

# Agronomy Notes

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Capital Region Extension Agronomy Team

BETTER CROPS AND PROFITABILITY

**Feb**  **2007**

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## Winter Annual Weed Control in Forage Crops

The talk around Extension and dealer meetings so far this year has focused on the unusually late fall and winter we have been experiencing. I personally saw many individuals wearing shorts and tee shirts the last week of 2006 and the first week of 2007.

Who would have expected that? But when it comes to the weather, there is nothing unexpected.

I remember a comment I heard a few years ago that stated the weather was “typical”, meaning it was “totally unpredictable.” Weathermen have a hard time forecasting a four day rain free period in summer. How we can expect a long term prediction seems like a stretch to me.

One prediction I can make as a result of the weather is that winter annual weeds will be a major problem in our forage stands this spring, both in new seedlings and established stands. Producers should anticipate these problems and take the time now to scout fields and plan control programs. Scouting assists growers with determining the amount and type of weed pressure present. Proper identification is necessary to select the best control programs.

At this time of year, the majority of the weeds present are classified as winter annuals. These include chickweed, henbit, mustards, shepherd purse, wild radish, yellow rocket and annual grasses such as downy brome, cheat grass, annual ryegrass and annual bluegrass. There are many excellent weed identification guides available.

Once identification is made, the 2007-2008 Penn State Agronomy Guide can be a valuable guide to design a control program. This guide should be familiar to most crop producers in PA. The latest version has just been published and is now available from your local Extension office for \$12.00.

As an example of using the guide and its many tables of recommendations, let's use the following scenario. A producer has a two year old alfalfa stand with heavy infestations of chickweed and henbit with some other broadleaf winter annual weeds spread around.

The 2007-2008 Penn State Agronomy Guide...is now available from your local Extension office for \$12.

Starting with Table 2.6-3 on Page 307 of the 2007-2008 Agronomy Guide, a comparison of the effectiveness of different herbicides on different weeds can be quickly made. This table provides a numbered weed control rating showing effectiveness of the product and potential for crop injury. From this table, the following herbicides are rated 9 out of 10 for control of these weeds: Gramoxone; Sencor; Sinbar; and Velpar.

Next, look at Table 2.6-5 on page 310 for additional product information, including type of application, rates, labeled crops and any additional remarks. Here you will find that Sinbar has a 2 year replant restriction that may affect your rotation plans. Velpar requires the use of a surfactant, since the weeds are emerged and actively growing. Velpar also has a crop rotation restriction. Sencor may injure the alfalfa if the crop has broken dormancy and can also be used in stands mixed with grasses.

Finally, Gramoxone is best used on small actively growing weeds and requires use of a surfactant, as directed on the label. The Agronomy Guide also lists, in Table 2.6-6, harvesting, feeding or grazing restrictions following applications of these products.

Winter annuals will certainly be a challenge for forage producers this spring because of the excellent growing conditions in November and December. Plan now to identify potential problem areas and use the new Agronomy Guide to base your control programs for best results.

**Paul H. Craig, CCA**  
**Forages - Dauphin Co.**

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## **High Crop Values Have Risk Management Implications**

The 2006 U. S. corn crop was one of the largest on record, but many market analysts predict that utilization for the marketing year may exceed production, leaving a negative carryover into next year. The demand for alternative fuels is part of the increased demand for corn and soybeans. In the near future, many predict both higher prices and increased price volatility. Weather uncertainty, which is always a factor in grain production and marketing may contribute to even more volatility than usual. The Chicago Board of Trade 2007 harvest time contracts are expected to continue to reflect this outlook. What are the resulting risk management implications for farmers?

**Contact a crop insurance agent for more details and a printed quote before the March 15th deadline.**

This new environment of expected higher and more volatile prices and abnormal weather requires careful re-evaluation of individual risk management strategies. Re-running your good 2006 crop insurance based risk management plan in 2007 could result in some very big surprises.

Crop insurance is a good base for your 2007 risk management plan because it can be used to help reduce adverse weather, yield/price and marketing risks to manageable levels. It also provides loan security up to the amount of protection that you choose.

