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Agronomy Notes

Capital Region

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Inside This Issue

Crop Insurance Producer Tips for Late August or Early September 2004

Double-Check Acreage Report Summary

A "Summary of Protection" or "Schedule of Insurance" is received about a month after your acreage report information is filed with your crop insurance agent. This form reflects the insurance company's record of your insurance protection for 2004 spring crops. It is a good rule of thumb to compare it to your completed acreage form to make sure that the information was interpreted and transferred correctly. Contact your insurance agent immediately to get any discrepancies corrected, otherwise it could adversely affect your premium billing or claim payment.

Early Silage Harvesting – Crop Insurance Tips

Silage harvesting will be earlier this year as the early planted corn is maturing ahead of normal. Most acreage looks good but NASS reports about 14% of corn acreage is in only poor to fair condition. Don't forget to file notice of damage on any insurance units (generally FSA FSN) that may be eligible for a claims payment. The rules are that damage must be reported within 72 hours of discovery. A notice of damage is also required 15 days prior to the beginning of harvesting (and earlier of harvest completion date or end of insurance period – 12/10 for corn insured as grain), if you are aware of damage before silage harvesting begins (give immediate notice if discovery occurs after harvesting begins). If you have damage that may make you eligible for a claims payment, you'll need a field appraisal before harvesting or from sample rows, first authorized by the insurance company. The purpose of the appraisal is to document the yield and quality to support your claim. **Remember too, that if you insure with the popular CRC** (Crop Revenue Coverage) plan, you may be eligible for a loss payment with a near normal yield, if fall CBOT prices decline significantly. For example, if the CBOT harvestime price declines by a greater percentage, compared to the $2.83/bu. spring base price, than your insurance deductible (i.e. 75% level of coverage = 25% deductible) a loss payment may be due.

2005 Enrollment\Policy Changes Deadlines – 9/30

The deadlines to enroll or change your existing policy for fall seeded barley and wheat, as well as forage production crop insurance protection, are fast approaching. Many producers suffered quality losses on these crops (excess moisture reducing yields, quality losses from scab and sprouting, and much rain damage to hay). A grower recently commented "everything is getting so risky to produce that insurance protection is necessary on everything."

Barley and wheat can be insured on yield guarantee basis at 50% - 85% of the actual production history for your farm. Loss payments for yields that are less than the guarantee are paid at up to $2.35/bu. for barley and $3.50/bu. for wheat. Poor quality production, below the standards specified in the insurance contract, is applied by reducing the number of produced bushels to count in calculation of the insurance loss claim. Wheat can also be insured by the Crop Revenue Coverage (CRC) plan, which provides a combination of yield and price protection through a revenue guarantee. The price elections used to calculate the revenue protection are the higher of the average daily closing prices for the July 2005 CBOT contract during 8/15-9/14/04 or the September 2005 contract during 7/15-8/15/05. Production is valued at the average daily closing prices for the later period. This the second year that the CRC wheat plan is available in PA. It is very popular with corn and soybean producers too. The final planting dates for both crops have been extended 10 days.

Forage producers have several different insurance plans to consider. The yield coverage (GYC) plan can be

used to protect alfalfa or mixtures containing a least 25% alfalfa. This guarantee production plan is based on 50% – 75% of the growers actual production history. Yield losses, below the insurance guarantee are paid at a rate of $165/ton. The rates for this plan are on file with insurance agents that write policies in the counties of Centre, Chester, Cumberland, Lancaster, Somerset, Tioga and Westmorland. Producers in other counties can request coverage by completing a written agreement request with an agent before 9/30/04.

