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THANK YOU for your business in 2008. It was another challenging but successful year. Challenges always spur us into analyzing our business and helping explore new ways for serving customers even better. If you have any suggestions or ideas for us, please let us know.

Plans are already in place to expand our personnel for the 2009 growing season. Keep watch in upcoming newsletters and on our Web site to see how Watertown Cooperative can be of even more help to you in the future. The challenges we have faced in the past can only help us better navigate what lies ahead.

Happy New Year! ●



Waiting on Fertilizer *By Travis Christensen Agronomy Manager • travis@watertowncoop.com*



It's hard to know how to handle the fertilizer situation, but here is what we know. Prices have come down from their record highs, but the market remains extremely volatile. Many growers are simply waiting out the fertilizer market in hopes they come down even more.

In the 'old days,' that would have worked. In fact, in lieu of recent record high prices, that would have been considered a good strategy. But today's supply management requires confirmed sales of nutrients. The old way of us filling the fertilizer plant and waiting for grow-

ers to buy and remove product are over. As we take orders for fertilizer, we are sourcing and buying it. We can no longer afford to stockpile product.

Adding additional pressure to the spring situation will be this past fall's weather. The application season was short across much of the U.S. and could further affect supply as we near planting time. If you haven't already, please call to discuss more nutrient market details along with your own nutrient plans. ●

Have You Adjusted Plant Populations Lately?

Higher corn yields don't just happen because a test plot yield leader was selected. Today's higher-priced seed demands optimum planting preparation. Inconsistent spacing and seeding depth can impact root systems and stand uniformity. But first and foremost on any how-to list for achieving higher yields should be selection of correct seeding population.

Your qualified seed advisor should be providing recommendations on RTP—response to population. You need to know how much yield you may be gaining or losing through seed population adjustments. If your seed advisor does not

know a hybrid's RTP, you may need to rethink your seed source—RTP is that important.

Population points to ponder

- Each individual hybrid has an optimal plant population at which it expresses its highest yield potential.
- Manipulating plant population offers a method of reducing the risk of poor pollination during drought as a hedge against lower fertilization, as well as reducing the risk of stalk and root lodging.

- Optimal plant population varies from one hybrid to another, based on ear type and stress tolerance.

If you have not adjusted your seeding population in the past few years, now is the time to discuss strategy with your Watertown Co-op agronomist. The elite genetics carried by your cooperative can have yield potential and return on investment maximized through the use of optimal seeding rates. ●

Bug Review

Hands down, this was the worst year ever for pests in eastern South Dakota. Soybeans across our entire trade territory were affected by aphids and bean leaf beetles. We don't anticipate such a high incidence of them in 2009. However, we are working well in advance to ensure we have products ready to combat this problem. Insecticides that worked best here were applied in those second glyphosate applications in July. They provided good knockdown and had the necessary residuals. ●



We had an extremely successful strip till and chisel plow season. All of our scheduled acres were completed before we had to shut down this past fall. Watch for early booking prices in 2009 for this service.

Stalk Quality Issues

This past growing year, we experienced some cornstalk quality issues. Today's corn plants are bred with a development emphasis on making grain. So when growing conditions don't optimize proper starch and sugar levels, the plant actually cannibalizes itself, removing those nutrients from its own stalks.

Weather conditions also contributed to lodging. Cooler, overcast weather affected the chlorophyll and the plant's growing processes. Additionally, we also had not one but two major wind events which led to a lot of tipped-over corn: the

last day of July and record winds on an October Sunday.

So a perfect storm of events, weather, and wind, contributed to cornstalk quality. Hybrids definitely vary in their tolerance to lodging. One of our corn products was a clear leader in stalk strength: Dekalb.[®] We experienced this in our test plot trials, and also many customers have remarked how their Watertown Co-op Dekalb fields did not sustain losses from tipped-over corn plants. It's definitely something to think about as you complete your corn hybrid orders for 2009. ●

Soybeans Could Play Starring Role in 2009

By **Trevor Stieg** Sales & Marketing Manager • trevorstieg.wce@midconetwork.com
and **Travis Christensen** Agronomy Manager • travis@watertowncoop.com

There definitely could be a whole lot more soybeans planted in our area if current corn market trends continue. Your cooperative is in a planning and ordering mode to make sure we have the best available soybean-related inputs for growers.

There could be some difficulty getting soybean seed later this spring. We have preordered more than past years' seed amounts because of anticipated demand. As with many seed products, the earlier you order, the better. Early-ordered soybean seed

ensures desired germination and seed size counts. We will also have the latest and most effective seed treatments available.

A product that is working well in this area is Flexstar.® We've seen extremely good results by adding in a couple of ounces with the second shot of glyphosate. Flexstar is providing enhanced control of problematic weeds that glyphosates may be missing.

Stay up on your fertility needs for potential soybean acres.



University data shows that a 45-bushel soybean crop removes 40.5 pounds of actual phosphorus and 67.5 pounds of actual potash. Yields will not be maximized if essential nutrients are deficient. ●

Variable-Rate Seeding and Glyphosate News

By **Trevor Stieg** Sales & Marketing Manager • trevorstieg.wce@midconetwork.com

Variable-rate seeding is a technology whose time has come. If you are in the market for a new planter, look into those equipped with variable-rate hydraulic drives. In today's era of higher-priced seed, precision planting will eventually return your investment through higher yields, reduced incidences of overseeding, and maximization of seed placement. With ever-increasing input and operation costs, variable rate technologies—whether for seeding or nitrogen applications—can increase efficiencies and your bottom line.

Glyphosate outlook

After last year's huge jump in prices, we have not seen the expected continued price rise in generic glyphosates. There is even talk of Monsanto making a price adjustment to Roundup® at some point. However, we are still advocating the value of pre-emerge chemicals for this country. Tank add-in products like Status® have proven to be a very good fit. We saw very good results with a pre-emergent application, followed by a shot of glyphosate with Status added to the tank. ●



We saw some very good Croplan Genetics® results across our trade territory. Their hybrids can be a best fit in a certain number and type of fields. With proper placement, Croplan seed can help maximize profit potential.



Feed Department News

By Jon Hegge *Feed Department Manager • jon.wce@midconetwork.com*



It's been a few years since we've had snow cover this early. That has affected some pasturing of cows on cornstalks. As a result we're seeing earlier placement of our RangeLand™ 30-13 tubs to meet nutritional requirements.

While it's tempting to figure out a way to reduce feeding costs in today's marketplace, supplementation is not the area to cut.

30-13 tubs are already economical. But their use is also a long-term investment that aids in rebreeding and good conception rates, along with helping cows drop healthy, vigorous calves. QLF Beef Elite 40 is another alternative. It's a 40% liquid protein supplement for those that prefer lick tub systems.

In some cases, current economics have also led to an increase in backgrounding instead of traditional

fall sale of calves. We've got the products and nutrition expertise to help achieve your performance goals. Choose products that complement distillers grain or balance out your forage and grain rations. We know margins are tight, so call the feed mill or nutritionist Mark Streich at 320-894-9158 for any assistance with ration formulation and profit projections.

We are also pleased to welcome Alex Kahnke to Watertown Co-op. She just graduated from SDSU with an animal science degree. Alex will work here in the office along with hitting the road eventually to meet with livestock customers about the choices available in our product line-up.

It's time to close but I want to end with a big thank you. Thanks so much for trusting us with your business. We are grateful to have you as our customers and wish you nothing but the best in the new year. ●

2008 Plot Data results are posted on our Web site at www.watertowncoop.com.

Mission Statement: To profitably enhance the success of our patrons.



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