

# MGA TIMES



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## MGA Variety Booklet 2008

This year's variety booklet is in the process of being published and as always, will give an independent, replicated and comprehensive list of the first choice maize varieties tested through the NIAB trialling system. As more and more growers are looking to make buying decisions earlier, we have posted the tables on the MGA website for members perusal before the booklet is distributed. The tables are in the secure section of the website, so only available to paid up members of the MGA. If you do not already have full access and wish to use the website fully, then please call or email the office with a username and password for.

## MAIZE CONFERENCE 2008

Please put the 28<sup>th</sup> February in your diaries for next year's conference, returning this year to the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester. Speakers to stimulate thought and discussion are being booked, and will include Simon Draper with results from this year's small plot trials, a presentation on the 2007 biogas trip, financial aspects of maize growing and at least one international speaker.

## GRAIN MAIZE DEMONSTRATION

Another successful day was had at the grain maize site near Exeter on the 15<sup>th</sup> November. After presentations on the economics, agronomy and drying of grain maize in the morning, Troy Stuart (host farmer and contractor) gave a demonstration of harvesting and crimping on the demonstration site, as well as further practical tips and observations on maize agronomy by Simon Draper (MGA agronomist).

Of particular interest was the speed of the harvesting operation, 50 acres combined per day with ease, 80 acres being achieved on particularly good days. The stripper headers used for maize certainly showed their worth, with only the cobs passing through the threshing mechanism and the chopped haulm laid as a carpet for the tracked combine to travel across. The other key factor in harvesting efficiency was the use Troy makes of his Chaser Bin, unloading the combine on the move

and, as seen in the picture below, the use of low ground pressure tyres leaving little compaction. Additionally, as this vehicle remains in the field, no compromise is needed for tyre pressure when travelling on the road. Rapid unloading in to either trailers or lorries on the headlands



(or out on the road) for transport back to the store again minimises tracking across susceptible soils. Not that common in the UK, mainly due to their capital cost, but as Troy pointed out, if you can increase harvesting efficiency by 20%, coupled with less soil compaction, quite a justifiable expense.

As expected, the grain being harvested was at 30% moisture and being processed in two ways, drying and crimping. Drying was being done at the farm's grain store, going across the drier twice to achieve a satisfactory drop in moisture at a cost of between £15 and £20 per tonne (and rising with the cost of diesel). This process can also slow the harvesting operation, even when running the drier 24 hours per day. The other method of processing demonstrated was crimping with a high output crimper, which could keep up with the combine. In this situation, the crimped grain was being mixed with an organic acid and either being clamped conventionally or stored in a "mini Ag Bag".



**STARTER FERTILIZER**

With MAP (Mono Ammonium Phosphate) now being talked about at between £350 and £400 per tonne, it is probably time to review how much we need to apply to our maize crops next year, or do we actually need any at all. At the traditional application rate of 1cwt per acre, this will now work out at £20 per acre, so an extra 1 tonne of harvested maize will need to be produced to cover this cost. In the past, with MAP at half this price, it has often been considered to be a good "insurance" policy to put some down the spout.

In fact, with soil phosphate (P) indices of 3 or above, little or no additional P is necessarily required and even below these levels; the P supplied by any manure applications often meet the needs of a decent maize crop. The problem invariably is the maize seedling actually being able to obtain vital plant nutrients in the early stages of its development. Consequently, when soil conditions are less than satisfactory (e.g. cold, acidic, waterlogged etc) a response has often been seen by supplying some essential establishment nutrients close to the seed. However, the response has often been found to be cosmetic, with the plant passing through this early yellowing phase and yield not ultimately comprised.

The conclusion would be to have a good idea of how much P is being supplied to the crop already from other sources (manures, soil reserves, sewage sludge etc) and then balancing this with bagged fertiliser to match the crops needs. The key then is to ensure these nutrients will be able to be taken up by the plant, so warm, well structured, optimal pH (6.5) soils will have a huge impact on how the seedling maize plant progresses. We all know this cannot always be guaranteed, but a few pounds per acre to correct some soil problems can be easily recouped by better crops and savings on "bought in" plant nutrients. Technical notes from the MGA on nutrient requirements for maize crops have been produced over the years and are available on the website or by contacting the office if you have lost them.

