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Tristate Seed Company LLC Winter Newsletter - 2014

Craig and Michael and I are always thinking of ways to make your individual operations more efficient and more profitable. Ultimately this is our goal, to create an environment of trust, a cache of knowledge, products and techniques that add value to your decision making process. If we are successful in directing your thought process toward those issues and systems that may have a positive influence on your bottom line then we have accomplished our goal. We may from time to time, advocate for something that has relatively little perceived value to your business, and in the next paragraph, hit a home run in some way that really makes a difference in your planning and profits. That is the way we have organized this letter, no particular agenda – just snippets of information and thoughts on relevant issues with the idea of making you think. Please feel free to contact us regarding anything you read – whether you agree or disagree. Your feedback is important to us. After all, this is the way we learn also. One of my oldest mentors once said, “You can be more successful in two months by becoming really interested in other people’s success than you can in two years trying to get other people interested in your own success.” - Dale Carnegie

AgCelerate Program Ramping Up Fast

It is important for you to understand this program! AgCelerate is a self-register data base that prequalifies you to purchase newer genetics released by seed vendors that have a royalty attached to them. The royalties are collected at the first point of sale and are remitted to breeding company as a user fee for the use of their genetics. This is the way many of our genetics companies and universities are funding their research programs now. Before Tri State Seed, or any other company can sell you seed which has been designated as “royalty driven,” you must log in to the AgCelerate system and register your farm as eligible to purchase these products. The log in is simple and the entire process takes less than five minutes, but it does require some sensitive information like the last four digits of your social security number. etc. Please do this, just type in www.AgCelerate.com and follow the directions to register your farm. ***You only have to do this once to have access to most all newer varieties.*** Most of the newer varieties being released from the universities, and especially the private seed vendors are requiring this to be done before you can purchase their seed. This is the way they track their products and collect their fees. Why now? Why me? Universities used to have dedicated funding sources they could count on for funding agricultural research and plant breeding, like the state legislature and the federal government. Those sources have dried up. Primarily because the people that control these august bodies have very different budget priorities than many of us in Eastern Washington. Need I say more? If we wish to have a public plant breeding presence in the state we have to self-fund it to a larger degree than we have in the past. The alternative is to have all the relevant genetics controlled by a few multinational seed companies – anyone want to guess how much Bayer or Dow or Monsanto care about breeding wheat for a less than 12” rainfall area? About as much as President Obama cares about our budget deficit!

Planting CRP Grasses with Success

Some things we just have to learn the hard way – trial and error. Planting successful stands of CRP grass is largely contingent of some help from Mother Nature, but some techniques are obviously common to many success stories. NRCS guidelines are clear on the soil temperature being less than 42 degrees F. before seeding. This year that window was about 4 days long before the ground froze for the first time. Obviously they want a dormant seeding, so the grass does not germinate until spring. The fallacy in their thinking is the timing window. We never know with certainty when the soil will freeze so hard it prohibits the seeding operation completely. Am I telling you to ignore the NRCS? No, just read between the lines. They publish guidelines; these are not set in concrete. These are suggestions, use your common sense. Remember it takes grass seed 21 days to imbibe enough water to begin the germination process. So back up your seeding date so you can finish the job before the soil gets too tight to finish. NRCS has developed these suggestions for a broad spectrum of soil types, residue conditions and moisture situations, so take them for what they are – guidelines! The more important issue here is that you get it done in a timely manner and the soil is

prepared properly. If you decide to cultivate the soil for weed control in advance of seeding, then do it with the goal of controlling annual grasses in combination with your herbicide program. Our biggest reason for failed stands in the lower rainfall region is cheat grass, Russian thistle control and poorly prepared seedbeds.

Seed beds should be firm enough to walk on without sinking in more than a ½ inch with the heel of your boot. If you drill the seed in this environment using a double disc drill, seed no more than ½ an inch deep. If you can see about 25% of the seed on the top of the ground – that is fine. Understand that once again NRCS is using a “general” seeding population for a multitude of conditions and environments. If you are in a county that has approved broadcast seeding with a Valmar or similar air seeding machine, the same recommendations apply. A typical CP-2 mix has approximately 75 seeds per square foot. You are ultimately responsible for the final stand of about one plant every two square feet to have a “certified” stand. So, you have plenty of seed to work with, more than enough to do the job. When you are done seeding, coil pack one more time to ensure good seed to soil contact. Most contracts state that you have 36 months to seed the grass from the date you sign the contract, and another two years to establish the stand. That is half way through the contract in most cases. Our suggestions are based on years of successful planting, and many – many mistakes. We also have the calibration scales and charts to make your seeding rate adjustment process quick, easy and accurate.

