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Agronomics with livestock in mind!



3 TIPS FOR CORN & ALFALFA:

Finalizing Crop Plans for Results!

Punxsutawney-Phil, the famous groundhog, did not see his shadow this year, forecasting that spring *may* come early. Only time will tell. However, it is important to be prepared to plant this coming spring before it is time. Here are three tips to help producers plan ahead.

First, work with producers to review their cropping plan to confirm that fertilizer, herbicide and seed orders match their available alfalfa and corn acres. Encourage them to contact you (their Renaissance consultant) with any necessary order changes. If there are any major changes in the crop plan, work with them to solidify and quantify them. Inventories [of seed products] are getting tight and suppliers can provide better service once they are aware of changes and needs.

Second, encourage your producers to prepare their planters. Proper planting populations, seed depth and uniformity of stands are important for all crops. During winter months they should take time (before they begin to plant) to service their seeders, drills and corn planters, and if necessary find and replace worn or broken parts. Calibrate the planters for proper planting and fertilizer applications to avoid costly mistakes. Losses may be high with uneven application or if too much seed or fertilizer is used, and yield losses may occur if they apply too little. Optimum plant populations and fertilizer rates may vary with hybrids and field needs. On a well maintained planter it is easier to change settings and make planting more efficient and go smoothly.

Finally, producers need to have a plan for pests. The current cold snap (early February) may help with this concern; but a mild November, December and early January may have set the stage for increased pest survival. Encourage them to be prepared to detect and protect their crops against pests that over-winter in your area. Increased adoption of no-till and reduced tillage can increase the number of pests that survive the winter. Insects of importance for corn include the corn rootworm, corn borer, grubs, wireworm, flea beetles, and billbugs. The milder

winter may also increase the potential for problems with the black cutworm, especially in the Northeast. Diseases like grey leaf spot, northern corn leaf blight, and northern corn leaf spot may also be a problem in corn fields, a problem most frequently seen with corn-on-corn planting. In alfalfa fields, stay alert for increased numbers of alfalfa weevils and possibly an earlier flush of potato leaf hopper.

Traits such as Herculex[®] and Yield Guard[®] are great tools; however, it is important to consider the important agronomic factors that are best for each farm ~ such as soil type and yield, and implementing traits as necessary. For example, if they are interested in silage corn, the highest priority should focus on fiber digestibility and use traits, if they are available, in highly digestible corn. In this example choosing agronomics and treating for pests conventionally (soil insecticide) will provide the most value to that farm. If they choose a hybrid based on traits it may not have the agronomics that fit the farm and its goals. This may result in reduced returns for their forage-related investment(s). Tools for the 2007 planting season may include hybrids with Herculex[®] RW for protection against corn rootworms. Herculex[®] I hybrids provide excellent protection against corn borers and black cutworm. Using seed treatments such as the Cruiser[®] ExtremePak can give protection against grubs, wireworms and flea beetle as well as soil and seedling diseases.

Having a comprehensive cropping plan will allow a producer to detect problems early and avoid costly or time-consuming mistakes during the hectic planting season. Use the resources available to you and your producers for pest identification, planting rates, and proper fertilization. Help your producers toward making qualified decisions that can help to improve their profitability, while meeting their forage needs and goals.

(edited from an article by Art Graves, MYCOGEN SEEDS ~ 2007)

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