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Manager’s Notes

Spring is here?
Has spring sprung yet? We see more signs every day hinting that spring is here. As I write this, the Mississippi River is open to the Twin Cities, barges are going north & south. This is good for grain and fertilizer movement. I believe this is almost 2 weeks ahead of normal. But, as I write this article I look out to see a pretty solid snow cover, but the weather forecast hints that it won’t be here much longer. I have seen robins all around, and the old adage says “three snows on the robin’s tail…” I am pretty sure that I have seen several more than that already. What does all this mean? Truthfully I really don’t know. More than likely it means we are working our way thru a normal spring. Personally, I am ready for spring, bring it on!

Fertilizer Pricing
The fertilizer pre-spring pricing update shows that the phosphate market has risen through the winter. We are probably at the highs now. Demand, usage, and when imports can get here will all play a factor if we are to see much price change.
Potash has been on the rise since fall. The producers are trying to keep production and usage as tight as possible. Right now, imports are keeping the prices in check.
Nitrogen markets are influenced greatly by the urea market. In my mind Urea is king of the nitrogen products. Urea has actually gone down in price but the buying activity has been light. Once demand starts to kick-in we could see price increases. NH3 is flat and has been that way all winter. Demand would be the only driving factor to change price. 28% UAN has been flat and hoping to stay that way. Interesting thing is both 28% UAN and NH3 did not follow Urea down this winter. We will see how that plays out as we start using product.

Think Spring and have a safe planting season!

Where is your dollar best spent?
Farmer retailers, wholesalers, and producers are all looking for revenue in the economic times we are in at the moment. As I look at areas our farmers can get the most bang for their buck, I would always start with soil sampling. I feel this is the most important investment that isn’t always done. Most see soil sampling as the base for any agronomic plan that does not get done or kept up to date. We are scheduling spring soil sampling right now. Contact any of our agronomy centers to get your acres scheduled for spring sampling. This is money well spent in a time nobody wants to spend any more money than they have to.

https://www.facebook.com/allamericancoop
As you prepare for the beginning of Spring fieldwork, you might be asking yourself some questions to make sure everything is ready to go when the weather breaks and we hit the fields. Questions such as: Are the tractors, planters, and other implements serviced and adjusted? Do you have all your fertilizer, seed, and crop protection needs lined up to cover your acres? Do you have your completed farm plans on file at the co-op?

These are all very important questions, however, let’s add one more question to the list: Do I have my fields signed up for Spring grid sampling? If not, let’s take a look at some of the reasons you should.

One of the biggest benefits with Spring grid sampling shows up in time savings. With Spring sampling, you can avoid the delays associated with fall sampling. When grid sampling in the fall, sampling has to wait until the field is harvested, followed by sampling, then sample analysis at the soil lab, followed by recommendations. This can result in a delay of 10-14 days until you can do your fall fertilizer and lime applications. With Spring grid sampling, you can avoid these delays. Since sampling is done in early Spring and through the planting season, you have the entire summer to plan a fertilizer program and estimate costs for the next crop year. This allows you to concentrate on combining, grain handling and fall tillage instead of making tough financial input decisions during the long days that happen during the fall season. Also, application of lime and fertilizer can be scheduled to be done right after combining, avoiding delays in tillage as the fall gets late and the weather gets harsh.

Developing the right fertilizer program starts with pulling accurate data from your fields. Spring sampling gives you this high degree of accuracy. Soil moisture tends to be more consistent in Spring, creating a more accurate sample; where fall sampling conditions can be extremely dry or extremely wet. Because of this, potassium soil test readings are more variable in the fall. Spring sampled potassium readings also tend to be more representative of nutrients available to the crop because potassium trapped in the crop residues will leach out over the winter.

Grid sampling data is a key component to many of the precision ag data management programs. For example, if you plan to enroll into the Climate Pro program to utilize the Yield Analysis tool, you will want to have your grid sample soil data entered to allow you to maximize your ability to extract how the soil properties of the field are influencing your yields. Taking grid samples on your fields this Spring will give you the opportunity to put a set of fresh data into the program to give you the best correlation results.

Before you get busy and hit the fields this Spring, take a moment to think if Spring grid sampling has a fit on any of your fields. Please give your Progressive Ag Center Agronomist a call to discuss any questions you might have. Finally, please take time this Spring to remain safe as you work. I wish you all a productive and safe season!
Stockdale

Grain News

Todd Stockdale, Grain Manager
tstockdale@allamericancoop.com (507) 438-8535

Markets

This has been the least exciting grain market period I believe I have ever experienced. There was a short period of encouragement in soybeans but that has passed away. The next big thing will be the planting report March 31st. It seems that everyone is hoping that the corn acres will really be decreased from last year. If the number is below 90 million acres, prices could bump up a little. Anything above 90 million acres, will give us more of the same dull market. Everyone is expecting soybean acres to jump up. Exports continue to be impressive but the South American crop is large and harvest there is moving along smoothly.