Group Risk Protection (GRP) is also available to forage producers. This plan permits producers to insure based on the variation of the average yield for the county, as determined by NASS\USDA. Producers can select coverages of 65-90% of the average historical yield of the county. If the grower selects 90% coverage, a loss is paid if the county average yield for the year of insurance is less than 90% of the county historical average yield. Producers can select a dollar amount of protection of up to $594 per acre. To illustrate how this plan works, let's assume that a producer selected 90% coverage and the county average yield for the year was 80% of the historical average yield, the grower would be paid $59.40 per acre (90% coverage minus 80% county yield times $594). This plan of insurance is available to producers for acreage in the counties of Adams, Armstrong, Bedford, Berks, Bradford, Butler, Centre, Chester, Clarion, Crawford, Cumberland, Erie, Fayette, Franklin, Greene, Huntingdon, Indiana, Jefferson, Lancaster, Lycoming, Mercer, Perry, Somerset, Susquehanna, Tioga, Washington, Wayne, Westmoreland and York. Features of this plan include that it provides protection for all classes of hay grown for harvest or grazing and requires very minimal record keeping.

Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) or **Adjusted Gross Revenue-Lite** (AGR-L) protection is also available. This plan provides protection on a gross revenue or income basis. A dollar amount of protection is available on a whole farm basis including forage, all other crops, greenhouse production, animals and animal products such as milk, wool, eggs, etc. The amount of protection is based on the average gross income for all agricultural commodities for the previous 5 years, based on IRS tax records. Qualifying producers may select protection based on 65, 75, or 80% of their previous 5 year average. If the producer's income falls below the revenue loss trigger (5 year avg. X % of coverage) the payment is calculated by multiplying the revenue shortfall times the co-insurance payment rate selected at the time of enrollment (65, 75 or 90%, with qualification requirements). The strength of the AGR plans is that protection is provided for loss of revenue due to weather related disasters and low market prices. This plan could have been used to address income losses in 2004 from the rain damage to forages based on the reduced income that resulted, especially for producers growing hay for sale.

Enrollment deadlines are 11/30/04 for GRP; 1/31/05 for AGR and AGR-L. They are discussed here to make producers aware of the different protection choices that are available.

Questions on reporting crop damage and coverage details available from authorized crop insurance agents.

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Proposed Nutrient Management Regulation Change Comment Period NOW!

New Penn State Cooperative Extension Guides to the NMA and CAFO Proposed Regulations – request yours now

On August 7, 2004, the State Conservation Commission published proposed revisions to the Pennsylvania Nutrient Management Act regulations. Concurrently, the Environmental Quality Board (responsible for issuing Department of Environmental Protection regulations) published proposed revisions to 25 PA Code Chapter 91 and Chapter 92 regulations affecting CAFOs and other agricultural operations. Citizens have until November 5, 2004 to comment on the State Conservation Commission's proposal and/or the Environmental Quality Board's proposal.

At this time, we are pleased to announce two new Penn State Cooperative Extension publications aimed to increase awareness and encourage public participation:

- *Shaping New PA Nutrient Management Act Regulations: A Guide to the Proposal and Comment Process*
- *Make Your Voice Heard: Commenting on Proposed Water Pollution Regulations for CAFOs and Other Agricultural Operations*

Hard copies of the publications are available at county extension offices and through the Publications Distribution Center, (814) 865-6713. If you would like multiple copies to be sent to your county office, contact Alyssa Dodd (AlyssaDodd@psu.edu; 814-863-5884). Otherwise only one copy of each will be sent,along with an order form. The publications are also available on the Nutrient and Water Policy Update Web site: http://agenvpolicy.aers.psu.edu. Here you'll find the publications, as well as links to the official proposals published in the PA Bulletin, and links to the PA Code so you can reference existing requirements.

Public Information Sessions and Hearings: The State Conservation Commission and the Environmental Quality Board will host two joint public information meetings for the purpose of summarizing the proposed revisions and two separate public hearings for the purpose of accepting comments September and October.

- Holiday Inn, Mechanicsburg, 717-687-0321

- Public Information Meeting, September 13, 2004, 6:30 P.M.
- Public Hearing, October 13, 2004, 6:00 P.M.

- Ramada Inn, DuBois, 814-371-7070
  - Public Information Meeting, September 16, 2004, 6:30 P.M.
  - Public Hearing, October 14, 2004, 6:00 P.M.

