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CropLinks

information on forages, corn and cereals

With Nova Scotia feed grain prices remaining very high and bedding shortages occurring, we thought it would be useful to have some regional meetings to look at cereal and soybean management. This issue of CropLinks advertises these sessions, discusses the tall fescue option for silage and fall grazing, and helps get you and your field sprayer ready for 2008 cropping.

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Organic Grains & Oilseed Forum

March 5 & 6, 2008
Memramcook, New Brunswick

For full program information, registration or to receive the Maritime Organic Grains Network Newsletter call 1-866-322-2676 or visit www.acornorganic.org

Grain Growing & Forage Strategies to Fight High Feed and Fertilizer Prices

Date & Place: Monday, March 17th, 7pm – 9pm at Wandlyn Inn, Bridgewater

Organizer: Lunenburg – Queens Federation of Agriculture (Kim Moore at 527-5236)

Speaker: Jack van Roestel, AgraPoint

Getting Field Sprayers Ready for 2008 Cropping

In organizing the April 8th and 9th Field Sprayer Clinics we were given some helpful information by PEIDA Field Crop Specialist, Will Proctor. An on-farm assessment of 38 PEI sprayers was done in spring 2005 and the following findings were extracted from their project summary;

- Average variation in each set of nozzles tested was 6%
- A 10% variation within the set of nozzles is considered acceptable before replacement is required (3 out of 38 sprayers had greater than 10% nozzle set output variation)
- Thirty of the 38 sprayers assessed had non-drip nozzles on the boom
- Close to 20% of sprayers had a 10-30 psi difference in the pressure gauge readout compared to the actual boom pressure (1 sprayer was lower and 6 were higher)
- Sprayers should be within 3 psi from centre sections, out to the tips, if there are no flow restrictions
- Sprayer booms which are plumbed to deliver water to the outside section independently from the centre, had more consistent pressure across the whole boom than those which supplied water from one point

The PEI assessment team made these recommendations to the 38 field sprayer operators:

- Clean nozzles
- Lift and secure hose up, and out of the way of the spray pattern (3)
- Replace pressure gauge(2)
- New nozzle bodies
- Replace hoses
- Adjust nozzle orientation to be 10^0 to boom
- Replace individual nozzles with more than 15% variation
- Replace spinners in hollow cone nozzles to have complete set of either brass or plastic

For some good ideas on how to get NS field crop sprayers ready for the upcoming season, join us for either the April 8th session (B.Gerrits' farm, 830 Middle Dyke Road, a few kms northeast of Kentville) or on April 9th at the NSAC Engineering Building. Other details are provided in this newsletter or by calling Bill or Jack. This 3-hour session will provide you also with three re-certification points.

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Sprayer Days in Valley and Truro

Date & Place: April 8th for Vegetable, Cereal and Corn Growers at Bernard Gerrits & family farm, 830 Middle Dyke Road a few kms northeast of Kentville

Time: 1pm – 4 pm joint session for all producers

Speakers:
Ken Lingley, On-Target Sprayer Services, PEI (consultant with lots of experience in sprayer selection, operation, repair and training sessions)
Peter Swetnam, Wilmar Acres (local onion, carrot, corn and wheat grower who will speak about their Raven in-cab variable rate control and GPS sprayer guidance sytems).
Peter Burgess, AgraPoint and Rick Hoeg, NSDA who will talk operator safety, calibration and new technology with you

Pesticide Points: 3 Pesticide Re-Certification Points are available at this

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Date & Place: April 9th for Blueberry, Vegetable, Cereal and Corn Growers at Engineering Building, NSAC, Truro (just east of greenhouses)

Time: 10am – 12:30pm is the Blueberry Session
1pm – 4 pm is the Vegetable, Cereal and Corn Session

Speakers:
Ken Lingley, On-Target Sprayer Services, PEI
Peter Burgess, AgraPoint, Truro
Rick Hoeg, NSDA, Truro

Pesticide Points: Blueberry Session has 2.5 Pesticide Re-Certification Points while afternoon session has 3 points

Sponsorship: Agri-Futures, SCIANS and AgraPoint are jointly sponsoring these three sessions.