The basis spread on both corn and soybeans has been exceptionally wide all winter. Apparently the processing plants are getting enough of both crops since they don’t have to bid up at this time. We might get a bump on upside in April and May while we are all planting. I am hearing from corn plants that they have a good share of their June and July needs already covered. I am guessing that they will get more than they will need as soon as planting is over. There is a lot of corn in local elevators and bins that will need to move to market sometime.

Elgin Facilities

All American Co-op is hoping to build a second big bin in Elgin this summer. In 2016 we leased well over 2,000,000 bushels of overflow grain storage. Leasing doesn’t work as well as it used to. Trucking is getting too expensive and labor costs are too high to move grain to slow operating sites. Leasing rates on the bins are going up to levels that eliminate any chance to cover costs.

We are also going to do major maintenance repairs to the north dump in Elgin. That dump has not been upgraded since it was built many years ago. We intend to triple the dump speed by replacing the leg and the bin fill conveyors. This unload site will be mainly used for soybeans and will be a major improvement in service level.

I hope we all have a safe and smooth planting season and none of the stored grain spoils while it waits to be marketed.

Stewartville 533-4222 • Elgin 876-2222 • St. Charles 932-4732 • Plainview 534-3147
Seasonal Locations: Eyota 545-2921 • Viola 876-2263 • Kellogg 767-3275

Feed Department News

Brent Vorpagel, Feed Department Manager
vorpagel@allamericancoop.com (507) 533-4222

I am thankful that I get to live and work in rural America and especially agriculture. I feel strongly that there is not a better way of life and no better way to raise a family. While it may be hard to explain this feeling, there are reminders all around us of how special the agriculture community is. Over the last few weeks I have read several stories about the wildfires in Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas. They estimate these fires have burned over 1 million acres. Just to put that in perspective, that would be equal to approximately 2.5 times the size of Olmsted County. The following is a story from CW33, the TV station in Dallas, Texas. I wanted to share this story with you to help remind us all how blessed we are to live and work in rural, agriculture based communities.

GLEN ROSE, TX -- The wildfires that ravaged Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Colorado killing seven people and thousands of cattle may be over, but a powerful new story is emerging.

Eye Opener’s Courtenay DeHoff met up with Kaylin Schimpf and Terry Starnes, two Texas ranchers who dropped everything to help their fellow ranchers across the country.

Schimpf says to a lot of these people the most important thing was trying to save the cattle that God blessed them to be the stewards of. Ranchers rushed into the flames to save their livestock and several of them did not come back.

The number of dead cattle is unknown, but is believed to be in the thousands. The few cattle that remain alive would eventually starve to death because the fires destroyed their food supply. This is where hundreds of thousands of ranchers like Terry and Kaylin come in.

Kaylin was loading semis full of hay before the flames had even died down. On her first load out she stuck an American flag in the back of the load. The photo has gone viral on social media.

“That really said it all. I think that’s what woke people up. This ain’t a rancher thing, this is an American thing,” Terry says.

People from across the world have banded together to help ranchers in all four states. From hay to cooking utensils the donations are pouring in even though asking for help isn’t really the cowboy way.

“We are such a proud community. A lot of these old ranchers are used to doing everything on their own. They don’t want help. They are proud of what they have been able to do with their own two hands,” says Kaylin.

One rancher tried to pay Kaylin for her donated load of hay even though all his family had left was his wife’s wedding ring. Despite their pride help is desperately needed. Many ranchers lost generations of work, their homes and their entire livelihood.

To view this story and others from CW33 go to: http://cw33.com/2017/03/17/glen-rose-cattle-ranchers-drop-everything-to-help-with-wildfires/
Utilizing Liquid Supplements for Precision Feeding

Nate Goeldi, Dairy Production Specialist, Purina Animal Nutrition
npgoeldi@landolakes.com (507) 271-1718

The nutritionists at All-American Co-op have ben utilizing the services and products offered through QLF for many years. QLF is a company based out of Dodgeville, WI, and they offer molasses based liquid supplements for all dairy and beef operations. One large advantage that QLF brings to All American Co-op is that we can customize a product to your specific farm.

“Precision feeding” strategies improve cow productivity and reduce waste. The benefits of liquid supplements complement precision feeding concepts, improve on farm efficiency.

