

MGA TIMES



Lloyds TSB
Agriculture

MGA 1988 - 2008 (so far!)
20 years of independant advice for farmers



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Agriculture

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- ◆ Harvesting maize in wet conditions.—Simon Draper
- ◆ Mature or immature maize to feed.—Chris Savery
- ◆ The importance of optimising yields.—John Morgan
- ◆ Diabrotica Update 2008
- ◆ Benefits of wholecrop for wildlife.—Gethin Davies
- ◆ NVZ latest information.—John Morgan

Difficult Harvest

Chris Savery has written a very topical note this month, with a large area of immature maize still waiting to ripen. This summer/autumn has been so frustrating and it is tempting to harvest the maize before it is fully mature. Chris tackles the problems of immature crops in his article and is more than happy to help any members having problems with their winter diets. Please give the office a ring and we will put you in touch with Chris.

DIABROTICA UPDATE FOR 2008

Current position

You may recall that Defra carried out a consultation exercise last year, to determine future policy against this pest. Various options were considered, but in light of the 2007 survey results (in which only 3 beetles were detected) it was decided that the most appropriate approach was to continue with the existing EU requirements (i.e. Decision 2003/766 as amended). By continuing with these measures in 2008, this would help to determine whether the 2007 results were a one-off, or whether eradication was a realistic outcome. This approach was confirmed at a meeting between Defra, NFU and the Maize Growers Association in February.



As highlighted in the consultation paper and confirmed at the meeting in February, one issue where there is no flexibility concerns the requirement to address the risks of further spread by aircraft (see Decision 2006/564). Within one and a half miles of an airport, Member States must either enforce a rotation so that maize is not grown more than once in two years, or monitor intensively using pheromone traps. The latter is not considered a realistic proposition and therefore an amendment to the Plant Health (England) Order 2005, to be introduced on 1 October, will provide the means to introduce a rotation requirement. This will apply to airports where the risk of introduction is high – for example, Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, East Midlands and Manchester. It is intended to publicise the requirement via the Defra website and local media, but the assistance of industry organisations would obviously also be appreciated.

Measures around Airports

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WANTED



The MGA office team are looking for a new carpet for the stand at shows. At the SW event our stand was right next to the main judging ring in the Showering stand, it is an excellent site, but this year the show commentator stepped in some cow s**t in the ring and proceeded to wipe his feet on our carpet, (what a cheek!) I was so surprised I let him get away with it. He had better watch out next year, I will be watching him! Anyway David & I made a management decision and left our carpet there. It is fairly ancient anyway and I believe John Morgan picked it up as a left over from a previous show, many years ago. We are looking for a 5m x 3m hard wearing carpet, commentator proof and not too patterned. If anyone can help we would be very grateful.

WHOLECROP CEREALS BEAT MAIZE AND GRASS SILAGE FOR WILDLIFE

A three-year trial across farms in Cheshire and Shropshire, run by the RSPB in association with Harper Adams and Reading University and funded by DEFRA, has been comparing the agronomic and wildlife merits of different livestock silages. The trial compared grass, maize, winter-wheat and spring-barley wholecrop. Key observations to note were that

- Through the summer, all cereal treatments were strongly preferred by a wide range of farmland birds, although swallows markedly favoured the spring barley over winter wheat.
- Through the winter, the retained spring barley stubbles had far greater usage by birds of conservation priority (eg yellowhammers, skylark and reed buntings), than winter wheat (where the stubble was not retained), maize or grass.
- Maize and grass silage were little used by most priority farmland birds – which was explained by a lack of seeding plants and invertebrates (plus a difficulty in accessing available food in dense grass silage). Maize was generally intermediate between grass and cereals in its use. The only groups of birds that favoured grass silage fields as a foraging habitat were soil-invertebrate feeding species like thrushes and crows during the winter.

In summary, the replacement of some maize or improved grass silage with cereal-based wholecrop silage is likely to have major benefits for farmland birds. Particularly key to providing these benefits will be the retention of winter stubbles. Gethin Davies of the RSBP, who kindly brought this trial to our attention, is keen to point out that several options exist within the Entry Level Scheme (ELS) to gain points for the positive management of cereal stubbles and wholecrop silage and we would urge members who are currently growing or are considering growing cereal wholecrop in the future be it spring or winter sown to investigate the ELS options.



