

# MGA TIMES



**Correspondence Address:** Town Barton Farm, Sandford, Crediton, Devon. EX17 4LS. Telephone: 01363 775040 Fax: 01363 776938  
 E-mail: [info@maizegrowersassociation.co.uk](mailto:info@maizegrowersassociation.co.uk) Website: [www.maizegrowersassociation.co.uk](http://www.maizegrowersassociation.co.uk)

- ◆ MGA Annual Conference papers.
- ◆ Eyespot update—Simon Draper.
- ◆ Invitation to Maize Open day at Severn Trent Water.

## MGA ANNUAL CONFERENCE PAPERS

In this bumper mailing, please take time to read the Conference papers, you will find some useful information about feeding and growing maize. We would like to take this opportunity to once again thank the Conference sponsors, without them the conference would not have been such a successful event.



## POST EMERGENCE WEED CONTROL UNDER HOT CONDITIONS

**When temperatures are over 25C, applications of herbicides are best delayed. Crops will be under extreme stress and treatments at such time can result in crop leaf scorch. There is also the risk that at such high temperatures some of the spray will evaporate before hitting the crop, with the result that its effect is reduced. If you must spray, only do so early in the morning or in the evening to reduce the chances of crop scorch.**

## UPDATE ON MGA COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

During this last year there have been quite a few changes to the MGA Council membership. Barrie Bryer, who had been the Treasurer of the MGA for at least ten years until two years ago, is leaving the Council. Although he has said he will still be happy to give the office team support, especially Jean with correcting punctuation! Actually his wife Rosemary is the expert. Mark Osman, who manages the Royal farms at Windsor is retiring after nine years on the Council, having just installed three robotic milking machines and built a lovely new complex for the Royal Jersey herd, he feels he needs to spend his time concentrating on that. Robbie Taylor, Livestock technical director at Velcourt has also stood down due to work commitments. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them for all their hard work and dedication to the organisation and running of the MGA.

At the AGM last month we welcomed two new members to the Council:-

- **Michael Christensen from Somerset.**  
 The farm has been run as a partnership between Finn and his two sons; Neil and Michael since 1990.  
 The business consists of Dairy, Poultry and Arable units covering over 1100 acres (600 acres owned). The business currently is turning over £5m, producing 4.6 million litres of milk, 2.1 million chickens per year and growing approximately 1000 tonnes of wheat for home use. Most arable and forage operations are carried out by the farm staff and machinery. Winter wheat and maize form their current cropping.  
 Over the years he has done numerous trial crops for Pioneer and MGA and has always held an interest in growing maize.
- **Hugh McClymont from Dumfries.**  
 Hugh presently manages SAC's Crichton Royal Farm at Dumfries, where he has been for the last 30 years. This currently involves 450 cows and 250 youngstock, split between the 2 units of Acrehead and Crichton. Maize has been grown at Crichton consistently over the last 15 years and the area increases annually, with maize recently harvested for grain. Other crops grown are spring and winter wheat for Alkalage production. As well as managing the farm business, Hugh actively supports the various research personnel undertaking the many research projects based at Crichton Royal Dairy Research Centre.

## TEXT MESSAGES

To get quick messages to MGA members, particularly diabrotica and eyespot warnings, we are investigating the possibilities of sending instant texts. Could we please have your mobile phone numbers if you are interested in the idea of this new feature of MGA Membership.

Please find a map on page three with the current Council members. As you will see they represent a fair area of the Country.

**WHOLECROP HARVEST WILL SOON BE HERE!**

Before we know it, wholecrop harvest will be upon us and for many, this is an opportunity to process a valuable crop rich in energy and good quality fibre. To get the best from this crop, it is very important to harvest at the correct maturity stage for the particular type of product you are trying to achieve, be that “Alkalage” or “Fermented”. As a rule of thumb, fermented wholecrop needs to be in the 35 – 50% dry matter range, Alkalage needs to be over 70%. Whichever system you are going for, please make sure the grains are adequately processed to release the starch and energy without over-chopping the straw, but being short enough to allow clamp consolidation (30-40mm chop length may be the optimum). Well-maintained and operated grain mills on the forager will achieve this.