1. Provide consistent ration (physically and chemically)
   a. Liquid supplements are stored in closed handling systems that protect against nutrient degradation and shrink loss
   b. Accurate weight and metering systems deliver precise amounts of liquid supplement to each batch of TMR
   c. Fluidity and stickiness of liquid supplements distribute their nutrients and additives evenly within that TMR and among a variety of particle sizes
   d. QLF Liquid supplements are nutrient-dense, and are designed to deliver supplemental nutrition to complement many different feeding programs
   e. Delivering additives through a liquid supplement reduces ration separation and feeding loss

2. Consistent flow of nutrients through the rumen and digestive tract
   a. Liquid supplements increase ration nutrient uniformity along the feed bunk
   b. Liquid supplements stimulate dry matter intake and daily intake consistency
   c. Sugars in liquid supplements provide quickly available energy to rumen microbes, which complements later fermentation of starch and fiber, increasing microbial protein flow to the small intestine
   d. Sugars and degradable protein in liquid supplements improve forage digestion to increase nutrient availability and VFA production from forages
   e. Liquid supplements reduce ration sorting to promote more even consumption of all particle sizes throughout the feeding period. This supplies the cow with consistent amounts of rumen-available carbohydrates, protein, and fiber, stimulating rumen efficiency and TMR utilization

3. Remove variation from the field to the bulk tank
   a. Liquid supplements improve ration palatability, and rumen efficiency to maintain dry matter intakes during forage transition
   b. Liquid supplements maintain optimal rumen pH and feedstuff utilization through:

   i. Provision of supplemental sugars
   ii. Increased diet forage levels
   iii. Reduced ration sorting behavior
   c. Sugars in liquid supplements improve utilization of rumen ammonia for microbial protein production
   d. QLF Optimizer supplements maximize use of home-raised feeds in the TMR and reduce on-Farm ingredient and additive

All American Co-op and QLF have the knowledge and product that can make your operation more efficient and productive. We can offer a wide range of products for any type of dairy, including robotic dairies. If you have questions or want to know more about how All American Co-op and QLF can help your operation, please reach out to one of the nutritionists at the co-op. From all of us on the Animal Nutrition team, we would like to wish you and your family a safe planting season.
Salmonella Dublin

Kate Brown, Calf and Heifer Specialist, Purina Animal Nutrition
kjbrown@landolakes.com (507) 951-2951

Recent news releases have talked about Salmonella dublin and the transfer of this bacteria to humans. As the concern grows, I felt it would be important to share a little more information. Points of this article were taken from newsletter released by Sam Leadley, his entire article can be found at http://www.atticacows.com/library/newsletters/CFebruary2017.pdf

Salmonella dublin is a bacteria that is shed through feces and milk. Subclinical carriers often are left undetected, which can result in the bacteria spreading fast. Cleaning and disinfecting will help remove the bacteria and prevent spreading. It is especially important to clean the feeding equipment and calving pens as this is when calves are most susceptible. Signs of Salmonella dublin show as respiratory illness including coughing, labored breathing and high fevers. Often calves will pick up the bacteria soon after birth however, not show signs until they become stressed, which is often at 4-7 weeks old.

If you feel that Salmonella dublin is something you are dealing with on your farm, first contact your veterinarian to get more testing done. Other tips that will help prevent the spread of this and other diseases include:

- Work with your Veterinarian on your Dry Cow Vaccination program and really assess if you are giving them at correct times.
- Give calves colostrum as soon after birth as possible and consider feeding Land O’ Lakes Colostrum Replacer, if milking the cows and getting the milk to calf is going to take more than a couple of hours or if you feel the colostrum is not the quality you would like.
- When wearing boots, consider a separate pair for the cow areas and calf areas. Manure can transfer so much and changing boots might help.
- Wear disposable gloves and change them often.
- Clean and disinfect feeding equipment and colostrum collection equipment.

It is very important to note that Salmonella dublin has spread to humans. Often like most bacterial infections, the ones hit the hardest are the young, old, and anyone with a weak immune system. To help prevent avoid eating or drinking in the calf housing area. Always wash your hands, and Do Not Consume RAW Milk, especially if you have had a Salmonella dublin case on your farm.

I completely realize this article has become very much like a public service announcement, but I also feel it is very important to protect your animals and also those loved ones around you that may be susceptible to becoming very ill. If you have questions about this please feel free to contact me.

Best of luck with spring field work, I hope that the freeze, thaw, snow, repeat cycle has ended for this winter.

Common Traits of Successful Cattleman

Mark Werner, Livestock Production Specialist, Purina Animal Nutrition
mjwerner@landolakes.com (507) 990-8235

I recently read an article written by Amanda Radke from Beef Magazine titled “4 Habits of a Successful Cattleman”. This article struck a chord with me and I wanted to share it with all of you. Ms. Radke has compiled these as top habits to support successful business practices. As you read thru these I encourage you to evaluate each and ask yourself if your operation utilizes them to ensure its current and future validity in the industry.

4 Habits of Successful Cattleman

Beef Daily, Amanda Radke, www.beefmagazine.com

As a writer who focuses on the cattle business, I frequently have the opportunity to interview a wide variety of influential people in the beef industry. When visiting with these folks, it’s interesting to learn more about what makes them tick, what steps they took to advance their careers and the little things they do to be successful in this business. Over the years, I’ve realized that successful cattlemen have a few things in common. I’ve identified the four common traits of these individuals, and I try to practice these in my own ranching enterprise.

