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- ◆ Maximise maize feed value—Chris Savery.
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## EUROPEAN MAIZE MEETING

Summarising the best bits of the European Maize Meeting held each September and this year hosted by Hugh McClymont at SAC Dumfries, is always difficult bearing in mind the massive amount of information discussed. This year delegations from Belgium, Germany, France, Denmark, Italy, Ireland and the UK attended.

As in the past the formal element of the meeting was divided into two sections. The first focused on the 2012 maize crop in each country and also provided delegations with the opportunity to talk about the research they were undertaking. This year's special subject, Maize Seedbed Establishment, attracted really good papers, ranging from those aiming to minimise the risk of soil erosion/wash, to those focused primarily on maize yield and quality. PDF copies of the papers are available from the office.



## IMMATURE MAIZE IS NOT ALL BAD NEWS!

Compared to typical maize silage, immature crops will:

- Be higher in digestible fibre.
- Have higher protein levels.
- Have slightly lower ME levels (sugars used by bugs to ferment crop).
- Have lower starch content, but higher sugars.
- Ensile well.
- Rapidly ferment.
- Rapidly drop in pH.
- Consolidate well in the clamp.

Bearing in mind the above, it may be best to describe immature maize as different, rather than dramatically inferior to conventional maize. To better understand the crops potential, you should most certainly get it analysed this year and develop rations according to what you have got to feed.

Immature maize is likely to be more acidic than normal and as a consequence the risk of Acidosis in milking cows will be increased. The key indicator of rumen acidosis is falling milk butterfat levels, although it is possible to test rumen liquor pH directly. Target rumen pH is 6 or above if forage is to be digested most effectively.

The best natural buffer is saliva, with lots of cudging, salt blocks and water being important.

Sodium Bicarbonate can also help buffer acidic rumen liquor.

SILAGE ANALYSIS PACKS  
AVAILABLE FROM MGA OFFICE

Having just had probably the most challenging year for a very long time, with all harvesting a struggle, it is even more important to know what you are feeding your livestock this winter. Don't forget to order your silage analysis packs from the MGA Office. 01363 775040.

Results returned promptly.



## TALES FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY!

### Stephen Temple, North Norfolk.

About 2/3 of the way through our own crop, just waiting for the June drilled Kaspian to be ready and the last bunker of old crop to be used up. Went a bit early, due to a couple of patches of eyespot in Ballade (unsprayed). Some early April drilled Beethoven with poor emergence ran 10t/ac, Ballade drilled in May yielded 20t/ac. A little Fusarium I think in Kaspian, which has an open end sheath.

### Graeme Cock, South Devon.

Maize harvest this year has yet to start, as has cereal drilling and many other tasks. The inclement conditions seem to be showing no signs of relenting. Ground conditions and mud on the road will dictate harvest on many fields.

Its a good job I'm a very patient person don't you think! Half of the maize crops were ready to harvest last week, some will now be 35%+

Our maize crop this year is respectable considering the awful season. The yield range will be far greater than normal though. My estimates are the best crops will be something approaching 25 tonnes acre (Benicia under plastic), but there are also poorer crops that have suffered as a result of the season, which will be 10-12 tonnes. One small four acre field will only do 5 or 6 tonnes.

All our crops were sprayed for eyespot, thank goodness!

Virtually everything under plastic is looking promising and good to go, but some May drilled crops in the open are way behind and the grains are still WHITE. Christmas eve looks like the day they will be fit to harvest, if the frost and the Badgers don't get it first. Happy days!

We must not lose faith with maize, as it still can offer the best value when grown successfully; though many will be considering alternatives, some of which will compete on £ tonne DM basis, but will not give the nutritional benefits maize does.



### John Whitby, Buckinghamshire.

I harvested 65 % ( by area) of our crop last Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October, enough to fill one big clamp.

All of the crop harvested was dry and ready to harvest, first guess at the usual 32% starch and 32% dry matter.

In terms of yield, I estimate 85% of normal, where normal would be 18t acre.

All of the crops were grown **without** plastic, with some 25% by area planted before the end of March, ( it did not emerge until May!). I have several fields left to cut, with the latest probably needing a week or two and others ready now. If I had a weather window I would cut some more this week.

Drilling cereals is a stop start affair , however there is still plenty of time.

