

MGA TIMES



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Cows back on winter rations - 11th July 2007.

LAST MINUTE HERBICIDE USE

Later drilled crops of maize may still need to have their weed control carried out due to the wet weather. This means some chemicals have gone past their latest application stage and will need to be replaced by others with later application windows. Of course this may mean the herbicide you planned to apply may not be the ideal choice, but for the weeds present it may be the only option available. Listed below are the most commonly used maize herbicides and the latest recommended application dates.

PRODUCT	LAST APPLICATION STAGE
Calaris	8 leaf
Callisto	8 leaf
Samson	8 leaf
Bromotril	10 leaf
Pendemethalin (Stomp)	4 leaf
Cadou Star	2 leaf
Starane/Tomahawk	7 leaf
Shield	6 weeks before harvest
Titus	4 collar

To see the efficacy of these herbicides on the weeds present in crops, please refer to the herbicide star chart and previous herbicide technical notes. Alternatively, please contact the office and we can put you in touch with Simon or Ruth (MGA Agronomists)

Justina under plastic, tasselling on the 06/07/2007 at Demo site, Exeter.



A clear solution for farmers



The Maize Growers Association and the Catchment Sensitive Farming team are keen to invite interested parties to a series of on farm demonstration visits at its purpose drilled site adjacent to the M5 nr Exeter.

The plan is to run five events coinciding with the key areas of crop development, the first of which is on the evening of July 26th at 7.00 pm.

The focus of the July event is to review maize establishment. Discussion will focus on variety choice, drilling date, seed rate, weed control and the use of livestock manures/bagged fertilisers.

September's event, targeted to coincide with forage maize harvest, will have as its focus forage maize harvest, chop length, minimising soil compaction, and post harvest management options.

November's events – (the plan is to run two), will focus on grain maize harvest including grain drying, grain quality, variety choice, post harvest cultivation.

Scheduled for early in 2008, this last meeting will focus on soil structure issues associated with maize harvest and over winter application of organic manures.

Dates for the September and November events have yet to be finalised and will be made available in due course.

Booking a place – Either fill in the form enclosed with this month's mailing or phone 01363 775040 or email info@maizegrowersassociation.co.uk

The Exeter demonstration site is located adjacent to junction 29 of the M5 near Exeter, Devon. EX5 2AN.

WE CAN'T CONTROL THE WEATHER, BUT WE MUST TRY TO CONTROL THE REST

This season's weather could not be more different from last year, and farms are desperately awaiting a dry spell, writes Chris Savery, MGA Nutritionist. Prolonged wet weather has eventually forced all but the most determined grazers to re-house cows at some stage, rather than just buffer feed. This is dramatic for July and is reflected in milk production concerns as well as difficulty in harvesting.

Most dairy farmers have struggled since the wet weather began to maintain quality grass in front of the cows. But, despite topping and rotating to maintain best presentation – the wet has led to damage to the swards and a loss of milk. Not only do cows not want graze wet grass in wet conditions – they know there will be feed available in the trough! This makes life difficult and means that daily intakes, milk produced and cow behaviour must be watched closely if losses are to be avoided.



No one is keen to reduce the production from grazing, but if the weather is excessively wet, the buffer feed must provide an adequate alternative. That means ensuring that cows have sufficient time to eat all they need. I am sceptical whether giving the cow the choice to wander between field and trough is adequate. Too often I believe the cow makes the wrong decision. If insufficient buffer is eaten, milk yield will decrease but more will also be lost. Declining milk fat and protein % together, generally reflect falling intakes. Poor bulling activity and if prolonged, poor PD results will commonly be the findings from difficult grazing conditions.

By the time gateways and tracks are good enough to travel again, the grazing is likely to have romped away. Make a decision whether immediate grazing, topping or taking for hay / silage is most appropriate. If to be grazed, you must get back to a dense leafy sward as soon as possible, with some missed fertiliser also necessary. Prospects could then be good for summer grazing.

Many have 2nd cut crops waiting to be cut when the ground is dry enough. With heavy crops likely, try to avoid cutting when the crop is wet. If you do, spread the crop immediately as wilting in a large swath is minimal. If weather remains particularly catchy, picking up sooner will be preferable to getting wet again on the ground. An inoculant additive may help, but more importantly the grass must be clean and uncontaminated, with rapid but conscientious ensiling required. Freedom from contamination must be checked if grazing fields are to be conserved; hay may even be possible yet?

Those with wholecrop to do must be careful that the crop does not become too mature. Crops are advanced and a change to fine weather will mean that grains may become too hard. They will then require milling during harvest if they are to be digested, and an appropriate storage system must be followed.