1. Hustle

Efficiency is the key to advancing yourself. Are you making the most out of your 24 hours? Are there things on the ranch you avoid doing or put off for later? Are there ways you could improve how you feed or tasks you could simplify, so they take less time? Are you hustling to get things done, so you have more time to focus on expansion, innovation and implementation of new ideas?

2. Continued Education

Learning shouldn’t stop once your school days are over. Take advantage of educational opportunities as they arise. Whether it’s reading BEEF magazine, taking an Extension course, attending a cattlemen’s meeting, enrolling in a program for young producers offered through your local bank or simply visiting with a respected mentor, there are many ways to continue learning, growing and expanding your knowledge in the beef cattle business.

3. Passion

There’s no doubt about it — the cattle business isn’t for the faint of heart. The risk, time commitment, market swings, weather—all are factors to make this a challenging industry to be a part of. When the going gets tough, remind yourself why you’re so passionate about this business in the first place. What do you love about this industry? Is it the ability to be your own boss? Work outside? Set your own schedule? Watch your herd grow and genetics improve? Focus on the positives and the tough parts of the job won’t seem so bad.

4. Goals

What are your short- and long-term goals for your business? Is everyone in the family on board to help you achieve those goals? Make it a habit to regularly review your one-year, five-year and 10-year plans to ensure that you’re constantly striving for something. Make goals attainable and realistic, but don’t forget to dream big, as well. Be sure to celebrate the little milestones along the way, too, as you make progress on your long-term goals.

We all want to reach success in every aspect of our lives, personally and professionally, but each of us probably has a different measure of success. We need to work hard with the task at hand, educate ourselves to try to stay ahead of the curve, be passionate about our livelihood and the agricultural community that surrounds us, and set realistic goals for our individual operations so that we can attain those goals and feel accomplished. The team of consultants at All American Co-op and Progressive Ag Center are here to help you reach your goals. Our success can only be measured by the success of our patrons. Thank you for your business and have a safe spring.
When I first began working in retail agronomy in the mid 1990’s, robust weed control options, particularly in soybeans, were varied and complex. I can remember my first days and weeks of the spring and summer of 1994 thinking to myself, “how am I ever going to figure this stuff out?” At that time Pursuit® offered broad spectrum weed control and was the foundation of what most of our herbicide programs were based on. However, it had its weaknesses and many times other chemistry’s had to be added to the mix to offer full spectrum control. At that time, lambsquarter, velvet leaf, wooly cupgrass, and giant ragweed seemed to be the weeds of primary concern. I can remember having 3-4 herbicides in a tank mix, not to mention the additives needed to be sure everything worked as it should, as we all know how the plot ends. A typical weed control program would look something like this. Prowl down pre-plant followed by a post emerge application of Pursuit®, Pinnacle®, Select®, and Resource®. Add some AMS, NIS, COC or MSO, to the mix along with the kitchen sink and you would end up with a pretty clean field. One almost had to be a chemist by trade and certainly had to know all the acronyms in the agronomy world. Weed control came at a pretty hefty price tag as well, in many cases.

We all know that by the late 90’s Pursuit all but went by the wayside with the onset of Roundup Ready® soybeans. It wasn’t long and our baseline program for weed control was glyphosate. A two pass post program in soybeans was enough to get us through canopy and have season-long weed control. Killing weeds was pretty easy and relatively inexpensive. Tank mixes were simple: Roundup®, AMS, NIS and water. Life was good.

I missed out on those relatively easy years of weed control in retail agronomy. At that time I was working in the livestock industry managing hog manure, (what was I thinking?). Fast forward to today, I feel like I’m back in the 90’s. I am back in the mainstream retail agronomy world and as glyphosate sees its sunset years as a primary weed control program in soybeans, we are back to navigating a complex system of herbicide options for weed control in soybeans. While our problem weeds have shifted somewhat, primarily waterhemp, (and giant ragweed is still a problem) what does remain the same is the intricate balance of tank mix and herbicide options for a robust weed control program. Tank mix options with some of our new chemistry has become even more complex, particularly in the case of our newest herbicides on the market, XtendiMax™ and Engenia™. Although Roundup Ready Xtend® soybeans are not a big part of our market this year, there is no doubt that dicamba tolerant soybeans and dicamba herbicides will become a big part of our weed control program in soybeans. But make no mistake, it will not be the silver bullet we would all like to see. Effective weed control will still mean putting a good base residual herbicide down, followed up with a post emerge option along with some additional residual to control our waterhemp and other small seeded broadleaves.

