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CropLinks

information on forages, corn and cereals

2008 Cropping Highs & Lows/2009 Uncertainties

The cropping season is drawing to a close although there is still around 1000 acres of grain corn in the Valley that needs to be harvested after this snow goes. In **western NS**, 2008 generally produced excellent winter wheat, corn and soybean yields. Weather wise the only complaints were in trying to get 1st cut dry hay made or the wet late August-mid September period when wheat straw baling or spring grain harvest were impossible. Certainly the low prices again for beef calves coming off pasture this fall, along with the crisis in our hog industry has been extremely frustrating.

The 2008 cropping situation in **central and eastern NS** was much more difficult for most. A wet May -June meant planting delays, stressed corn and cereal crops, and lower quality 1st cut forages. Heavy amounts of rainfall later in the season ruined some spring grain and corn crops, or increased vomitoxin levels in harvested grains.

In looking ahead to 2009, the bigger decisions will be what crop acreages to grow and what fertilizer rates or types to use. Milk shippers will have a fairly set requirement for forages and possibly corn so they can't make too many fertilizer cuts, but may decide not to grow any extra "cash crop" corn, spring grains or soybeans and fallow some of these fields. With fertilizer prices for 2009 rumoured to be close to double of what it was this past spring, I find it hard to pencil a break even situation on spring grains at up to 1.5 mt/acre yields, soybeans at 0.9 mt/acre and grain corn crops of 2.5 mt/acre at above 25% moisture (when fertility needs are met solely with chemical fertilizers). For vegetable farmers if winter feed wheat isn't going to be the break crop on certain fields next year, and your grain corn yields weren't in the 3 – 4 mt/acre range this year, you may want to consider planting some Italian type annual ryegrass. A ryegrass plowdown crop if given a little nitrogen after emergence and clipped quickly after heading can improve soil health, but don't let the ryegrass produce seed or it will be a weed problem that haunts you forever.

If you want to bounce your 2009 cropping or soil fertility strategies off of us, please call. Good luck with these big decisions.

Upcoming Pasture Workshop to Explore 12 Months of Grazing

Extending the grazing season into late fall and winter can take advantage of low cost, high quality aftermath feeds according to Brian Magee from Cornell University. Cornell has been "year round grazing" a flock of sheep on the STAR accelerate lambing program. Brian says that the early fall regrowth of hay fields and pastures that is preserved under snow and grazed in the late fall and winter is often better in quality than conserved feed. Winter grazing means lower feed costs, less manure to clean out and spread, requires less labour to feed, and has less housing and bedding cost. Brian Magee will be telling us how they overcame the difficulty of supplying water and fencing through the winter as well as how to deal with deep snow and ice conditions at an **upcoming pasture workshop Saturday, December 13th at the Nappan Research Station.**

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Grazing Workshop (continued)

Also on the program will be John Duynisveld, Agriculture Canada. John has done a lot of research at Nappan looking at ways to successfully extend the grazing season into the late fall and winter by stockpiling pastures. Sean Firth, Atlantic Stockyards Ltd, will discuss the economics of extending the grazing season and Dr. Yousef Papadopoulos, Agriculture Canada will address which forage species work best. Nick Van Vulpen, a local dairy and beef producer, will give a producer's perspective to extending the grazing season.

The workshop will run from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. Lunch will be provided. Weather permitting a field tour of the Nappan grazing trials will be included at the end of the day. To register please call AgraPoint at 1-866-606-4636.

The Best Way to Measure Forage Quality is RFQ

Those sending their forage away to commercial laboratories for analysis might be familiar with Relative Feed Value and Relative Forage Quality. Relative Forage Quality (RFQ) is a fairly new value used to score hay crop forage. It is similar to Relative Feed Value (RFV) in that it combines nutritional measurements to give an index that compares the quality of forages relative to that of full bloom alfalfa (RFV=100). RFV is based on ADF and NDF values only, whereas, RFQ is based on CP, ADF, NDF, fat, ash and NDF digestibility at 48 hours (NDFD48).

RFQ is a much better predictor of how an animal will perform on a given forage than RFV because RFQ takes into consideration NDF digestibility, %CP, fat and non fiberous carbohydrate making it a more complete assessment of forage quality and production potential. The limitation of RFV is that it does not take into consideration that forages can have identical fiber levels (NDF and ADF values) but have very different digestibility's and therefore intakes.

	CP%	ADF%	NDF%	NDFD48	RFV	RFQ
Legume A	20	30	40	45	152	151
Legume B	20	30	40	55	152	174
Grass	15	35	55	55	108	129

How is RFQ used?

Forages with higher digestibility will have higher RFQ scores. Different formulas are used in calculating RFQ for grasses than legumes, so you will need to identify the crop being analyzed. RFQ values of 100-120 are considered low. Values 120-140 are considered mid range and values over 150 are considered best for high animal production.



Comments on the Crop Guides

In **corn** the grain Recommended List is a fair bit larger than previous ones, however several of the new additions are double stack trait versions of hybrids that have previously been on the list. For example 39F60 is the RR/Bt version of 39F61, hybrids 39B96 Bt and 39B94 Bt/RR are GMO versions of 39B93 and Co-op's 20T18 Bt/RR is the same genetics as 20T16 Bt. Many of these hybrids also appear on the silage list for the first time.

If you're picking a hybrid to grow for dry grain corn, really give big consideration to the soil drainage situation and potential planting date for specific fields. Don't pick too high a heat unit hybrid, there are plenty of mid-maturity hybrids on the list that have the genetics to produce 3 – 4 mt/acre yields of 25% moisture grain by November 10th. The difference between taking 30% versus 25% moisture grain corn to the drier, is there will be an extra 7% shrinkage losses and about \$5 /tonne more drying charges. This is costly and can be eliminated with proper hybrid selection.

Proper hybrid selection really comes into play if you need to have the silage corn crop mature by late September to avoid either harvesting on greasy fields due to fall rains or wanting to plant winter feed wheat on this land. There are good silage hybrids on this list that fall between Pride's A4175 Bt and Maize's LF725Bt in earliness, that will perform well and allow you to accomplish this goal.

In **cereals** the main changes to the Recommended List is in barley and oats. With 6-Row barley there aren't any new additions, however, we have another year's data on newer varieties Synasolis, Encore, Yelder and Chambly. Synasolis is the top yielding barley on the list, which looked good in production fields this year. Synasolis is sold by various NS reps and grown by Grand Falls, NB pedigreed seed growers Terio Seeds. Both AC Klinck and Chapais have an outclassed designation indicating that these older varieties have been surpassed by new ones and will be coming off the list next year.

In 2-Row barley there is a new high yielding addition to the list called "Leader" that's also produced by Terio Seeds and a couple of new oats called Lachute and Prescott.

No new winter wheats this year, with Pioneer 25R47 still the top yielding feed wheat. In the spring wheat the top yielder is Hoffman from Co-op Atlantic, followed in second by AC Helena.

For **soybeans** we now have 3-4 testing years' data on several varieties giving a much more reliable indicator of how these might perform on your farm. If the plan is to harvest these soybeans in early October, and plant winter wheat afterwards, then select a bean variety in the 2400 – 2500 heat unit range and seed this in mid May.

There is no **forage** variety testing data in this package. We are just starting to analyze the first years' data on 79 varieties now under test at the five Maritime sites that were seeded in spring 2007. Many of the newer alfalfa, red clover, timothy, orchardgrass, brome, reed canary and fescues are being evaluated. You will see a completely revised Forage Variety Guide in December 2009.