

MGA TIMES

Lloyds TSB
AgricultureMGA 1988 - 2008 (so far!)
20 years of independent advice for farmersLloyds TSB
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MGA NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2009

- ◆ Getting ready for maize in 2009—Simon Draper.
- ◆ Irish Recommended Variety list—John Morgan.
- ◆ European maize meeting report—John Morgan.
- ◆ MGA Conference date.
- ◆ MGA Mineral.
- ◆ Silage Analysis.
- ◆ Soil Analysis.

The date has now been arranged for the 2009 MGA Maize Conference, this year we have moved it to late March (hopefully less likely to be affected by the cold weather). It will be held on **Wednesday 25th March** at the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester. We have already booked Leif Knudsen from Denmark, who we hope will speak on fertiliser for maize. Simon Draper will be updating us on the trial results for 2008, John Whitby will be presenting a paper on his first experience with planting maize under plastic. The five minute "Short & Sweet" slot that was so popular last year will be repeated again. Invitations and details will be sent to members in January.

GORDON NEWMAN

As everyone will now be aware, Gordon Newman sadly passed away on 27th October. We have had many phone calls since, from members paying tributes to Gordon and appreciating his influence in the forming of the MGA. In the new Variety booklet, John Gerring, the MGA's founder chairman pays a very fitting tribute to Gordon.

There are plans to have a Memorial service for Gordon sometime in the New Year.

We will let all members know when and where it will take place as soon as details are finalised.

NO BUGS FOUND IN 2008

The survey for 2008 is now complete and no Diabrotica beetles were found on any of the traps in England and Wales.

Approximately 230 sites were surveyed in all; 70 in focus and safety zones (within 6km of previous finds), 115 in buffer zones (6-50 km from previous finds) and 50 at other sites around England and Wales, particularly those with significant transport links.



BIG INCREASE IN MAIZE EYESPOT ON BOTH SIDES OF IRISH SEA!

This year's cold wet weather has led to a considerable increase in the number of crops affected by Maize Eyespot (*Kabatiella zeae*). Information picked up in Ireland during September's European Maize Committee meeting, confirmed that Irish crops have also been effected badly during 2007.

At the meeting, Tim O'Donovan of Teagasc (Irish Agricultural and Food Development Authority) Department) outlined his view that many farmers in the south of Ireland are spraying routinely from quite early (waist height) stages of crop growth. Tim added that replicated small plot trials are being conducted during 2008 with eight fungicide treatments. We hope to report on the findings of these trials and our own work in good time for next year's spraying window.

Eyespot facts - Maize is most susceptible to eyespot when temperatures are between 10-12 deg C and therefore causes more problems in cold wet summers. Being specific to maize, the rotation of crops can help reduce the risk of further infection. Deep ploughing of crop residues will cause rapid plant rotting and further reduce the risk of problems. Some differences in hybrid susceptibility to eyespot have been noted.



Included with this issue of the MGA Times is the popular MGA Variety booklet for 2009. Details on choosing the correct maturity class are included, as well as an article by Chris Savery (MGA nutritionist) on choosing the correct variety for your feeding system.



PRICE WATCHING WILL NOT GET THE JOB DONE!

“A lot of talk and yet still no action” could best describe discussions between industry representatives and growers in recent weeks as to the price of Nitrogen to be spread on maize next spring. Peter Kendall and the NFU continue to push hard and get rebuffed by the fertiliser manufacturers who say that the drop in energy and urea prices has yet to impact on their business models. Who is right? who knows? However one thing that is very clear is that individual farmers can only really affect their personal fertiliser nitrogen bill by focusing on matching crop requirements with nitrogen inputs. It is here that the MGA Nitrogen predictor comes into its own. Designed over 8 years ago the predictor, having taken account of all the agronomic conditions affecting crop nutrient needs, generates nitrogen recommendations for 1000's of acres of maize each year. We urge all members be they growers or commercial members keen to use the service for their clients, to contact the office or download the input form from the MGA website.



MGA MINERALS REMINDER

Now that we are in the full swing of winter feeding, can I remind you that the MGA have formulated a specialised mineral range for milking cows, dry cows and youngstock. These minerals are formulated to compliment maize based diets. The mineral range, originally formulated by Gordon Newman and subsequently updated by Chris Savery and the team at Mole Valley Farmers, includes the **MGA SUPERSPEC 200**, **MGA DRY COW**, **MGA GRAZING** AND **MGA YOUNGSTOCK MINERAL**.

Members can rest assured that, as well as receiving competitively priced top quality minerals, a significant element of the purchase price will be directed to the MGA Research Fund.