Controlling our weed spectrum in soybeans is going to continue to be a challenge and will not be as cost effective as what we have been use to with glyphosate. We currently have several effective weed control options for season-long control of weeds in your soybean fields. But much like the 1990’s, it will come at a cost and will be more complex than what we have been accustomed to. If you haven’t made a plan already, please talk to your Progressive Ag Center agronomy team and they can help you design a plan.

We have witnessed a lot of changes in the herbicide world in the past twenty years. But as I’ve come full circle from my experience in the beginnings of my career one thing is certain for me, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Have a safe spring!
May 1942: Oh, how things have changed! Or have they?

Steve Yoch, Agronomy Sales, Plainview
yoch@allamericancoop.com (507) 951-8251

A few days ago I was on a farm visit with Tony and Matt Berktold, a father-son dairy and crop operation near Lake City finalizing their 2017 crop plan. I had the privilege to have loaned to me, an issue of “Successful Farming” magazine from May 1942. Tony had discovered this in the belongings from his Grandfather, Theodore Berktold.

This issue of Successful Farming will be 75 years this May. I have always been interested in history. Ask my 4 children about museum visits and they would confirm my interests! They really don’t want me to buy the Minnesota Historical Society “season pass” again. The 2015 all-access season pass about did them in on history lessons! 3 trips to Historic Forestville in one summer is being a good parent, isn’t it? I want to share with you a few of the many articles and advertisements that caught my interest in the 1942 magazine. Some things have changed since 1942, some have not.

Ten pages into this magazine took me to an article that caught my interest. It is called “Alfalfa Needs No Nurse Crop”.

To sum up the article, it points out all the negatives of trying to grow 2 ½ bu of oats, taken to grain, while simultaneously trying to establish a good alfalfa crop below it. The author strongly advised to grow the two crops in separate fields and manage them as two separate crops. I would agree. 75 years later, I sometimes still see those two crops grown together. I guess some old habits are hard to break.

Page 19, takes us to an article on soybean production. Remember, just 5 months prior, the United States declared war. We were attacked at Pearl Harbor in December of 1941. “Super Soys” was an article on increasing soybean production. The United States needed to increase production for the war. Food was an integral part of the war’s success. Growers had 10 acre contest fields and were judged on yield, economy of production, oil content, and quality. 50.73 bushel was the Illinois state contest winner from 1941, while the state average was 18.2 bu.

A few “tricks” disclosed by the winner- Variety, planting date, soil fertility, and adequate pH. Sound familiar? 2017, we still abide to those agronomic principles, and have yield contests to see how much yield can be obtained. Our end results in grain production are obviously still the same, to feed people. In 1942, the food grown was to feed the military and the people at home. Today, adequate food supply throughout the world is essential in trying to avoid wars.

An ad on page 43 talks about “Nitragin” brand soybean inoculant. That one surprised me. I didn’t know that the soybean specific bacteria for nodulation were known at that time. It also says it had been “Farmer Tested” for 42 years! What?! That means in 1900, growers started inoculating their legumes. Claims of “50% Increase in Production”, was advertised. In 2017 we do not see that kind of return on investment, but we still see the value in that type of product.

Conservation of resources in 1942 and thru the end of the war was of utmost importance. The war consumed vast amounts of resources. Page 47 has a Ford Tractor with the “Ferguson System” advertised. They are showing how much “war steel” their tractors are saving versus competitive equal working capacity tractors. “100,000 tons of metal saved for armament by this tractor”, the ad reads. Ford said that all the steel saved producing this smaller style tractor would be enough steel for 4 battleships, or 48 destroyers, or 5,500 tanks, or 23,000 scout cars. Today, conservation in farming is still about conserving what we have or invest in: machinery, labor, fuel, fertilizer, and soil to name a few.

A few other interesting finds:
- In a Champion Spark Plug advertisement Ford, Chevy, and Chrysler all used the same model spark plug! Not today!
- Material to build an 800 square foot house could be done for less than $4,000.00.
- Any houses of that size being built today?
- McCormick Deering dealers had trained forty thousand youth, too young for the war, in tractor maintenance and operation.
- Top price paid for a breeding sow at an Illinois auction was $2,000.00.
- Independent Silo Company was on Pillsbury Avenue in St. Paul.
- Some work boots were made from horse hide
- a postage stamp was 1 cent
- I found a pastry recipe that called for lard. Can you still buy lard? The recipe looked delicious!
- 100 baby pullet White Leghorns would set you back $12.00
- I looked high and low, but no web addresses or 1-800 numbers were found!

There were a lot of interesting finds between the covers of this 1942 magazine. As we look forward to the 2017 growing season, don’t forget to look behind once in a while. There are lessons and ideas from the past that have shaped the way we farm today. I will see if my kids are up for more museum visits this summer. We could still buy the 2017 Historical Society pass. They may have felt that we did, but we didn’t go to ALL the museum locations in 2015... some are still to be explored! Have a safe and productive year and as always, Thank You for your business.
Is Everyone Ready?