Considerable silage has been fed as buffer, and many have still to catch up with maize / wholecrop stocks. But overall, stocks should be replenished this year. The quality of the forage – unless you were the early bird who achieved quality 1st and 2nd cuts before the storm! – will be more mature than desired. Whilst the rain has come down, all feed prices have gone up, but how far they will go we do not know. However, it is important that if not done already done so, you give serious thought to what is to be fed this winter. Energy and protein feeds are

expensive and with export restrictions still in place and power stations requiring fuel, there are less feeds to choose from. It follows that the market will be very competitive, and you will to a large extent 'get what you pay for'. Beware of lower price, low quality blends and compounds.

Feeding less of a better quality feed leaves more room for forage.

Your
livestock
partner

Overseed this summer to regenerate your grassland. Local contactors nationwide.





For further details contact Brendan Paul mob 07767 310454

Last word! - Looking out of the office window on a lovely sunny afternoon, I wonder why the cows are still indoors during the night, but if you look at the photo that accompanies Chris Savery's article above, you will realise that our tracks are not good for cows in wet conditions. They are out during the day but we are keeping them indoors at night. Since bringing them in milk quality and yield has gone up and cell counts have dropped, should they be in all the time? Although it has been wet down in the South West we can't really complain when you see the images of houses and crops under water for over a week, in the North and North east of the Country.

MAIZE PROGRESS AROUND THE COUNTRY

As you are very well aware, the unseasonable weather is having a huge impact on all farming across the UK. Below are some observations and comments from a selection of agronomists from around the country.

Neil Potts – Matford Arable Systems. South West.

Generally the maize crop is looking and growing well despite the poor weather, with many crops being well past the “knee-high by the 1st of July” saying. There are however some notable exceptions and these are:

- Late drilled crops in general doing less well than those drilled in April and very early May
- Heavy, poorly drained or compacted sites struggling to establish a good crop as might be expected given the recent excessive wet.
- Crops where the herbicide applications were delayed for one reason or another now suffering with weed competition.

Bindweed in maize at Town Barton



Sally Grey – TAG. Midlands

Weed control is becoming an issue with delayed herbicide applications leading to a few notable weeds having less than perfect control, notably:

- Fat Hen
- Knotgrass
- Bindweed

In these situations, a second herbicide is having to be applied when a window of opportunity arises (very rare).

Several backward crops (6 leaf stage) are suffering and looking pale, however forward crops are looking good and well away.

Rodney Plank & Pat Mulcahy – Masstock. South East

Some of the later drilled crops are doing OK, but there appears to be a general lack of nutrients – pale looking crops. As observed elsewhere, poor soil structure is flagging up the biggest problems.

Some of these crops have also missed spraying opportunities through no fault of their own, just down to the appalling weather.

Earlier drilled crops that missed the moisture have been patchy due to: -

- Poor germination
- Rook & Crow damage – even with treated seed which is a bit worrying

Mike Harrington, also of Masstock, expressed concerns with trace element deficiencies, especially Magnesium & Zinc. Not necessarily through low levels of these nutrients in the soil, but there lack of availability due to poor soil structure. He believes soils are becoming low in humus, leading to poorly aerated soils with less movement of nutrients.

Reuben Morris – Cropwise. North

If there ever was a year to show the benefits of maize under plastic, then this has to be it (especially in Cumbria). Growers who drilled maize with plastic generally got it in during the warm/dry spell in April, where the moisture was retained under the film and the plants got off to a flying start. Even with the poor weather subsequently, the crops have really motored on and are a couple of feet ahead of others.

Generally weed control has been pretty good and not many fields have missed herbicides due to the weather, however a few problems have occurred with product availability.

A couple of growers had a problem with a mysterious larva attacking the roots of emerged crops. After investigations at the Central Science Laboratory (CSL), they were identified as a type of Dung beetle larvae.



Cut worm

Simon Draper has also had a few cases of Cutworm (Moth larvae) damage this year; unfortunately there is little that can be done about these pests once the crop has been established. Seed dressings containing imidacloprid (e.g. Cruiser) or clothianidin (e.g. Poncho) would give control of these soil borne pests.

Having mentioned last month that organic farmers have no control over slugs, there is at least one product available for Organic farmers. Sluggo contains 1% ferric phosphate and 99% inert durum wheat and ferric phosphate and is listed in the EEC list for organic farming (EEC guideline 2092/91). The Soil Association require growers to complete a derogation application. The preferred controls are cultural and mechanical methods. Unfortunately, there are occasionally situations where cultural and mechanical control tools fail to prevent serious localized slug problems

