

MGA TIMES



Lloyds TSB
Agriculture



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STARLING PROBLEMS?

The MGA are holding a meeting on Tuesday 1st November at The Bath & West Showground to discuss the on going problem of starlings and crows contaminating dairy cow and beef animal forages, especially maize based feeds. This problem is very serious in Somerset and therefore it seems an appropriate part of the country to have this meeting. We will have a speaker from Natural England, a local Vet and a farmer. We also would welcome any solutions that farmers have used to successfully deter these pests.

Please ring or email the MGA Office to book a place.



A COLD AUGUST, A WET SEPTEMBER AND A LATE HARVEST.

With the exception of those crops that were drilled early or for those in the south of the country under plastic, it looks as though it is going to be a late harvest.

Harvesting immature crops will lead to greater effluent problems. The effluent does contain high levels of sugar and ideally this should be trapped and fed – one option to do this is to place sugar beet pulp in the bottom of the clamp as an absorbent and a quality feed. Another option for those where this is unobtainable/too expensive is to use chopped straw, but it is less absorbent where high levels of effluent occur.



Harvesting on MGA Chairman's farm near Slough.

If the crop has a lot of dead tissue within it, consolidation will be difficult and heavy rolling (which will cause even more effluent) will need to occur to ensure significant consolidation to stop secondary fermentation.

EYESPOT AGAIN

Maize eyespot is a relatively new problem to many farmers and occurs as a result of cold, wet growing seasons. Eyespot is temperature sensitive and if August temperatures reach 27°C, eyespot will generally not be a problem. This year has not been the case! and consequently, a large number of marginal crops have been infected. The disease spreads down the plant and will rapidly spread across the crop. The entire field can look dead in as little as 2 weeks from initial infection.



Disease control with fungicides can be achieved if sprayed at the end of July or even up until the beginning of September with a high ground clearance machine but now it is too late.

Eyespot is already seriously attacking crops in the South West and Wales and if we continue to have the wet misty type weather we are currently having, then the eyespot will develop very quickly.

Once eyespot develops to the point where the whole plant is infected, then harvesting should be considered. With the plant dying no more starch will be laid down and the feed value of the sugars etc that are in the green leaf will be lost.

Therefore harvest date will be a compromise between starch levels and feed value of the green leaf, but once more than 15 patches of dead plants (>10m across) can be seen in a field, consider harvesting as soon as you can.

MARGINAL MAIZE MEETING.

The MGA members meeting held in Clawton on the 20th September, courtesy of Adrian Mitchell, proved to be a great success with 20 members plus Simon Draper and John Morgan from the MGA plus representatives of the Environment Agency in attendance. The focus of the meeting was marginal maize production with presentations on the logic and economics of maize under plastic from John and the EA's thinking on marginal maize production being followed by a "wet" guided tour of the Limagrain variety demonstrations adjacent to the hall. The keen ones amongst us then headed to view Adrian's maize under plastic before we regrouped at the village pub for some lunch. Lots of positive discussion and most certainly a reason to try and run similar members only events over the



coming winter months. John's paper on the economics of plastic can be viewed on the MGA web site and an edited version is also included in this mailing.

DONT FORGET TO ORDER YOUR MGA MINERALS

Soon we will be in the full swing of winter feeding, can I remind you that the MGA have formulated a specialised mineral range for milking cows, dry cows and youngstock. These minerals are formulated to compliment maize based diets. The mineral range, originally formulated by Gordon Newman and subsequently updated by Chris Savery and the team at Mole Valley Farmers, includes the **MGA SUPERSPEC 200, MGA DRY COW, MGA GRAZING AND MGA YOUNGSTOCK MINERAL.**

Members can rest assured that, as well as receiving competitively priced top quality minerals, a significant element of the purchase price will be directed to the MGA Research Fund.

Minerals are ordered direct from Mole Valley Farmers and designated telephone/fax numbers have been set up for this purpose only - it is **not** possible to order any other MVF products on the numbers given below. You can either telephone or fax your order on the following numbers:

Telephone 01278 444829 Fax: 01278 446923

Please remember if you have an order to make, a query about delivery, invoicing or product then please contact the Mole Valley contacts given above. If you need advice about mineral feeding, or if you have a formulation query, you should telephone the MGA office on 01363 775040.



SILAGE ANALYSIS

MGA members can order silage analysis packs via the MGA Office, we use Sciantec Laboratories for this service. The results are sent back promptly. If you phone the MGA Office Jean will send you the analysis packs, including information on sampling. Postage of samples is free.



MYCOTOXIN WARNING

The later the harvest, the more the potential for firstly soil damage, but also as importantly the risk of a crop containing high levels of Mycotoxins.

Mycotoxins have been associated with high levels of disease, poorer reproductive performance and reduced levels of milk output. Whilst there are a range of Mycotoxins, all of which can be found on maize, it is when the crop loses its green leaf, as the dead brown leaf allows the Fusarium (pink fungal growth on the cobs and nodes of the maize plant), to rapidly colonise the maize plant. Therefore it is important to ensure that harvest of the maize crop occurs when the crop is still GREEN.

Thus for crops which are not going to be ready until mid October at the earliest – and that does assume we will have an Indian summer, then care does need to be taken, as these crops are likely to become frosted or perhaps more worryingly severely attacked with maize eyespot.

Ideally the dry matter of the crop needs to be at 30% but if this is achieved by having a dead crop then it may be worth considering harvesting it earlier as the problems that go with this (acidic feed, low starch etc) may be easier to overcome than high mycotoxin levels.

Masstock
SMART FARMING

**MAIZE MASTER
drill after maize**

- 50% diploid Italian ryegrass
- 50% tetraploid Italian ryegrass

- Big** 1st cut in May then back into maize
- OR** 3 cuts then into arable
- Can keep for 2 years unlike Westerwolds
- Soaks up surplus N
- Reduces soil erosion
- Sow at 14 kg / acre

For further details contact Brendan Paul 07767 310454