Pete Doherty, Operations Manager, Stewartville
pdoherty@allamericancoop.com (507) 421-2077

Spring is fast approaching and we all need to be prepared as best as we can to have a smooth spring season. It is key that we keep the lines of communication open with your Progressive Ag Center team. Our communication is vital to both our businesses getting spring fertilizer applications done in an efficient timely matter. It is best to give a couple day notice so we can schedule our application equipment effectively in your area to save on road time. I would suggest that you call directly to the office so that we are all on the same page. This will help us dispatch our equipment as best as we can to be sure that we can get everyone’s jobs done as quickly as needed.

Once corn is planted it’s off to the races for the soybean planting. If it’s warm and the soybeans crack very quickly, we need to know sooner than later that your soybeans are planted and need the pre-emerge chemicals sprayed before they come up. It is best to let us know that day before you plan to plant each farm so we can schedule our equipment for those fields as quickly as possible after you have them planted. We all need to work together to keep the weed pressure under control! Getting these pre-emerge applications down will be key to effectively managing weed pressures early on in the growing season.

Please have a safe spring! Be sure to keep in contact with your Progressive Ag Center team to help make the busy planting season roll along as smooth as possible for you. We are all in this together and we want to make it work for everyone. Thank you for your business!

Ready or Not?

Larry Veith, Seed Specialist, Plainview/St. Charles
lveith@allamericancoop.com (507) 923-5628

Crop planting time in SE Minnesota is just about here for the corn and soybean crop. We have had tremendous yields in recent years, and if Mother Nature cooperates as she has been doing, there is no reason this year should be any different. Technology, including better equipment and hybrids, as well as improved understanding about crop input needs and timing has taken us forward to unimaginable yield levels from just a few years ago. There is no turning back! Profit margins are thin at best, and improved efficiencies are really the only way to stay profitable consistently outside of a crop disaster.

BE PREPARED

Planting your crop is indeed one of the most critical management decisions of the season. You need to have your game plan ready, and make sure that it is the best one possible under your current situation. I can’t stress enough that the planter needs to be your #1 priority. You normally get one chance to do it right, so make sure you do NOT overlook the details.

Consistent emergence is absolutely vital to maximize yield, followed by seed drop consistency and planting depth. Make sure you have tested your meters, checked for worn parts, and give your planter and monitors a thorough going over.

The one major item needed to be stressed in planting is planting depth. You should never plant shallower than 1.5”, but the IDEAL planting depth, under normal circumstances is 1.75” to 2”. This depth is necessary for proper root formation and development, as the root is the foundation of the plant. Without a strong base, other management strategies may well be compromised throughout the season.

NCGA Corn Growers Contest

We encourage growers to challenge their management styles and strategies and enter the NCGA Corn Growers Yield Contest. Planting a DEKALB hybrid purchased through Progressive Ag Center, LLC will cost you nothing to enter.

Contact Jared Tabor or myself to get more details, but know the entry deadline is usually late June, so you don’t have to do that up front…BUT, you do need to plan for making perhaps a few changes in your contest field or fields to try and maximize production.

Having a field within your operation for you to “test” some new strategies on can be very rewarding in many ways. We have some general, as well as specific, ideas which can lead to yield improvements without putting you in the red, and may stretch your ideas on what you may or may not believe is possible in your operation. It is a NO RISK, HIGH REWARD way of experimenting with new strategies that may well be what “keeps you in the game”.

- The first component in trying a new, higher yielding strategy for the NCGA Corn Growers Contest is to pick a field that is generally fertile and well drained. Corn following soybeans or alfalfa is ideal.
- Early planting pays, so make it one of your first fields to plant, but only if the soil is truly ready to plant. You can’t rush a good thing.
- Planting populations will need to be a minimum of 35,000, but more likely in the 36-38,000 range. Ideal fields can even support 40,000 seeds per acre or more, but this requires some other management strategies that will need to be incorporated.
- Weed control, fungicide, micronutrients and side dressing will likely be needed as part of the “game plan”.

Give the NCGA Corn Growers Yield Contest a try in 2017. It is a great learning experience, and if all goes well, you will certainly be rewarded. Contact any one of the Progressive Ag Center agronomy team or seed team for further details.

Be safe, enjoy what you do, and smile. You are a vital part of feeding the world, so be PROUD!
What is “Normal?”

Gary Quam, Agronomy Sales, St. Charles
gquam@allamericancoop.com (218) 689-0947

Looking back at the winter that we have had so far, I am positive that no one is going to argue with me that it was far from a “normal” winter. I am comfortable in saying all-in-all it has been pretty mild. The temperatures have not been bitterly cold and we did not get an overabundance of snow. However, we continued to have surprises including the 60 degree weather in February followed by a foot of snow a couple days later.