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.

Masstock
SMART FARMING

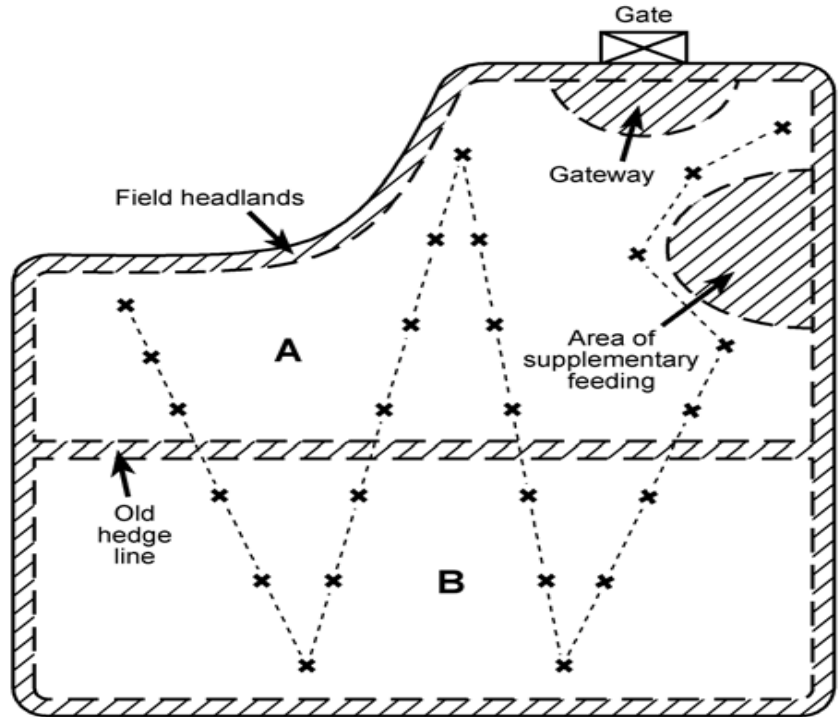
Anvil - 1st choice
Avenir - 1st choice
NK Bull - 1st choice
Picker - 1st choice
Treasure - 1st choice

For more information, please consult your Masstock contact or call Brendan Paul on 07767 310454

USEFUL TIPS FOR TAKING SOIL ANALYSES

With fertiliser costs of maize potentially adding up to 50% of the total growing costs, taking full account of the nutrients available from the soil is vitally important. While assessing the soil nutrient supply of phosphate and potash is relatively easy following soil analysis. Estimating soil nitrogen supply is more complex and best left until spring. P & K testing alongside pH assessment should be done now. We would also encourage you to soil test pre each crop of maize bearing in mind that the analysis will cost in the region of £8.50 per field and that the fertiliser bill per acre could be as much as £400!

When sampling, you should do your level best to get a good representative sample from the field. Soils should be sampled to a depth of 15 cm and multiple samples from across the field will be needed to get a good average sample (see diagram).



- Route taken
- x Sub Sample points
- ▨ Areas excluded from sample

Areas A and B should be sampled separately if they have been farmed differently in the recent past, or if they support different soils.

Ref: Rural Development Service Technical Advice

DO YOU KNOW HOW GOOD YOUR MAIZE IS IN THIS DIFFICULT YEAR?

Having just had probably the most challenging year for a very long time, with all harvesting a struggle, it is even more important to know what you are feeding your livestock this winter. Don't forget to order a silage analysis pack from the MGA Office. Results returned promptly.



MAIZE UNDER PLASTIC

For farmers in less favourable areas, plastic is becoming a more realistic option for growing maize. John Morgan has written a useful article this month on trial work done in Ireland on suitable maize varieties for growing under plastic. At the conference next March, we will also be able to hear from John Whitby on his experiences of growing, harvesting and feeding maize using plastic. We would urge members to bring their neighbours along to learn more.

VALUE ADDED TAX

At the December MGA Council meeting the recent change in the rate of VAT was discussed. The council concluded that the hassle and administration costs associated with implementing the change, over what will be short period, would outweigh the financial benefit, particularly bearing in mind that many of you pay your subscription by Standing Order.

Therefore the Council have decided that the gross amount members pay should remain the same. In effect this means that the subscription element of your payment will increase slightly.

Old Rate £85 + 17.5% VAT = £99.88
 New Rate £86.65 + 15 % VAT = £99.88.

This principle also applies to Associate and Commercial members.

We hope that all members appreciate the logic behind the councils decision.