Russian thistle control is critical to good stand establishment. We have had great luck controlling the seedling Russian thistle with a full rate of 2-4D and Dicamba. Use plenty of NIS and a little AMS. Then about June you will no doubt see a second flush of thistles come but this time fewer of them. Because weed control in CRP is a non-crop use of this herbicide, use a double rate this time and you will get good control. This is critical because Russian Thistles have the ability to extract hygroscopic moisture from the soil and substantially reduce your grass stand by starving the grass for moisture. The forb that works best in the native stands recommendations is Western Yarrow because it has very fuzzy leaves and the herbicide never gets to the leaf to be absorbed by the plant.

Low Lignin Alfalfa – Game Changer?

The development of low lignin alfalfa has been a priority with dairy farmers and exporters for some time. Monsanto has been working on a GMO system to reduce the lignin or indigestible fiber in the plant for some time. At the world dairy conference last fall in Madison WI, Dow Agrosience announced the release of two conventional low lignin varieties. Dr. David Johnson has been working on this non-GMO lower lignin plant for about ten years using conventional breeding techniques. He came to Dow through Dow’s recent acquisition of CalWest Seeds. Both Craig and I have visited Dr. Johnson at his research facility in Wisconsin several times in the last couple of years; that is how we pick our alfalfa varieties, by visiting the breeding programs and evaluating side by side trials over multiple years.

Dr. Johnson can reduce the lignin percentage to the point that the plant will actually fall over when it gets ready to harvest. The “sweet spot” seems to be about a 10% reduction in lignin. At this level of reduced lignin the plant maintains good standability while still performing at a level that is statistically significant when you evaluate the quality of the finished product. In replicated testing over several years the research is showing that cows fed these varieties of lower lignin alfalfa produce 2 ½ pounds more milk per day over the control ration. For the commercial hay farmer this means lower ADF’s and higher Relative Feed Value numbers. The Midwest uses Relative Feed Quality, but both are nutritional algorithms that measure feed efficiency in the animal. If you get paid for your alfalfa based on a quality test, you need to pay attention to this research. Or more importantly if you are the end user of this alfalfa, the benefit will become obvious with much higher milk production and feed efficiency.

As an alfalfa producer you can take advantage of this technology one other way. If you are used to cutting on a 28 to 30 day schedule, you will have much higher RFV’s. But if you wait another week to swath your alfalfa, the lower lignin alfalfa will have the same quality test in 35 days as the conventional hay does at 28 days. The company has released a fall dormancy 3 and a fall dormancy 6 alfalfa for planting the spring of 2015. Watch for information regarding **Hi Gest 360** and **Hi Gest 660**. We just happen to be your local dealer for these products. For more information please call Craig, Michael or myself for the details outlining the agronomics and pricing.

Spring Wheat Supplies Tight

We are not trying to scare anyone about the supply of spring wheat, but if you think you are going to need spring wheat of any kind look for it now. We currently are in pretty good shape with Diva and Louise soft white spring and

Kelse and Glee DNS for the dryland guys. Express and Cabernet DNS for the irrigated acres are also in pretty good supply. J D Club is all but sold out as no one, including us had the foresight to produce what the market will ultimately absorb this spring.

Spring Forages

Flex peas are the best spring forage pea I have ever seen. They are a dark green, white flowered semi-leafless forage pea that will climb as high as the triticale or barley will grow. We sold a lot of this in combination with Trical 141, SAS W-4, and Lavina Beardless Barley last spring in southern Idaho because they were uncertain of how much water they would have – and this turned out very well for them as the water supply was extremely tight. Typically if you are a dairy operation and want higher milk production, the Lavina Barley and Flex pea is the best combo simply because of the increased fiber solubility. For pure tonnage the Trical 141 and Flex is the best choice. The SAS W-4 forage wheat is a great choice for baled product with the peas, plant both early and don't spare the water. This is an amazing combination but the fiber in the forage wheat has more lignin which is less soluble in the rumen than either the barley or the triticale. It is a great choice for dry cow feed. We spend a lot of time testing various combinations for compatibility and maturity. You can't just throw two forages together and say they are the best thing since night football, it takes a fair amount of research to figure out the proper percentage of each, and to evaluate the growth habits of each so one doesn't completely dominate the other. Seed size also plays a large part in the final recommendation. If you want a final stand that gives you 50% of each component, you need to do the math regarding seed size and growing profiles. Competitive exclusion can ruin the best intentions, so ask your seedsman if he has done any research with the particular blend he is recommending before you buy. If he can't show you plot results, tell him to pound sand.

