the project is to provide experience of agriculture in another European country, to establish links with other farmers and to support a proposed pilot project on the subject of training packages for small producers/farmers in the EU. The application is being submitted in association with the Small Farms Association.

The cost of travel, insurance and a small amount for subsistence would be covered. Accommodation would be given on a reciprocal basis - I assume this means that anyone participating would host a visiting farmer for a similar period.

I understand this would be open to any farmer in the UK and there is no age limit.

If you would like any further information, please contact Anne Martlage, European Student Placement Manager, Plymouth College of Further Education, Kings Road, Plymouth, PL1 5QG. Tel: 01752 305391 or Email [amartlage@pcfe.ac.uk](mailto:amartlage@pcfe.ac.uk)

## EUROPEAN MAIZE MEETING

### Maize in Europe

Simon Draper recently attended the European Maize Meeting, hosted by AGPM in France. The meeting provides a useful opportunity to catch up on the status of the maize crop in Europe and bring key messages about the technical subject (this year *'Financial & environmental benefits of maize quality'*) to members.

Simon's paper, 'Maize quality - at what cost to the environment?' is enclosed. The full report containing papers from the seven participating countries is available to members on request - in the meantime here are a couple of snippets which Simon felt may be of interest: -

**Netherlands** – Digestibility is an important parameter to consider when assessing forage maize quality. Work highlighted that although starch content reflects DM content, it is not that closely correlated with whole plant digestibility. This work suggested cell wall digestibility is also an important factor to consider when predicting whole plant digestibility.

Studies with 6 varieties of maize indicated that there are significant differences between varieties in terms of cell wall digestibility but in general there are no clear correlations between this and either the DM or fibre content of the crop.

**France** – Whole plant yield and energy values increase as the plant matures, but do you know the relative contribution from the ear and stover components? Development of the whole plant can be considered as a result of development of stems, leaves and cobs through the vegetation cycle. Climatic events at various development stages can affect development and this causes a degree of diversity in profiles at harvest.

	15 Aug	10 Sept	22 Sept	7 Oct
<b>Yield (tDM/ha)</b>				
Whole plant	8	13	14	14
Cob	0.8	6.5	8.4	9.1
Stem & leaves	7.1	6.5	5.6	4.9
<b>% DM</b>				
Whole plant	16%	25%	30%	35%
Cob	18%	33%	43%	47%
Stem & leaves	15%	20%	22%	25%