People with disabilities or impairments who wish to attend the meeting or hearing and require an auxiliary aid, service or other accommodation, should contact Chris Shroyer at 717-787-4526 or through AT&T Relay Service at 800-654-5984 (TDD users) or 800-654-5988 (voice users) to discuss how their needs may be accommodated.

If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact me.

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York County

Planning and Planting A Top Wheat Crop

I've heard both good and bad reports on the wheat crop this past year. So you may or may not be looking forward to growing the next crop. But it is a new year and to end up with a good wheat crop, planning and planting management this fall is as critical as always.

Good quality seed of the best varieties is the place to start. I mentioned this in last month's newsletter. Variety test reports are available to help you choose varieties. If you haven't selected them yet and can access the web, you can go to these sites to find reports;

Penn State 2004 Small Grain Trial
http://smallgrains.psu.edu/

Maryland Small Grains Trial
http://www.nrsl.umd.edu/extension/crops/wheat/

2004 Ohio Wheat Performance Trial
http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/wheat2004/

If you need a paper copy, call your local Extension office (or me at 240-6500) to get one. Use the multiple year test averages in these reports where available for the most reliable information. In some variety reports or seed company information, there are ratings for head scab resistance. This is useful in reducing the severity of disease infection but even the ones with the best ratings do not have high levels of scab resistance.

Wait until the optimum period of October 1 to 15 to plant wheat. Planting wheat too early increases the risk of powdery mildew and barley yellow dwarf virus infections. We don't think about the Hessian fly much, but you do avoid that insect by planting after that date, as well as avoiding winter annual weed pressure. Oklahoma research indicates that test weight is lower if planted earlier than the optimum date there.

Not much wheat is planted back to back but sometimes it is, especially in fields where it got too late to double crop soybeans. This invites diseases such as Staganospora, take-all and powdery mildew, particularly when old straw and chaff remain on the surface. Most wheat is planted following corn and soybeans. The red zone I would watch out for is wheat planted no-till in corn fields with a lot of stalks on the surface. There is more potential for head scab next year than if it were soybean ground or even corn ground with more of the stalks tilled in or under.
Fields testing low in phosphorus are not as scarce as some people think. To have a good wheat crop, make sure that you fertilize accordingly if any of yours are in that category. pH is more critical for barley than wheat but don't take that as an excuse to let it drop down too low.

When seeding during the optimum time, 20 seeds/ft., in 7 inch rows, is adequate. This is about 100 lbs/ac of seed with 15,000 seeds per pound. Uniform depth of planting resulting in even emergence is very important. If planting later than the end of the optimum period, increase the seeding rate to compensate. Ohio State recommends increasing the seeding rate by one pound per day starting eight days after the Hessian fly free date. If planting earlier, re-read this article.

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Fall Pest Considerations

Fall is fast approaching. It is the ideal time to eliminate a few problem pests, as well as target fields for treatments next year.

1. Rootworm adults are widespread and now you can assess whether a field should be treated with an insecticide next year. Although the time to scout for adults to predict next years field treatment is just about over, one might recall seeing large amounts of beetles in fields or where significant silk feeding existed. Target heavily infested fields that will be cropped in corn again next year with an insecticide or a Bt rootworm hybrid. We know this because the beetles lay eggs only in corn and by knowing where the beetles are at this time of year forecasts where the eggs laid now will hatch out next year.
2. Consider treating alfalfa fields now for chickweed control next spring. There are many options that will provide residual control (as well as post control) through the spring. As we come to the peak time for chickweed germination, now is the time to begin treating to ensure weed free fields in the spring.
3. Cereal rye and small grains are in short supply this year. Why not plant alternative crops such as hairy vetch, oats, red clover, field peas, birdsfoot trefoil or maybe some brassicas? Check out the cover crop factsheet for detailed information available at the Extension Office in Lebanon.