The table below gives a good guide to wheat wholecrop maturity and crop dry matter: -

DM%	CROP COLOUR	GRAIN TEXTURE
32 - 35	Green	Soft Brie; some grains milky
36 - 38	Green	Soft Brie
39 - 42	Green, ears turning yellow	Soft Cheddar
43 - 46	Green, going yellow	Soft Cheddar
47 - 54	Yellow, hint of green	Hard Cheddar, with some harder grains
55 - 65	Yellow, hint of green on stem	Hard Cheddar, with some grains impossible to penetrate with thumbnail
66 - 70	Yellow/brown, traces of green at nodes	Very hard, with grains impossible to penetrate with thumbnail
71 - 80	Yellow/brown	Too hard to penetrate with thumbnail; loosening in daytime

**SO FAR SO GOOD!**

On a recent cross country trip, John Morgan of the MGA office team called in at past MGA chairman David Christensen's farm near Oxford for a cuppa and to hear how David was getting on with his first maize under plastic. David and the family have been growing maize for many years and have land which allows conventional maize to reach maturity each and every year. Why then you may ask is he trying maize under plastic, a technique which until recently has been more commonly associated with more marginal maize growing areas. The answer is simply economics. David is keen to maximise the production from his



land and is keen to investi-

gate the potential of plastic to boost yields to a level that more than covers the extra cost of using plastic. Before heading home, John took a look at the maize as well as some photo's. The difference in growth stage of the maize planted with and without plastic was dramatic. While the conventionally drilled maize was looking very well with four good leaves, that under plastic towered above it having much broader leaves and stronger stalks. Most noticeable was the fact that the maize under plastic was meeting across the rows allowing the plant to make full use of the high angled June sun to bulk up and clock up the heat units. David confirmed that before getting too carried away with the technique, he would be making yield assessments and preparing full crop costings in the autumn. He also commented that he is keen to identify the most suitable varieties.

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**MGA COUNCIL MEMBERS**



As you may all be aware, a voluntary farmer committee (MGA Council) runs the MGA. We at the office thought it important for members to know who they are at present. As you will see, there is a great cross-section of the farming industry with a wealth of experience in all aspects of growing and feeding maize.

§ **CHAIRMAN**

**John Jackson**

Farms manager for Severn Trent Water Authority, Nottingham. Managing 4500 acres over 3 farms.

§ **VICE CHAIRMAN**

**John Whitby**

Farming a typical lowland family unit in Buckinghamshire, currently milking 185 Jerseys. Growing maize under threat of the Diabrotica beetle.

§ **TREASURER**

**John Cottle**

230 cow Dairy-farming Company near Chester, Cheshire. No grass silage, but relying on maize and fodder beet for winter forage.

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**Andy Allan**

Farming 200 pedigree South Devon sucklers on the Portman Burtley Estate, Buckinghamshire. Currently selling to Waitrose and under organic conversion.

**Graeme Cock**

Dairy farming partnership covering 1,100 acres near Ashburton, Devon, milking 450, 10,300 litre cows and growing 170 acres of maize.

**Michael Christensen**

Farming in Partnership with his Father and Brother at Pilton in Somerset. The business consists of Dairy, Poultry and Arable units covering over 1100 acres (600 acres owned).

**Hugh McClymont**

Hugh presently manages SAC's Crichton Royal Farm at Dumfries, where he has been for the last 30 years.

**Simon Leach**

Currently livestock manager for Anglia Farmers in Norfolk, the largest farmer-buying group in the UK.



**NITROGEN PREDICTOR GETS EVEN BETTER.**

This year a record number of N predictors have been processed by the office, bolstered by the price of Nitrogen fertilisers and the need for many to have more precise Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) records. Because of the NVZ requirement to calculate an N max figure for maize crops, the input form this year asked for more accurate details about application rates of slurries and manures.

This has highlighted in several situations that we can in fact be even more accurate with our recommendations. In essence, the more details we have about slurry & manure types, application rates/timings and incorporation details, the more exact we can be. The plan next year will be to create an input form with more opportunities to add greater detail without complicating the process excessively.

For members in NVZ's we have been able to calculate their N Max figure for maize (provided all fields have been included), saving them time, effort and probably inclination in providing the necessary calculations for this piece of legislation.

For those who have not used the service this year and would like to double-check their figures, please call Jean at the office and she can organise an input form.