

MGA TIMES

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MGA OFFICE

MGA Contact

Please note that Noelle is away on holiday, and therefore out of the office, until Thursday 25th October.

During this time it will be possible to leave a message or send a fax to the office - the answer phone and fax will be checked daily and queries responded to.

Please remember that your MGA membership entitles you to contact our consultants directly for technical agronomy and feeding information. Contact details are given below: -

Agronomy

Ruth Baker 07767 242721

Simon Draper 07836 234741

Nutrition

Chris Savery 01547 530789

Should you have an urgent query during this time then please contact our Chairman David Christensen on 07740 825593. Less urgent queries for David can be faxed direct to his farm on 01865 821238.

ROTARY BAND SYSTEM

Visit to Switzerland

Charles Moore, Environment Committee Chairman, and a few others visited Switzerland last week to view the drilling technique which aims to reduce both the environmental risks and

MGA/BGS MEETING

Increasing your profits!

This is the theme for the joint MGA/BGS meeting, which will take place on Wednesday 24th October at Ardingly, West Sussex.

The programme covers a variety of topics. Full details of what promises to be a very worthwhile and beneficial meeting are enclosed on the yellow flyer.

costs of establishing maize. Details of what was seen will be given in next months mailing.

EVENTS

Successful Dairy Event

We were pleased to see so many people at the Dairy Event this year. It is always nice to meet members and put faces to names.

The winner of our 'Guess the Maize Dry Matter' competition was Tony Walkers from Wellington in Somerset, who won a years free MGA membership. Tony's guesses were on average within ½% of the actual dry matters.

ADVERT

Please note

The A4 Biotol flyer enclosed with last months mailing was a commercial advertisement from Biotol.

We apologise to those who thought, due to the layout, that this insert was connected in any way to MGA information.

Commercial members can use our commercial mailing facility for a fee on the proviso that the content in no way implies support or recommendation by the MGA.

WINTER TOUR

Winter Tour?

We are unfortunately unable to confirm whether or not the Winter Tour to Holland (27th & 28th November) will go ahead. There are still Foot & Mouth restrictions in place in Holland - we will update members as soon as we have any news

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Diary from the Chairman's farm ...

What a relief to have the maize harvest behind us. After 4 dry weeks the contractors arrived and within 10 minutes it was raining - fairly typical for us at Kingston Hill. However, between the showers over the next 4 days 200 acres were harvested so we can now relax with our most important field operation of the year behind us.

Our contractor has purchased an 8-row Kemper Header this year which made short work of the crops and is spectacular to see in operation watching 8 rows being felled and drawn into the forager. Once again it highlighted the absolute necessity for a second tractor to roll the clamp so the buckrake operator can concentrate on filling the clamp properly.

Norman brings maize news from Jersey

A visit to Jersey at the end of September to inspect maize varieties for David Bright, gave Norman Light the chance to gain an insight into how the maize crop was doing away from home on the Island.

Norman reports that despite the majority of crops being sown late due to farmers growing early potatoes (a profitable crop) on the land suitable for maize, the plants were 9 or 10 feet high, with fully formed cobs which were beginning to turn yellow.

On average the crops were around 4 weeks away from harvest.

Sub-soiling is considered very important in Jersey and once the potatoes have been harvested (by the end of May) the land is always sub-soiled and ploughed before drilling with the maize.

All the muck from winter is used on the maize field, which then rots down for the following years early potatoes.

There are some large pedigree herds on the Island (180 cows) so it is unfortunate that the farmers do seem to lack confidence in feeding a lot of maize to their cows, especially as milk yields dropped when the maize ran out this summer!

There are only 2 contractors in Jersey who undertake all the drilling and harvesting. All the farmers get together to provide tractors and trailers and at harvesting time around 7 - 9 tractors and trailers can travel up to 5 miles each way on single-track lanes to bring the crop home!

I would guess that the crops averaged around 17 tonnes an acre fresh weight - it is always difficult to know just how much weight is in the trailers. The dry matter contents range from 28% - 31% and the starch analyses that have come back so far came in at 32% and 36%.

One variety was around a week behind others in maturity and so will probably not be used next year but otherwise I think we made a fairly good job of variety selection and agronomy.

The newly acquired land that had been in set aside for 10 years, previous to us taking on the tenancy of it, is still full of couch so, when the wind drops, it will receive another dose of glyphosate to continue the war on it.

A weed new to us on this land is marestail and we didn't seem to touch that at all with our weed control programme so that will need reviewing for next year - although I don't think it competed with the maize. Some other patches of couch on our existing maize fields will also be dealt with at the same time and particularly around headlands where it has a habit of encroaching.

We are now turning our attention to winter housing of the cows and the final preparations to the cubicles. As of today (4th October) the herd is still out 24 hours a day but it won't be long before we will house the high yielding group at night.

Despite last weeks rain showers it is still very dry around the farm which according to members around the country is quite different to what many of you have been getting, especially in the South East. Grass supplies are now getting low and so buffer feeding of both groups of milking cows is taking place.

With the introduction of maize silage back into the diet (albeit not fully fermented yet) our milk

quality has taken off and it is good to see butterfat back up to our normal higher levels. The last test came in at 4.49% which will add some more value to the milk and I now expect to see protein increasing too. Milk urea which has been very high all summer has come back to a normal level so we are gradually getting set up for the winter which is our peak milk production time of year.

Other work that we must prioritise is to get our heifers vaccinated against IBR. Prior to us vaccinating them we would always get a nasty outbreak of IBR in mid winter which would lead to a rash of problems like abortions and eye infections.

One group of heifers that were grazing across a public road decided to make their own way home in the dead of one night after a thunder storm, walking right up the main road and down the farm drive. They could have gone anywhere so we were extremely lucky that they seemed to have some level of homing instinct and not end up heading for Oxford. As for the movement licence...!

In the new parlour the rest of the water pipes need insulating before we get any serious frosts and we need to continue to modify and improve various areas that only really come to light as you spend more time in there. As always - plenty to do.

It was good to see so many people at the Dairy Event and meet members on the MGA stand. After the hiding the livestock sector has seen over the last few years it is highly encouraging to see such enthusiasm in dairying and long may it continue. The key to that will be a sensible long-term milk price that both farmers and processors can live with and a sensible price for quota.

*With my best wishes
David Christensen*