Understandably the arable team are keen to finish, given the manic nature of harvest , hay making , grass silage etc which was all compressed into six weeks in late July and August.

Open Farm Sunday was the only nice weather day in June and we attracted 975 visitors.

### Hugh McClymont, Dumfries.

25 acres of Nancis and Ardent (1/2 of each) were harvested on 26<sup>th</sup> September at 29% DM at a yield of 15 tonnes/ acre not bad for the worst growing season on record.

Kentaurus grown under plastic planted on April 1<sup>st</sup> at 38000seeds/acre and yielding 14t/acre @ 38%DM very dry!! Field now ploughed and will be sowed with Clamfiller Grass seed for harvest at Scotgrass on May 9<sup>th</sup> 2013.

Still 70 acres to harvest and now planned at earliest w/c 22<sup>nd</sup> October, with a further 15 acres to be sown with grass after harvest. Fingers and Toes Crossed.

Drilling last of our W Wheat today in brilliant Sunshine (I did take a photo of the sun for the record!).



### Mary Quicke, Mid Devon.

Mary's Farm manager Adam was harvesting their maize on the day of the SW Dairy Show, the maize wasn't high and the harvester was knocking the plants over, with the precious cobs being left on the ground. Below is Adam's email comment to Simon Draper.

***"Got there eventually by changing all the blades, going slowly 3-4mph and not cutting eighth row on the open side as they had no support to hold them up. 700t off 150 (ish) acres. Ouch"***

There is a lot of maize down in the South West that will have the same problems and this may be some good advice to others.





# MGA WINTER MEETING

By kind permission of Kath & John Cottle, Birchenfields Farm,  
Sealand Road, Chester. CH1 6BS

**Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

**Starting at 10.30 a.m**

## “How to obtain 5000 litres from forage”

**The meeting will include a tour of John’s farm, where he feeds maize silage and fodderbeet.**

**Andrew Holland from Ontrak Nutrition will explain the feeding regime at Birchenfields Farm.**

### FROST ALERT!

*If we haven’t already had enough problems this year, beware of frosts. Neil Groom has below given a good description of what happens to the plant after it has been frosted.*

The freezing process explodes the plant cells and the sugar solution held within the cells is lost. This sugar ultimately would have formed starch, so maturity is compromised. 3 to 4 days after a frost event the leaf becomes brown and dies and yeasts and moulds can colonise this dead material and grow.

We all know we want to keep yeast and mould out of the silage pit for fear of mycotoxins. Each grower needs to assess the degree of frosting, in my opinion top 2-3 leaves doesn't matter - they are small and don't make up much of the total volume.

If down to cob level get the crop chopped.

Maize will always continue to lay more starch down since there are sugars in the stems too, but if all the leaf is dead reduce the mould level and harvest.



### ALKABUPHA

This year’s visit to the Livestock event at the NEC was notable for several reasons, one of which was a chance to catch up with Alkalage Guru Alan Sayle.

Alan was keen to talk about Alkabupha, a product which he claims will “Get to the root of the Acidosis & SARA problems”. Alkabupha’s supporting literature states that it is a protein based product, which releases alkaline, reactive ammonia in to the forage part of a diet when added to the mixer wagon and in so doing increases the ration pH and in so doing reduces or eliminates the acid loading of the ration.

Something to take a look at and compare, alongside the more conventional rumen buffer options available perhaps.

**Last word—** Its been a busy few months in the MGA Office, with a lot of questions about harvest and when it will happen. Apologies for those who have already harvested, but we have included a harvest guide for those (us included) that haven’t.

Obviously great care will have to be taken when harvest gets going, mud on the road being a serious problem. Maize is having a bad enough time at the moment, we don’t want to upset the general public and give maize a bad name. The Livestock Show & South West Dairy Show saw a lot of members and non members come to the MGA stand to talk about harvesting and feeding maize this year. Chris Savery & Simon Draper were there to answer questions.

One problem that is cropping up and it applies to Town Barton as well, is how to harvest maize that is about three foot tall, with a huge cob near the bottom of the plant. (See the harvest update for some advice from Mary Quicke’s Farm Manager).

Finally the MGA would like to thank the sponsors, SAC and especially our Chairman, Hugh McClymont for hosting the European Maize Meeting. (Haggis is rather good! and I could get to like malt whisky).



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