The changes in 2007 outlook are reflected in crop insurance, too. Details for the 2007 APH yield coverage are available from your crop insurance agent or on the Internet at [www.rma.usda.gov](http://www.rma.usda.gov). You will notice that the maximum corn price election for this plan (used to calculate amount of protection and loss claims) increased from \$2.00 per bu. in 2006 to \$3.50 per bu. (soybeans \$5.15 to \$7.00) for 2007. This change better reflects the expected increased crop value due to higher prices. If your APH yield remains the same and you stay with the same percentage of coverage, the amount of corn protection per acre will increase by about 75% (relationship of \$3.30 to \$2), however, the premium will also increase within a range 60 to 75% (premium as a percent of protection stayed about the same in many areas).

Estimates can also be done for revenue insurance plans using your "best estimates" for increased prices and volatility. Remember that the actual CRC prices and volatility factors cannot be released by RMA/USDA until early March as prices are based on the February average daily closing prices for the CBOT harvest time contracts. So you'll need to act pretty quickly in early March to beat the March 15 decision

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deadline to get a printed quote from your agent on CRC and other revenue protection plans that may be available in your county.

### **Decision Rules of Thumb**

Some decision "Rules of Thumb" are provided below to help organize your 2007 crop insurance decision:

1. What is your purpose of protection - replacing lost bushels, a base line for forward pricing, maximum amount of loan security or recover input costs?
2. What are your budget constraints - protecting the higher value crop or must you limit your cost to about the same as last year, knowing that if you do, you have substantially increased your risk exposures? If the latter is your situation, consider reducing price election rather than the coverage level to keep a higher loss trigger (actuaries calculate that higher coverage levels result in much more payments over time - that's why they cost more).
3. Other ideas that may reduce premium cost:
  - A. Removing county based yield floors from APH history, if you have had several good yielding years, or
  - B. Consolidating optional insurance units.
4. Always obtain a coverage and premium quote from your agent to avoid surprises later. Ask for side-by-side quotes of different insurance plans and coverage options as a decision aid.

We are all aware that crop insurance has been a valuable risk management tool for thousands of PA producers. Insured producers received over \$100,000,000 of increased net income, after premium costs, during the period 2001-2005, with only about half of the insurable acreage enrolled. This financial boost benefited producers, ag suppliers and rural communities. But many producers will need to modify previous insurance decision choices to maximize benefits for 2007. Contact a crop insurance agent for more details and a printed quote before the **March 15th deadline!**



**Gene Gantz  
RMA/USDA  
717-497-6398**

### **Capital Region Field Crop IPM Schools**

**February 13** - Cumberland Co. Extension Office  
**February 14** - Lancaster Co. Extension Office

Speakers include Dr. William Curran, Dave Johnson and Del Voight on management of weeds, disease and insects. **Call Lebanon Co. Extension for more information or to register** - 717-270-4391. 9:30A-2:30P. Cost is \$10/person. **Registration deadline is Feb 9.**

**February 2007**

## **Warm Conditions Give Rise to Adverse Conditions**

### **Grub Alert**

Beetle larvae, called grubs, will become active during warm conditions. Many grub infested hay and pasture fields viewed this fall and left untreated have the potential for economic levels of damage. Scout now by digging one square foot holes and count larvae. One grub per foot in pasture indicates a need to treat.

### **Soybeans**

Over-wintering beetles, such as bean leaf beetles, are affected by warm temperatures and depending on the rest of the winter, may again be a threat in the region. Since bean pod mottle virus is confirmed in the region, this over-wintering beetle population will be of concern in planted fields.

### **Weeds**

Many producers inquired about burn down now in preparation for spring planting. Many products are labeled for pre-plant application timings and some are as long as 45 days preplant. Others, such as Python, Canopy EX and XL and Senecor, are options labeled for fall/winter. With the excessive winter growth, there is no reason to wait for burn down. If soil conditions allow, this chore can be done. Be sure to check the label and the Agronomy Guide for specifics.



### **Forage Grasses**

Winter molds thrive in these conditions. While there is no labeled fungicide for forage grasses, maintaining adequate soil potassium levels should assist plants with warding off disease. Most problems this winter will be associated with compaction from foot traffic in grazing areas and crown infection in hay fields.

