May 2011

Maize Growers Association

MGA TIMES

Lloyds TSB Agriculture

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In this Issue

EMAIL ADDRESSES PLEASE

For the last couple of months Simon Draper has been sending out some relevant notes re this years maize drilling and the crops progress in this difficult year. I have been sending the information out to MGA members who's email address I have. Judging by the number of emails returned unknown, my address list is sadly lacking up to date information. If you are on email and haven't received the three or four notes sent out in April and May, could you send the MGA office **(info@maizegrowersassociation.co.uk)** an email and I will put your address on the list. I am also regionalising the address book, so any relevant problems in particular areas can be sent to the members affected (if you see what I mean!). An example of what is being sent out is highlighted below.

Maize update – May 2011

Simon Draper- MGA Agronomist

Purple maize at this time of year is very common and is generally very transitory and should be of concern, only if the maize remains purple for more than 10 days.
Purpling is generally a symptom of plant stress, although some varieties do have a natural purple edge to the leaf at the 4-6 leaf stage.

One of the main causes of stress is drought and whilst we have had some welcome rain, it may have not been enough to reach deep into to the soil and the main maize tap roots may still be in dry soil. This is particularly the case if the field was ploughed in dry conditions, inverting the top dry soil down to plough depth and it may have not yet had enough rainfall to wet this up (even more so where grass has been ploughed down). Once this occurs the maize roots will not penetrate any further into the soil and start to 'stress' from insufficient supply of either or both moisture and nutrients.

Stress may also be caused by herbicides that have been applied under dry and sunny conditions – it is worth checking for this by finding a spray miss or a double on the headlands and see if the purpling is any less or more.
Stress can also be caused by poor soil structure, which does not allow the maize roots to penetrate quickly and therefore run out of nutrients within the rooting zone. Again this can be transitory, but if the soil structure is bad, then the roots may never be able to explore enough soil to get the nutrients they require.
On chalk soils, purpling is very noticeable and this is due to the lower soils temperatures which make the roots grow more slowly and hence temporarily running out of nutrients. Normally on chalks crops will recover quite quickly.

Correction of the purpling

The most likely nutrient deficiency which will cause purpling of the leaves is phosphate deficiency. Before tying to address a potential shortage, it is worth double checking the phosphate status of the field by looking at the soil analysis. It is also worth waiting for ten days or so to see if things sort them selves out on there own.
The waiting and paper checks done and still purple leaves means it is time to try and apply extra nutrients and while soil applied nutrients are the most obvious choice unless it rains, release of available nutrient will be limited and as a consequence the use of foliar feeds containing phosphate should be considered. Foliar feeds that contain nitrogen, potash and other nutrients are also available.

While not always showing a positive response in some cases, results following the use of foliar feeds have been favourable and usually with stressed crops. Give me a ring at the MGA office to discuss your options.

STRIP TILLAGE COMES TO THE FORE

The excellent article focusing on the Strip Tillage being undertaken by MGA member and 2011 conference speaker Stephen Temple in the one of the May editions of the Farmers weekly reminded me that we have a long standing MGA and past Council Member who has been persevering with strip tillage for many years. Jeremy Wilson, who farms in Kent has drilled well over 500 acres of maize with his Swiss designed cultivator/drill combination machine this spring, into a variety of previous crops and soil types. Maize has been established into grass sprayed off with glyphosate, cereal/overwintered mustard stubble and on fields that have received slurry and or farm yard manure. Jeremy is keen to remind members of the potential low cost, soil protection and speed of establishment benefits of the technique and would be happy to talk through his experiences with members. To learn more contact the office and we will put you in contact with those with the practical experience!.

Strip tillage into mustard stubble

CEREALS 2011

The MGA are once again attending The Cereals Event. **Our Stand Number is C450.**
Please come along and meet the team and let us know how this years maize is fairing in your part of the country. This year the event is being held at Boothby Heath, Lincoln, Lincolnshire LN5 0AS.

cereals
The Arable Event
15-16th June 2011

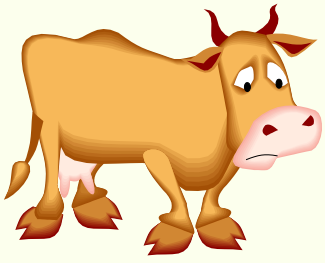
GRAIN MAIZE GETS A GOOD WRITE UP IN THE FARMERS WEEKLY.

Keen members will no doubt have already spotted the excellent article by Philip Case on the Farmers Weekly web site, talking readers through the physical and financial performance of the crop. The article, focusing on Mike Harper and MGA supporter Peter Bailey talks readers through the crop from start to finish and in so doing provides a really good insight to the practicalities of grain maize. Existing growers will I think find the piece interesting and thought provoking. The full article can be found via the following link.

http://www.fwi.co.uk/Articles/2011/03/10/125844/Widening-the-harvest-window-with-grain-maize.htm

MAIZE SILAGE MAKES NATIONAL NEWS

The release of the DEFRA funded nutrition research into ways to reduce Green House Gas (GHG) Emissions from Ruminants certainly made national journalists prick up their ears earlier in the month, with the work being reported by the BBC as well as several national newspapers including the Guardian.



The work, by researchers at Reading University and the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Science in Aberystwyth, attempted to address the fact that rumen fermentation accounted for 35% of the total agricultural emissions of GHG, by measuring and evaluating the methane emissions and nitrogen use of a range of diets.

The work found that increasing the proportion of maize silage in cows diets from 25% to 75% reduced the methane emissions per litre by 6% and concluded that Maize silage was one of the most successful ingredients at reducing GHG emissions alongside, naked oats, crushed whole rape seed, linseed oil, legume silage and high sugar grasses.