

MGA TIMES

CONTENTS OF THIS MAILING

- ◆ Getting ready for the maize crop
Simon Draper
- ◆ MGA Annual Maize Conference Report (if applicable)
- ◆ Errata to Maize Variety Book
letter & data from Simon Draper
- ◆ Fax back MGA Research Report request form

MAIZE CONFERENCE

Did you miss the maize Conference?

Those who attended the MGA Conference agreed that this was a beneficial and enjoyable day. If you were unable to attend the Maize Conference you will find a copy of the Conference Report, which contains copies of all the presented papers & includes a summary of all MGA R & D results of trials carried out last

MGA RESEARCH RESULTS

Congratulations to Richard Tomlinson, winner of the Milk & Meat from Maize Silage Competition 2001

Richard collected his prize of £500 cash, the HSBC Agriculture perpetual trophy and enough additive to treat 500 tonnes of maize silage at the Maize Conference. Richard was the overall winner of the competition the final round of which was so close that the difference between Richard and the next score was literally half a point! The runners up were Bicton College of Agriculture, Andrew Stevens who farms in Lechlade, Jim Williams who farms in Barnsley & David Christensen who farms in Oxon.

Many thanks again to the Competition sponsors (HSBC Agriculture, Farmers Weekly, Biotol, Promar International & Nickerson).

NUTRIENT INFORMATION

Are you wasting money on unnecessary fertiliser applications?

Nutrients available from a cow can be worth £70/year or more and 2 cows can supply enough nutrients for 1 ha of maize if used strategically. MGA has been conducting trials looking at fertiliser requirements of the maize crop and some of the findings, particularly in relation to Phosphate requirements, could save members money.

Simon Draper has detailed this information in the enclosed technical note 'Getting ready for the maize crop.'

We urge members to make use of the Nitrogen Predictor (data sheet was sent with your January mailing), and consider the value of the nutrients you already have on your farm when calculating your fertiliser requirements.

A full copy of the Phosphate Use report to which Simon refers is available from the MGA Office on request.

PLEASE CONSIDER THE RESEARCH RESULTS AVAILABLE - THEY COULD SAVE YOU MONEY

Full research reports available to members

The full research reports for each of the MGA's R & D trials undertaken last year (listed) are available to members on request. A fax back request form is enclosed with this mailing. A reminder of the R&D work results available follows:-

- *Effect of row width & seed rate on the yield & quality of forage maize.*
- *Use of Vaderstad drill to achieve the correct row width & seed rate.*
- *Interaction between variety & applied nitrogen.*
- *Interaction between starter fertiliser & nitrogen.*
- *Interaction of variety & drilling date.*
- *Use of Phosphate.*
- *Grain maize trials report.*

WHOLE CROP CONFERENCE

Whole Crop Conference a success

Should any members require a copy of the Whole Crop Conference papers please either indicate this on the fax back

request form or contact the office - these will be sent to members free of charge. *Please note that non-members are charged the delegate rate of £21 for their copies.*

BASIS POINTS AVAILABLE

MGA Conferences

qualify for Basis points

Members who qualify for Basis points can claim these if they attended either of the MGA Conferences. Please contact Noelle at the office who will advise you of the Basis reference.

ARABLE PAYMENTS UPDATE

MGA continue to pursue the Arable Area Payment issue

Update by Tim Gue (R & D Chairman)

MGA representatives recently met with the chairman of NFU Cereals Committee to lobby for their support on maize area aid issues. It was a useful meeting allowing both sides to put forward their positions.

While the NFU is able to support our claim for full area aid for grain maize their position on forage maize remains firmly against merging the base areas, as this would (slightly) reduce area payments for other arable crops.

They favour pushing for a base area enlargement for maize - NFU members, please lobby them to ensure that they do push for this!

The following week MGA representatives met with The Rt. Hon Joyce Quin MP Minister of State for Agriculture to discuss area payments and funding for a project on Sustainable Maize Drilling. The funding issue is being hampered by the fact that the England Rural Development Board funds are only available for local or regional projects not national ones. Ms Quin agreed that our projects were worthwhile and will report back having explored the funding issue.

The Minister was sympathetic to our position with regard to area payments for maize. It was pointed out that in some instances the advantage some other EU milk producer's gain over us as a result of receiving full area payments could be worth up to 0.5 pence a litre! She expressed her frustration of a system that was based on history rather than looking to the future. She believes that the arguments for a larger base area are sound, but it has never been done before. It is unlikely that any changes will be allowed in the short term, however EU enlargement could offer an opportunity to argue the case. This is due to happen in two years time so we must continue to lobby this issue. Please help us by writing to your MP about this; it will get to Ms Quin.

Grain maize falls into the same category as forage maize at present and suffers similar cutbacks in area aid, it was pointed out that if sweetcorn receives full area aid and is classed as a cereal, grain maize should be treated the same.

The meeting with Ms Quin came about as a direct result of our

close relationship with the Environment Agency and the praise this 'partnership' has received from all quarters

MINERALS Applying the correct minerals? - some advice regarding mineral choice *from our Ruminant Consultant, Chris Savery*

What is being protected and what is the benefit?

Trace elements (copper, manganese, zinc, selenium and iodine) are the main minerals to be protected. They are protected (or chelated) by combining with organic compounds (often proteins or amino acids). Chelation of trace elements is not new, and indeed natural chelates occur. The main reason to protect trace elements is to increase the availability of the trace element to the animal. How this occurs is not clear, but the organic form may be metabolised differently. They are typically found under the names of bioplexes, metalosates, optimins, nutrisols and carbosans.

Many ruminant production and health problems are blamed on 'mineral deficiency', and though there are clear cases of deficiency, there are possibly as many concerns over mineral interactions. Most of these can be corrected with standard sources of additional minerals.

There have been, and are a wealth of claims for the benefits of trace element protection in ruminants (improved production, fertility, reduced mastitis and lower SCC in particular). In most cases there is insufficient independent evidence for the use of protected trace elements in standard mineral products, to justify the increased cost. However, there will be conditions that may benefit by increasing the trace element availability, and should a problem be persistent, protection of one or more trace elements could be worthwhile.

Action

Ensure that your diets are adequately mineralised with standard trace element sources. Where this involves adding a mineral supplement daily, see that the specification is appropriate for the diet fed, and the required amount is fed every day.

Before moving to protected trace elements, be clear as to what you are hoping to achieve and why. Some analysis / dietary assessment is desirable to support the symptoms seen. Feeding more of the standard trace element source may be as effective as a protected source, and cheaper.

All members should have details of the MGA range of minerals but should any member have a query with regard to mineral choice or specification, please do not hesitate to contact me via the MGA office.

An interest in Grain Maize?

A small tour of France to look at grain maize is being organised to take place in June. Numbers are very limited but if you are interested in attending this tour, please contact the office for further details. Places will be allocated strictly on a first come, first served basis.

Your views would be appreciated!

Two countries have been suggested for the next Winter Tour this year Holland and Southern Ireland. We would appreciate members' views as to where you feel a tour would be most beneficial before proceeding with arrangements. Please contact Noelle at the MGA Office (Tel: 01189 761276 or Fax: 01189 761451).