So, has this been a “normal” year? When I look back at the last five years and try to come up with a definition of “normal,” I cannot come up with an answer. There have been extremes on both sides. The five year history shows a spring so wet that fields were never planted along with a spring where most of the acres in our area were being planted before May 1st. The growing seasons don’t reflect extreme heat or moisture. The past couple summers have not had more than a handful of days in the 90’s. All of this would make me wonder, is this now our new “normal”?

“Normal” by definition is “conforming to a standard; usual, typical, or expected.” If I was asked to describe the agriculture industry in the past five years, the word “normal” would be the last word to come out of my mouth. There are so many factors that have contributed to the lack of a standard in the farming world recently that makes it hard to know what to expect. If the weather was a pitcher in the major leagues known for only throwing fast balls, we have been connecting with the curve balls and sliders that Mother Nature has been thrown at us for many years.

The weather so far in 2017 has been a little crazy, and we do not know what pitch is coming as we wrap up winter and prepare for spring. This is the time of year when farmers start to get a little stir crazy and begin pulling equipment out of the shed. The big question you need to ask yourself is “When should I start planting?”

Deciding when to plant might be a lesson passed down from a prior generation and that is just the way that you do it because that is how Grandpa did it. Maybe you decide to start planting each spring based on other things, like ground temperature or moisture. Maybe you begin to plant as soon as you are ready each year. You might even decide to start planting when you see that your neighbor is in the field. However you decide the time is right to put that planter in the ground, please do it with some thought behind it. The “normal” planting date on your farm might not be what it used to be. Evaluate the “normal” way you have decided to plant in the past; you might realize that you need to be ready to throw an unexpected “pitch” this spring. If you need to move your planting date up or back a day or week, all I ask is that you do it for a good reason.

Use the resources you have available to you so that you can make the best decision possible to start the 2017 season off right. The agronomy team here at Progressive Ag Center is here to help you with this tough decision of “when” to start planting. We cannot predict the future, but we can hopefully help minimize some of your risk. “Normal” is an idea that we all believe is there, but I believe the “normal” in farming is that every year is different. There are new challenges that we face and overcome every year. Farming is constantly changing and we must continue to adapt with it. Good luck this spring.

Chicken Bacon Ranch Cassrole!

1 lb. Bacon, cooked and chopped
12 oz Pasta (any kind you prefer- I used shells)
1 1/2 C Mozzarella cheese, shredded
1 lb. Boneless, Skinless Chicken Breasts, diced
2 Tbsp Olive Oil
1 Medium Onion, diced
1/2 Tbsp Adobo Seasoning (Spanish Blend of Spices)
1 tsp Pepper
Salt to taste
1/2 tsp of Fresh Parsley
2 Tbsp Adobo Seasoning
2 tsp Adobo Seasoning
1/2 cup Cheddar Cheese, shredded
1 & 1/2 jar Alfredo sauce

Instructions
Preheat oven to 375°F. First you want to marinate your chicken pieces, take a gallon size Ziploc bag, add in the olive oil, diced RAW chicken, salt to taste, pepper, adobo, parsley. Shake until chicken is evenly coated with the seasonings. In a large skillet, over medium heat, add your marinated chicken and your diced onion and cook until no longer pink in the center. Set aside.

Boil your pasta in a separate pot, until al dente and drain well. Add your ranch dressing to the cooked pasta and toss until well coated. Grease a 9x9 baking dish. Add ranch covered pasta to the greased baking dish. Add cooked marinated chicken, HALF of the cooked bacon and the Alfredo sauce to the pasta. Toss well. Sprinkle both cheeses, remaining bacon and pop into the oven. Bake until cheese is completely melted, about 12-15 minutes. ENJOY! http://myincrediblerecipes.com/chickenbaconranch/
Fulfilling My FFA Dream?

Last month Donna Moenning, Minnesota FFA Foundation Chair, posted a question asking us what motivates us to support the FFA. I took a moment to think about how there could be so many different responses to this question. For most of you, your response would lead back to a very personal story about one of your own experiences with FFA. For me, it is a bit of a different response.

FFA For Everyone!

You see, when I was a student at Mayo High School in Rochester FFA was not available. Thankfully, FFA is back and going strong in Rochester. But for me and my siblings, the Ag Education curriculum had been cut from the Rochester Schools. Part of my responsibilities today as a recruiter for All American Co-op is to reach out to students and have a conversation with them about the future of agriculture and how important they are to the success of that future. I tell them that I am a bit of an FFA Stalker! I talk about how I used to feel a little cheated that I never got to be a part of such a great organization that is centered on Agriculture. Growing up I loved to see that shine in my dad’s eye whenever he would talk about FFA. His roots were deeply embedded in production agriculture and that is where most of my learnings as his youngest daughter were founded. He would tell me stories about the meetings, shows, events, competitions, and of course the fairs that were all connected to his FFA Experience. So, when Donna asked what motivated ME to support FFA, it is a multi-level response that ultimately directs me back to the first line of the FFA Creed which reads, “I Believe in the future of agriculture, with faith born not of words, but of deeds…” Whenever I hear the FFA Creed being recited I look around the room and I see the pride that everyone has and I find myself standing a little taller. Hearing the FFA Creed sparks a fire inside of me that wants to find a way to ensure that every student has the opportunity to be a part of the FFA Experience.