4. Consider fall applied residual programs to keep fields clean this winter and allow for early soil warm up and quicker planting. Many soybean and corn programs offer this option. Consider them in troublesome fields with winter annuals like chickweed. Another benefit is that when the cutworm moths migrate north next April and May, they will not have the cover in which they prefer to lay eggs, eliminating the threat.
5. Standing corn does not mean options are not available to clean up fields of perennials. 2,4-D at dent stage or glyphosate at black layer to treat tough perennials or escaped bur cucumber is a viable option to eliminate weeds. A high clearance sprayer would be needed but may prove effective if a problem exists.
6. Finally, spray pastures and hay fields this fall with a herbicide treatment (2, 4-D, dicamba, Ally) to eliminate perennial weeds, such as dandelion. As the plants move nutrients into the roots for winter, why not have the herbicide move with them and kill the weeds roots and all?
7. Burn down (glyphosate) stands of grass or alfalfa hay now so that next spring the field will be ready for planting corn or soybeans. The planter will operate more effectively in well decayed sod than in a freshly killed sod.

Every year I write about fall timing for pest control but every spring I answer the same calls on dandelions, chickweed, cutworms etc that could be eliminated in the fall. Maybe this is the year you make it a priority on problem fields and fields that have a history of a pest. Check out the Agronomy Guide, where Dr. Bill Curran has listed fall applied herbicides and rates to go with them.

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Revisiting Triticale and Alfalfa

In 2003, I wrote an article for this newsletter about interseeding older alfalfa stands with triticale in the fall to "thicken up" older stands. The University of Maryland had reported excellent forage quality and tonnage from mixed stands on their dairy research farm.

Since that time many producers have commented on trying this and the results they had were very favorable. One of the interesting aspects of this practice is the affect on the stand of the alfalfa. I have closely observed two stands of alfalfa that were interseeded in 2002. Following establishment, the stands looked rough. There were cut crowns where the coulters passed over the plants. However since two years have passed there is no noticeable thinning of the stand.

The initial response from producers about overseeding triticale is that older, thinner stands would be best suited for the practice. Work at Maryland has shown, however, that there is an advantage to this practice on even younger stands of alfalfa, 1 to 3 years, without any detrimental effects to the alfalfa. Here's how it works, based on Maryland research.

Triticale is sown at 50 to 60 pounds per acre into newer stands of alfalfa (1 to 3 years old) and 80 pounds/acre into older, thinner stands. Ideally the interseeding is done between early September and early October. Mid October seedings do not allow for sufficient development in the fall. In the spring, additional nitrogen must be topdressed to provide nutrients for the triticale and to aid alfalfa survival as well.

On younger stands, highest forage production has resulted from the addition of 50 pounds of nitrogen. On older alfalfa stands, with higher triticale seeding rates, optimum yields were achieved with 120 pounds of nitrogen. In one trial, yields of first cut alfalfa, without triticale but with 80 pounds of nitrogen was 1.93 tons/acre, with triticale and 80 pounds of nitrogen yields were 2.79 tons/acre and 80 pounds of triticale and 120 pounds of nitrogen yielded 3.22 tons/acre. Forage analysis of the triticale/alfalfa silage cut at the late boot stage was 24.1% CP. 33.1%ADF, 42.9%NDF.

The triticale supports the first cutting of alfalfa and keeps it standing. The triticale also offers good winter annual weed competition in older stands. Another experience has been that not all of the triticale shoots are fully emerged when first cutting takes place. Regrowth of triticale will occur in the second cut as well.

Why triticale and not rye? Triticale is 2 to 3 weeks later in reaching maturity than rye and does not reach full head as quickly as rye, thus providing a wider harvest window more closely related to the optimum time to make first cutting of alfalfa. Triticale is taller than wheat or barley and thus has a higher yield potential. And the optimum harvest stage for wheat and barley is later than the desired time for alfalfa. The challenge has been to find a source of seed. Start looking early if you are interested in trying this practice.

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