Yellow Hammer

For more details on this project and other ways of benefiting wildlife on livestock farms, please contact Gethin Davies. gethin.davies@rspb.org.uk or 01597 827416.

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

Difficult Harvest

Simon Draper has written a very useful article for this difficult autumn, not only advising best practice for the eventual harvest, but what to do to minimise run-off afterwards. We, as responsible maize growers, need to be very aware of the potential risks of late harvested crops. Please endeavour to minimise the impacts by considering Simon's comments and if in doubt, contact Simon via the office on 01363 775040 or email info@maizegrowersassociation.co.uk



MAKE FRIENDS WITH AN ARABLE FARMER!!

At last the NVZ situation is clear. The new rules come into effect on 1st January 2009 for farmers in existing NVZ's and the 1st January 2010 for those newly designated. Follow the link <http://www.defra.gov.uk/Environment/water/quality/nitrate/default.htm> to go to the DEFRA NVZ web pages for access to the Maps showing the NVZ areas and other information.

The main area to focus on in the short term, is the Livestock Manure Nitrogen Loading or stocking rate restriction. For any farmers currently and who will continue to be in an NVZ you need to be aware of the following:

Currently, for those farmers in an NVZ, the livestock manure loading figures for your farm are 170kg N/ha (equivalent to 0.7cows/acre) on arable land and 250kg N/ha (equivalent to 1 cow/acre) on grassland. This grassland figure is going to be decreased to 170kg N/ha on the 1st of January 2009 for those currently in an NVZ and the 1st January 2010 for those in the newly designated NVZ's. Anyone who has a predominantly grass farm and is stocked close to the 250kg/ha limit should start planning now. As of the 1st January 2009 you will only be able to have a stocking rate of 0.7cows/acre including youngstock. Although DEFRA are applying to the EU for a derogation to maintain the grassland limit at 250kg/ha, the decision on this is not expected until summer 2009. Furthermore, a positive decision is not a forgone conclusion and even if achieved, the strings attached may make derogation impractical, or not a preferred option for some farmers.

The challenge is therefore to ensure that you meet this N loading requirement from day one. Remember that the loading figure is an average for the calendar year and only applies to livestock organic manures. If you delay getting things sorted you will have to take more drastic action later in the year to achieve the 170 average figure.

The recommendation for those with a potential problem in an existing NVZ therefore is; secure additional land, reduce stock numbers and/or agree to export livestock manures as soon as possible (ideally by Jan the 1st 2009).

While severe, the outlook is not totally bleak, particularly in relation to the export of livestock manures. The financial value of slurry & FYM is now considerable due to its nutrient content and arable farmers appear keen to work with livestock producers in relation to spreading livestock manures. Close by arable farmers may therefore offer the best opportunity to meet the requirement.

So in a nutshell, NVZ's are very much here and the N loading or stocking rate restriction comes into effect in just over 12 weeks for some. It is time to start getting things sorted.

If you would like to learn more about the final regulation please contact the office.



Last word:- Thank you to all members who called in at the MGA stand at, both the European Dairy Event and the South West Show at Shepton Mallett. This year we featured the difference in dry matter of variety groups and also demonstrated the milk line test. This kept us busy at both events and we had a lot of comments and worries about whether the crop would ever ripen this autumn. We know how they feel, Town Barton maize is going to be late this year. Both Simon and Chris have written appropriate articles to cope with this autumn/winter. Simon & Chris were on our stand at Stoneleigh and were available to answer many questions, particularly about this years maize crop. We at Town Barton have had a couple of heifers with displaced abomasums and depressed appetites post-calving. Chris was able to give us some very practical advice on feeding dry cows and in calf heifers for the two weeks pre calving. It is certainly very worthwhile contacting Chris if you are having similar problems.

For the last two years we have produced "clatty" straw. When you have a job to stab the fork into the straw and then fight to get it off again, you know it is going to be a frustrating winter. Apparently finding second hand straw choppers is like looking for hens teeth. We are that fed up fighting with bales, we are proposing to buy a new one. I didn't realise there are so many variations on a straw chopper, it was difficult enough choosing a new feeder wagon!