I Dare You!

I feel I am fulfilling a little bit of my FFA Dream. I am honored to be a board member and sometimes I wonder, what do I have to bring to the group? The words of William H Danforth author of “I Dare You!” come to mind, he writes “I dare you, whoever you are, to share with others the fruits of your daring. Catch a passion for helping others, and a richer life will come back to you.” Thinking about Mr. Danforth’s challenge I am quickly reminded that everyone has the potential to help. There are several opportunities to support the Minnesota FFA Association on many different levels as individuals, groups, or businesses. As I am writing this, we are counting down to our 2017 State FFA Convention in April and we still have some openings for specific sponsorship to different events and awards. If you would like to give more of an all-purpose gift, we have the opportunity to make a donation of $100 and you will receive a beautiful limited edition Bonnie Mohr print titled “We Live to Share” that was specifically created just for the Minnesota FFA. Maybe you, similar to me, have a special place in your heart for the blue corduroy jacket? If that’s the case, do we have the fit for you! Why not donate to the Blue Jacket, Bright Futures fund that makes it possible for students to own their own blue jacket. To learn more about the Legacy Club and many other ways to support chapter success visit www.mnffafoundation.org/legacy-club.

I guess what I am trying to say is, no matter how you give, your support is appreciated by a very large group of over 11,000 students, 300 Ag Education teachers, and over 3,000 FFA Alumni members across the great state of Minnesota that are all working to help make it possible for students to have the chance to experience FFA and carry that leadership training with them no matter where their future takes them. I guarantee you that FFA Students are the individuals that you will seek out. These are the individuals you will want to hire and you will want to work shoulder to shoulder with no matter the industry you are a part of. These students are our future leaders not only in Agriculture, but in Government, in Technology, in Medicine, in Research, in Entrepreneurship and Big Business.

Thank You!

If you are already a supporter of the FFA, then I dare you to tell your story of what motivates you to support FFA to your peers, your friends, and business associates and let your light spark something in each of them to motivate them to support FFA.

With gratitude and appreciation,
Beth Pagel
Minnesota FFA Foundation Board Member
All American Co-op Marketing & Communications Director
Food Drive: March is Food Share Month

Nichol Arndorfer, Food Drive Chair
arndorfer@allamericancoop.com (507) 533-4222

March is Food Share Month. I wanted to share with you an update on another extremely successful 2016 Food Drive. All American Co-op and Progressive Ag Center donated 726 lbs of non-perishable food items to four local food shelves. These food shelves were the Plainview-Elgin Area Food Shelf, St. Charles Resource Center, Spring Valley Food Shelf, and St. John’s Wykoff Food Shelf. Thanks to our generous employees, producers, and board members, we raised cash donations totaling $3,375. A matching funds grant from the Land O’ Lakes Foundation added another $3,375 to our donation bucket. In total, All American Co-op donated $6,750 to Channel One Food Bank. I was pleased to find out that we could designate where we would like our money to be used. As always, our co-op is dedicated to supporting the communities we do business in. Therefore, the funds we donated were divided between the Chatfield, Racine, St. Charles, Spring Valley, Wykoff, and Plainview-Elgin Area food shelves. Everyone at All American Co-op would like to thank you for your donations which made this another successful Food Drive!

Backpack Programs in Our Local Schools

Local Backpack programs discreetly provide nutritious, child-friendly, easy-to-prepare food to hungry children. The food is distributed in ordinary backpacks that students take home over the weekends and out-of-school times. These bags contain one breakfast, one lunch, one snack and supplemental food for each child in the home. Thanks to one of our ingredient suppliers, Nutrablend, All American Co-op earns points with everything we purchase from them throughout the year. This program allows All American Co-op to then turn these points into cash donations to Backpack programs at the local schools of our choice. In addition to the Nutrablend points program, CoBank offers a “Sharing Success” matching grant program that will match the money that All American Co-op donates to our area Backpack programs. For the 2016 calendar year, All American Co-op donated a total of $10,600 to four of our area schools backpack programs that included Stewartville, St. Charles, Plainview-Elgin Area, and Chatfield Public Schools.

All American Co-op and Progressive Ag Center are pleased to have the support of our customers, employees, and business partners to be able to fight hunger within the communities that we do business in. Thank you for your continued support!