### **Alfalfa**

Accumulating heat is moving the plant toward breaking dormancy. This will depend on the dormancy rating of the alfalfa and future heat development and the past cutting management last fall. If growth occurs and is frosted off, the root reserves may be depleted. Begin assessing stands early this spring to observe any crown disease or winter injury.

### **Corn**

Should burn down be done now to prepare fields? As long as the day temperatures are in the 40's and the soil allows traffic, application can be made. There are limited products labeled this far ahead of planting but some are 45 day preplant. Burn down now allows for early planting, followed by a residual application. Elimination of the weeds now will also limit the migration of cutworm moths into those fields and eliminate the risk of cutworm damage.

### **Cover Crops**

Monitor your cover crops. The warm spell really pushed some into high gear. If the field will be no-tilled, particularly into rye, be sure the growth does not get ahead of you. Earlier burn down allows for more uniform stands.



**Del Voight, CCA  
IPM - Lebanon Co.**

## **Nutrient Management and Soil Conservation Requirements for Smaller Farms**

Nutrient management requirements relating to larger animal operations have recently been the focus of many education and outreach efforts. Larger operations have a whole new set of nutrient management planning and implementation efforts. But what has not been discussed to any great extent is the state agency requirements for smaller animal operations and how they need to deal with nutrient management and soil loss control.

Current requirements for small and mid sized farms in order to be in compliance with Pennsylvania water quality laws include:

- an agricultural erosion and sedimentation control plan (or conservation plan) and
- a manure management plan

DEP is just now finalizing the framework for developing a farmer friendly agricultural erosion and sedimentation control plan. The plan is intended to address soil loss associated with all cropland, just as conservation plans have done for years. In addition to developing an agricultural erosion and sedimentation control plan under this soon to be released format, this requirement can also generally be met by obtaining a current conservation plan through NRCS or the conservation district.

DEP is just now finalizing the framework for developing farmer friendly manure management plans. The plans are intended to describe proper manure handling and application practices for your farm. A manure management plan looks at both nitrogen and phosphorus losses from the operation, with the farmer selecting a method for addressing phosphorus based on a number of options available to them. It also requires that barnyards and feedlot areas be managed in such a way as to eliminate manure directly running off of these areas into streams. In addition to developing a manure management plan under this new format, this requirement can also be met by developing a nutrient management plan as described in the PA Nutrient Management Act.

It is DEP's intention to implement a well designed manure management and conservation plan that will enhance the long-term sustainability for your farm. Sound soil and nutrient management practices equate to enhanced soil quality, improved animal health, more efficient crop production, and a better bottom line.

Farmers need to act now to develop these farm management tools to help them maintain their important farm water resources and to ensure environmental compliance. The regional DEP office, county conservation district or local NRCS office can assist landowners in understanding these important farm management tools and how to go about developing site specific plans.

**Doug Goodlander**  
**Nutrient Management Program Director, SCC**  
**State Conservation Commission**  
 Email: [dgoodlande@state.pa.us](mailto:dgoodlande@state.pa.us)

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Contact Linda Kulp today at 717-921-8803 or your local extension office.



Non-renewals will be removed from the mailing list on February 1.

**York County Nitrogen Meter Experiences**

Last year, the York County Conservation District loaned leaf meters to eight farmers who used them on 563 acres. The most common result was that even on the same farm, some corn fields had enough nitrogen, while others needed a sidedress application. Many expressed they either used less fertilizer than they had planned or they needed additional nutrients on fields where they were not anticipating using any fertilizer.

The meter can help you fine tune your nitrogen management with manure and maximize your yields. If interested in borrowing the meter for the 2007 growing season, plan to attend an informational meeting. Attendance to a 2006 or 2007 meeting is required.

**York Co. Nitrogen Meter Meetings**

Monday, Feb. 26, 7-9PM

Tuesday, February 27, 10A-12P

For more information or to register, contact Wendy Kindig at York Co. Conservation District at 717-755-2966 Ext. 133 or [wkindig@yorkccd.org](mailto:wkindig@yorkccd.org)

Note: Many Conservation District and Extension offices have meters available. In order to use a meter, you must limit the bulk of any commercial Nitrogen applications to a sidedress application. The meter measures the N supplied by manure and legumes and thus may not have more than 15 units of N in a starter prior to meter use.

**Jeffrey Graybill, CCA**  
**Agronomy, Lancaster Co.**



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