

MGA TIMES



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MGA MEMBERS ADVERT

"CONTRACT HEIFER REARING":

An MGA member is seeking an opportunity to rear dairy heifers for clients in our locality. Previous track record of dairy replacement rearing – excellent stockmanship guaranteed. First class buildings with penning for groups of 35 to 70 head. Available now. Location: Gloucestershire / Wiltshire border.
Phone 07971 874926 (day)
or 01285 851510 (evenings)".

It will soon be time to think

about fertilizer requirements for this years maize. We would like to remind members of and encourage you to use, the MGA's own nitrogen prediction service, N Predictor. The N predictor software developed over 10 years ago, works on the basis that high yielding crops need appropriate N fertilisation and that the current public recommendation tables do not match crop requirements. To use the N Predictor service, members need to return to the office either via post, fax or email a completed input form. The field data is inputted into the computer and a field specific recommendation is produced and returned to the farmer. The N predictor also includes a predicted N max calculation for those of you in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ). Farmers growing maize in an NVZ should not exceed their N max, to stay within the law. N Predictor input forms are available from the office, MGA web page and will be sent to all members in the next mailing.

THE MAIZE CONFERENCE – THURSDAY 25TH FEBRUARY 2010

Please find enclosed in this mailing, the programme for this years Maize Conference. As you will see, we have this year been lucky to attract some excellent speakers to talk about all aspects of maize growing and use. The Irish have done a lot of work with growing maize under plastic and we are fortunate to have **Tim O'Donovan** speaking about their trials with different maize varieties and how well they perform under plastic. The Irish have also done a lot of work on eyespot control, Tim will also talk us through their results and conclusions. **Simon Marsh**, from Harper Adams College will be reporting on the College trial on the "Effect of concentrate feed levels on the performance of maize silage fed bulls". **Mark Roach**, Managing director of Grosvenor farms with four dairy herds totalling 1400 cows, including the Gold Cup winning herd 2006 will talk about their farming system and the use of maize in the system. **Richard Smith**, Environment Agency has been heavily involved in the impact agriculture, in particular maize growing has on the wider environment and he will report on the EA findings and how farmers can prevent runoff from maize stubbles. **Jonathan Blake**, from the Forage Analytical Assurance Group will explain to delegates the trial being run at Reading University and involving the MGA, looking at finding a more accurate way to get reliable maize silage analyses. Briony Burge, has been sponsored by the Gordon Newman Travel Award to look at the ever increasing interest in grain maize in the UK, the costs of growing maize for grain and the opportunities and markets available, the MGA Team will report on her findings. **John Whitby** will talk about the excellent MGA trip to Denmark. Last but certainly not least! **Simon Draper** will review last years MGA research programme, which included herbicide work, eyespot trials, and nitrogen/sulphur trials.

NITROGEN PREDICTOR UPGRADE

REQUEST FOR SILAGE SAMPLES

Members will be pleased to know that the MGA are very much involved in a LINK funded project, aiming to improve the analysis of maize silage. The work being undertaken at Reading University involves 90 samples of maize silage being fed through sheep and chemically analyzed. The MGA have agreed to collect a large proportion of the samples and deliver them to Reading. We are proposing to use a pickup with 2 IBC containers on board and will take 2 samples/trip. As we are based in Devon it would be ideal if we could have samples from farmers along the M5/M4 corridor. If possible, a range of Dry matter silage would be preferred. We would like at least 5 samples under 25%DM and 5 samples over 40%DM and a range in between.

We have already had an offer of half a tonne from Richard Roberts from Somerset, following the mention in last months mailing, which is very encouraging. We will have a trial run at Town Barton to see how easy it is to seal the samples and load them on the van!

In the mean time we would like to remind you that the MGA have negotiated a very good deal on forage analysis via Sci-antec Analytical Ltd. Members keen to make the most of this offer should give Jean a ring in the office 01363 775040.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE 2010 MAIZE CROP

With the turn of the year our thoughts turn to preparations for this year's maize. Simon Draper has put his new year's thoughts down for members to consider.

As we all know, the greatest enemy to high yields of maize is poor soil structure. Damage usually occurs either as a result of harvesting previous crops, including maize under less than ideal conditions, or by applying slurry and manure onto land in the winter period.

Winter cultivations –

The light soil types – sandy loams and sandy silt loams – should be left until the spring, until they are dry enough to be cultivated and if possible, at this point they should be subsoiled and drilled. Cultivating these soil types too early can lead them to drying out in a dry spring and therefore there is little advantage of working them too soon.

For the heavier soil types, subsoiling in the spring is not really an option, as deep working is likely to cause very cobbly seedbeds, which in turn can give poor germination should dry weather follow drilling. In the wetter parts of the UK however, cobbly seedbeds can be beneficial as they provide good drainage. Wet, waterlogged seedbeds are often more life threatening than a dry seedbed in these areas.

Across the bulk of the country, heavy land needs to be cultivated before drilling. The ideal situation is to break the soil in the dry conditions of early autumn, however this does not always fit with planned winter FYM and slurry applications. If manures are to be applied, it may be best to do so sooner rather than later, remembering that it is reasonable to spread on lightly frozen ground, assuming a thaw is forecast or likely (to allow water infiltration and minimise the risk of surface runoff). If conditions remain frosty, the land can be cultivated soon after spreading with a subsoiler and then left, allowing further frosts to break down any clods in to a good seedbed for the spring.

Where FYM has been applied, then the only option may be to plough as soon as possible to cover the FYM and again hope the frosts enter into the flag. In these situations if we do



get a series of frosts, it may be wise to level the flags with a subsoiler 1-2 weeks after ploughing, as this will give greater rooting depth, whilst at the same time producing a more uniform surface, allowing the frost to penetrate the land evenly.

Members are reminded that whilst there is no closed period for FYM, slurry applications are limited in the NVZ areas to not commencing until the 15th January (assuming you have sufficient storage). Applications following the end of the closed period are limited to 50 cu m/ha.

Members are also reminded that if they would like to talk through their cultivations plans with Simon, he can be contacted via the MGA office 01363 775040.

CORRECTION TO VARIETY BOOKLET

I have had a message from Tim Richmond from Limagrain UK to say that their Maturity class 9 variety LZM155/60 is actually called **LG31.81**

Could you please amend your booklets accordingly.

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