Cereal & Soybean Growers Tune-up

March 4th Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre (1pm-4pm cereals only)
March 4th Scotsburn Fire Hall (7:00pm-9:30pm cereals only)
March 6th Truro Glengarry Best Western Hotel (10:15am-4pm joint session with Truro Agromart Ltd having their program in the morning)
March 6th Amherst Wandlyn Inn (7:00pm-9:30pm cereal & soybean session)
March 7th Wolfville Old Orchard Inn (10:15am-4pm joint session with Cavendish Agri Services Ltd having their program in the morning)

Speakers: Dr. Claude Caldwell, NSAC; Doug MacDonald, NS Crop Development Institute; Sean Cochrane, Monsanto Canada; Mathew Miller, Shur-Gain; Bill Thomas & Jack van Roestel, AgraPoint (speakers will vary a bit between locations)

Organized by: AgraPoint, Soil & Crop Improvement Association of Nova Scotia (SCIANS) and Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture

Sponsorship by: Truro Agromart (Truro session); Cavendish Agri Services (Wolfville session); Shur-Gain (Mathew Miller speaking at March 6-7th sessions); Monsanto-Dekalb (Sean Cochrane speaking at March 6-7th sessions)
For more info call Bill Thomas (896-0277) or Jack van Roestel (678-7722)

Call for Lunch: for those attending the March 6th session in Truro you need to pre-register with Truro Agromart at 895-2857.

Consider Tall Fescue for Silage and Pasture

If you're planting a grass stand this spring consider tall fescue. Tall fescue is a vigorous perennial bunch type grass adapted to a wide range of growing conditions. It yields well for silage and is the best grass for late fall grazing, reducing livestock wintering costs.

Tall fescue has a reputation of poor palatability. The leaves are broad and coarse with rough edges. As well, old varieties were high in endophyte fungus. Endophyte is a fungus that grows inside another plant without causing it any harm and in some cases even benefits the host plant. In tall fescue the endophyte produces chemicals called alkaloids which protect the tall fescue from insects and nemetodes allowing the plant to do well in marginal situations. It is the alkaloids that reduce palatability and when consumed in large amounts cause animal health problems. According to Jerry Cherney, Cornell University, "new endophyte free tall fescue varieties do not have these endophytic palatability problems".

In pastures the palatability issues associated with the roughness of the leaves can be lessened by rotational grazing. Through rotational grazing the plant can be grazed before it becomes too mature and coarse. As well, seeding tall fescue as the lone grass with a clover will reduce selective grazing. John Duynisveld, Biologist with Agriculture Canada, Nappan, says that after a hard fall frost the plant seems to become more palatable. John has reported average daily gains of over 2.4 lbs /head /day for growing cattle grazing June 2nd until Sept 15th on a sward with over 80% tall fescue. The biggest benefit of this grass is it can be stockpiled from mid August for grazing in October, November or later.

As a stored feed, tall fescue yields very well often yielding 10% more than most other perennial grasses grown in Nova Scotia. While not as winter hardy as timothy and bromegrass, tall fescue is considerably more winter hardy than orchardgrass.

From a quality perspective tall fescue is similar in fiber content and digestibility to other grasses when harvested at the same stage of maturity. However, tall fescue is usually lower in crude protein than most other tame grasses except timothy. In regards to maturity, tall fescue heads out later than orchardgrass, but is much earlier than timothy.

Tall fescue is relatively easy to establish. Like most forage grasses they are best seeded early in the spring into a firm seedbed. Tall fescue is most productive when soil pH is 5.8 to 6.5 and when phosphorous and potassium are medium to high and nitrogen is readily available.

We are currently testing the following six endophyte free tall fescues in a regional cultivar evaluation trial at five sites across the Maritimes; BarElite, Kokanee, Kora, Hymark, Courtenay, and Festorina. Courtney and Festorina are on the current recommended list. Results from this trial will be available in 2009.

We would suggest that you not seed a large area down, but seed just a few acres to tall fescue and get some experience with it. For pastures we recommend seeding 15 kg/ha of tall fescue with 2 - 3 kg of white clover or perhaps 3 - 4 kg of red clover. For silage we recommended 15 kg/ha of tall fescue with 4 kg of red clover or 5 kg of alfalfa.