Observations from Michael Dixon

For those of you I have yet to meet, my name is Michael Dixon. I grew up in the Tri-Cities with my parents Shawn and Boyce Dixon and two younger brothers. I graduated WSU with a bachelor's degree in Geology. When attending college I worked at the Windust and LO-MO elevators operated by Louis Dreyfus Company on the Snake River in the summers to help pay for school. While working there I knew someday I would want a career in the grain business. Now I'm excited to say I get that opportunity with TSS.

Farmers seem to be getting the message on fertilizer placement. I noticed this year a lot more of you were mixing fertilizer with your seed especially phosphorus. The benefits of a P2O5 fertilizer application with small grain at planting have long been recognized as a means to improve crop yields. Compared to broadcast applications banding with the seed has been well researched and is recognized as the most efficient application method. The fertilizer that we recommend is mono-ammonium phosphate, also known as MAP, 11-52-0-0. Crop production Services has a product called Micro Essentials SZ that is also great because it has some Zinc and Sulphur, 12-40-10-1. Both have a high amount of phosphorus in the mix. Our soils have a net deficit of P2O5. The average 35 bushel wheat crop will withdraw 23 actual pounds of phosphorus. Phosphorus added to the soil will also increase the availability of other basic nutrients to the plants. Phosphorus promotes early root development. In a moisture deficit year where yields are limited by other factors, results may not be so obvious. Because phosphorus is so immobile in the soil, at the end of the day it is not going anywhere unless the plant uses it so your return on investment may be delayed but certainly not lost.

DeKalb Corn Seed

The breeders at DeKalb have been busy developing in some truly astounding genetics. Across all hybrid maturities they are the obvious favorite for dry down in the fall. In fact with the weather we had this summer many of the high moisture corn fields dried so fast that many were by-passed and ended up being harvested for dry corn. Their most notable accomplishment in recent years, rapidly becoming apparent in the Columbia Basin, is the mid maturity grain hybrids that are yielding like you would expect a longer season hybrid to yield. We have had many reports of 98 day grain corn yielding 277 to 290 bushels per acre at 16 to 18% moisture in early October. All of their hybrids are now Refuge in a Bag (RIB) so there are no more requirements for planting refuge corn for resistance management. Let us know if you are interested in talking more about planting corn this spring. We have an interest-free financing program until November 2015, and availability should be good on most hybrids.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Bullet Points

- Aurora Timothy is in good supply at TSS for the mean time. We have about 25,000 lbs at the moment – first come first serve. There will be no more until new crop in October 2015.
- Senate passes HR 5771 – which extends for this year only (through Dec 31, 2014), tax breaks for businesses, including the extensions of increased expensing limitations and treatment of certain real property as section 179 property. Check with your tax guy, in most cases this can be a sizable tax savings for you.
- Breaking news – The Department of Natural Resources in Washington State is about to announce their desire to re-seed 100,000 acres of the Carlton Complex fire in the Methow Valley. This is totally dependent on their ability to secure funding from the State. It is our opinion that DNR will probably get this done. Call us and we will explain the politics to you. So, why are we so concerned? This project if accepted may consume as much as 1,000,000 lbs. of native grass from supplies that are not ready for this kind of demand. Bottom line, if you are in need of CRP grass in 2015; nail your needs down now while you still can. Prices cannot help but rise if this happens the way we think it will.
- Watch for our announcement regarding our grower meeting this spring, it will be worth attending. No, we will not have pesticide credits. If you need credits go eat lunch on someone else. You will get a personal invitation and agenda.
- Tri State Seed is about to upgrade all of our electric service. We will be off line temporarily sometime this winter.
- If you need help registering for AgCelerate, call us and Michael can help you get everything done quickly and efficiently over the phone.

Thanks for all of your support this year. At a time just between Thanksgiving and Christmas, we are thankful for the bounty provided by our God, and hoping you also take time to think about the meaning of Christmas. Blessings to you in the coming year!

Dana Herron Craig Teel Michael Dixon Margaret Krug Nathan Robbert
 Andres Garcia George Ortiz