**STARLINGS IN YOUR CATTLE SHEDS?**

Hawk-Kite + 7 Metre Pole is a Powerful and Effective Deterrent that Really Works



Exploits deep-seated instinctive fear of hawks. Superb control. Scares even feral birds - **SILENTLY**



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**CHRIS HITS THE NAIL ON THE HEAD**

Chris Savery's technical note enclosed coincidentally summarises exactly what has happened at Town Barton (MGA office farm) this year. An enthusiastic contractor (you know who you are!) harvested the first part of this year's maize a little early (but it yielded tremendously well) and the resultant silage is as Chris has predicted: -

- o 28% Dry Matter
- o 22g/kg Starch
- o 11.6 ME
- o 3.7 pH

However, as the farm feeds a high percentage of maize in the dairy ration, no apparent impact on cow performance has been experienced, mainly due to the high ME content of the silage. The lower starch levels can be put down to immature plants, but as the crop was taken at the end of a prolonged dry spell, the dry matter was not too bad. Others harvesting a week later in this area after a spell of rain, ended up with lower dry matters, effluent and yet had higher starch levels. The other half of Town Barton's maize crop, harvested 3 weeks later, has yet to be analysed but was obviously drier and grains more mature.



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**DISCOUNTED ANALYSIS SERVICE**

With maize and grass silage analysis results so varied this year, it is even more important to know exactly what you are feeding your livestock. Chris Savery has written an excellent article on maize feeding this winter, which is included in this mailing. The MGA offer a discounted silage analysis service and results are emailed back within a day or so.

*(Prices subject to VAT)*

**Maize Silage Standard Package**

*DM, Crude Protein, D Value, ME, FME, Fibre, Ash, pH, Ammonia Nitrogen, Fermentation Acids, Sugar, Starch, eRDP, DUP values from MP protein system.*

**£12.00**

**Grass Silage Standard Package**

*DM, Crude Protein, D Value, ME, FME, Fibre, Ash, pH, Ammonia Nitrogen, Fermentation Acids, Sugar, eRDP, DUP values from MP protein system*

**£12.00**

**Grass Silage Package with FIM (Feed Into Milk) Predictions**

*As standard grass package plus additional Nitrogen and DM values for use with FIM programmes*

**£13.00**

**Wholecrop Silage Standard Package**

*DM, Crude Protein, D Value, ME, Ash, pH, Starch, NCD*

**£12.00**

**Wholecrop Alkaline Treated**

*DM, Crude Protein, ME, Fibre, Ash, Ammonia Nitrogen, Starch, NCD*

**£14.50**

Please ring the office for sample packs and instructions. You will then know what you've got in your clamps this year. See below an example of a summary sheet for a maize sample.

**CLAMP MANAGEMENT**

As we are always being rightly told by Chris Savery, managing the maize clamp has to be a priority from the moment the first trailer load arrives, to when the last bucketful is taken at the end of the clamp. Managing the face at feed out presents a considerable potential to lose feed value through aerobic spoilage unless careful techniques are adopted.



At Town Barton for example, the bucket of the tele-handler is used for all silage feed out operations. As seen in the picture above, as long as downward pressure is always applied, it will leave a clean tight face and all the silage can be picked up off the floor, leaving no stale and heating maize to deteriorate.

**Maize Silage Analysis**



Advisory Contact	Farm
Town Barton Farm Sandford, Crediton Devon, EX17 4LS	MUNDAY-MUNDAY TOWN BARTON FARM SANDFORD, CREDITON DEVON, EX17 4LS
Customer Code: F63a	Originator Reference Number:

Sample Details				
Lab Reference:	FR0720901	Description:		Date Cut:
Sample Type:	Silage - Maize	Cur Number:	Additive:	Sample Received: 22/11/2007

**Summary**

Energy	Analysis	Comments
Dry Matter	% 27.5	
ME	(MJ/kg) 11.6	
Starch	% 21.7	
Crude Protein	% 8.1	
Ammonia N	(% of total N) 5.8	
pH	3.7	

**MAIZE SEED DRESSING REMINDER**

The eagle-eyed amongst you may notice an updated technical note from Simon on the value of seed dressings for next year's maize crop. The reason is to remind members of the trial work over the last few years and enabling an informed decision on whether to order specific dressings for maize seed. Early ordering is necessary for Cruiser and Poncho.

As shown very dramatically at the demonstration site this summer, be careful about using farm stored seed kept over from last year. In this situation, very low germination occurred with a sparse plant population. **If in doubt, do a germination test and/or mix with new seed to minimise crop failures.**