

MGA TIMES

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WINTER TOUR

MGA Study Tour to Holland – Almost Fully Booked!

We have had an excellent response for the MGA Winter Tour to Holland, which is now almost fully booked subject to confirmation of a few places reserved without deposit.

The tour departs on Sunday 24th November and returns overnight on Tuesday 26th November and involves visits to:-

- Intensive commercial farms (including the farm of 'Sunny Boy')
- Leading Dutch farmer Franz Keurentjes, a member of the European Dairy Costings Group
- Lelystad research centre to view 3 very different research and demonstration farms, all using maize diets, including a low cost farm (8,400 kg milk/cow), hi-tec farm (10,000 kg milk/cow) and a feed and dairy farm (9,000 kg milk/cow).

The cost of the tour will be in the region of £285. The flyer and application form was included in our last mailing but if you would like to go on the tour and have not yet confirmed a place, please contact the office, as there may still be places available.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Changes Ahead

It would be quite wrong if our organisation did not reflect the current state of the industry in the way we operate. We are therefore proposing to make some

MGA/BGS MEETING

Making The Most Of Your Forages

This is the theme for the joint MGA/BGS meeting, which will take place on **Wednesday 23rd October**, commencing at Hill House Farm, Lindfield, Haywards Heath, Sussex.

The varied programme including practical and technical papers is enclosed with this mailing. We are grateful to the sponsors, in particular to our main sponsor HSBC for their continued contribution towards this meeting, which enables the attendance fee to remain at £10/head.

changes. It is glaringly obvious that the majority of members do not have as much time to be involved with an organisation outside their business such as MGA. If time is taken off then it tends to be some unconnected activity being pursued and the farm business is left at home.

We have therefore decided not to run the Maize Silage Competition this year (in view of the amount of voluntary help this requires) but are replacing it with more regional 'on farm' visits, with the theme very much on winter feeding and herd health. We start with our trip to Holland on 24th November and this will be followed up by more local half-day visits.

The MGA demonstration trial sites will not be run for demo purposes, but work will still be undertaken and reported on as and when necessary.

Members will have seen the summary of the report on silage additives trial undertaken by Dr Sarah Harrison in the last mailing. Sarah hopes to be joining us on a part time basis to carry out specific R&D work and also help with the technical input at events.

MGA will continue to contribute to the NIAB work. Tim Gue, R&D Chairman, will report in the next MGA Times on the input MGA has on the NIAB panel.

Our two conferences will also take on a fresh approach. Farm visits will be included; member Andrew Shakeshaft's farm for the wholecrop & the Royal Agricultural College farm for maize. MGA Council are also streamlining meetings minimising time out for Council members.

Environment work is continuing with some very positive data coming back from the Swiss drilled crops that have so far been harvested. A full report will be given at the MGA maize event in February 2003.

Please feel free to discuss any of these issues with the office or myself. In the meantime I hope harvesting goes/has gone well for you – we are still a week away on this farm in North Devon.

Charles Moore, MGA Chairman

HARVEST UPDATE

Yet To Harvest?

With the weather continuing dry for another week and maize getting drier by the day the temptation is to leave the maize in the field until it reaches the ideal 28–30% DM. For those in the more southern areas that is no problem as virtually all crops have now reached this stage and if not harvested already, should be this week if at all possible. However, some crops in the far

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southwest, northwest & Yorkshire have not yet reached maturity and are mainly in the region of 22–26% DM. At these figures and with the forecast of wet and windy weather next week what are the options? Well as always it depends - the factors I would take into account are:-

1. The DM of the maize crop

We know that 28% is what we should be aiming at but what realistically is the lowest level to give some good feed value? Well, in my view, taking into account farmers' comments, then the figure needs to be a minimum of 25%. Even at this level there will be some effluent and the feed the cows are going to receive through the winter will be wet. This can be offset in some cases with the rest of the ration, but in some cases it can't - for instance, if the ration is mainly forage maize then 25% DM will cause less problems than where maize is being fed alongside wet grass silage.

2. Feed quantities

With the maize harvest later than normal many silage stocks are running dangerously low. If wet weather occurs next week, then there is a risk of a delay, which could cause stocks to run out. In this situation lets get some maize harvested.

3. Ground conditions

Ground conditions are ideal at the moment and if you are growing maize on fields which are at risk from soil wash or erosion then the maize should be harvested whilst the ground is still dry and ideally the land should be ploughed up and put back to winter wheat. This would give you a good crop of wholecrop next year.

4. Contractor availability

Due to the good conditions contractors are working at a fast rate and currently some contractors have availability so if the crop can be harvested this week, provided it is over 25% DM, then it is worth consideration.

5. The forecast

Can you believe it? They have been forecasting wet weather for the last three weeks now – but as

usual in farming generally it is never wrong to be early ... as long as it is not too early!!

Simon Draper

EVENTS

Positive Feedback From Shows

MGA exhibited at the Dairy Event, Stoneleigh & Dairy Show, Shepton Mallet. Both shows were well attended and we received plenty of visitors to the stand, many of whom were existing MGA members, who took the opportunity to have a chat with us, in particular to Ruth Baker, our agronomist, who was demonstrating microwave DM testing and ruminant consultant, Chris Savery, who was present to answer queries on feeding – most of which related to optimum chop length dependent on ration.

The next MGA event is the MGA/BGS meeting on 23rd October (details enclosed).

TRAVEL AWARDS

Gordon Newman Travel Awards

The Gordon Newman Travel Awards, set up on Gordon's retirement from Agriculture in April 2000 in recognition of his passion for agriculture and those working in the industry, to enable members of the industry to undertake short study projects based on forage production and utilisation, the environment and welfare has now awarded two recipients.

The first Award recipient, Catherine Tytherleigh BSc, chose to study the promotion of rural youth groups in America & Europe with help from the National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs in order to assess how life for young people living in rural Britain could be improved. Unfortunately, the events of 11th September 2001 prevented Catherine from travelling to America when originally planned but in April 2002 Catherine joined young people from every US state at the

4-H National Conference in Washington DC in order to gain an insight into the structure and general ethos of the organisation. Gordon Newman was particularly impressed with the full report completed by Catherine, a summary of which follows:-

'4-H USA and FFA were studied as examples of American groups that began with rural roots and have developed into respected nationwide youth organisations. 4-H focuses largely on youth development through volunteer work and leadership and is shaking off its "country" image, having a significant impact on the creation of youth leaders. FFA works through the education system and is still heavily focused upon agriculture.

Both are more highly developed than Young Farmers, largely due to Government support, differences in culture, and greater scale and wealth than Young Farmers.

Many tactical ideas used by both 4-H and FFA could be utilised to strengthen Young Farmers – the report contains ideas for action and useful contacts in the US. All of these ideas need to be underpinned with a sound business and strategic base upon which to build and through complete consultation with the membership, YFC needs to first establish an overall direction and answer a number of key questions relating to the future with regards to the key areas:

- Broadening the scope of YFC
- Leader recruitment and development
- Developing an educational role
- Retaining older supporters and lowering the entry age
- Playing a role in shaping rural policy.'

The second Award recipient was MGA member Steve Edmunds, who also visited the USA this year investigating feeding systems. Steve will report on his findings, which he feels will be of great benefit to members, at the MGA maize event in February 2003.