



Newsletter

March 19, 2010

Planter Adjustments that can Optimize Yield on Your Farm By Brandon Bruce - Agronomist for MFA Lamar

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The past two corn planting seasons have definitely been a challenge. I think we are all hoping for good planting conditions for the 2010 season; unfortunately, the weather is one thing we can't change. Key factors that we can change include planter adjustments such as seed placement, depth, down pressure, row cleaners, firmers and planting speed.

Proper seed placement and seed drop can be achieved by calibrating the metering units before season. Meter units on new planters need to be calibrated as well to insure proper finger tension for the seed you are purchasing. Calibrating the units will reduce skips and doubles insuring better accuracy and proper seed spacing.

Seed depth is also critical and something that changes from field to field. Soil type, moisture, seedbed conditions and planter adjustments all affect the seedling depth. Ideal planting depth is 2 inches; however, cool wet conditions favor 1.5 inches and dry conditions favor greater than 2 inches. Corn seed placed less than 1.5 inches deep will develop nodal roots at or above the soil surface exposing them to environmental conditions, herbicide injury, and/or insect feeding. Shallow planting can also lead to early season problems with standability and nutrient deficiencies. To improve stand population and produce a more even emergence proper seedling depth is key.

Row unit down pressure and row cleaners not only affect the seedling depth, but also the seed to soil contact. The desired down pressure varies, so adjustments should be made in the field. Excessive down pressure can cause seed furrow compaction not allowing the seedling to properly develop roots. Turning the gauge wheels by hand with the planter down will help determine the desired down pressure. Row cleaners set too aggressive can cause trenches disrupting the gauge wheel which affects the seed depth accuracy. These trenches can also lead to reduced stands if excess water ponds. The row cleaners should not spin all the time, but just enough to move trash not soil.

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Management's Minute

Where has the year gone?

March 9, 2009 was the first day we were open in our new building at Lamar. We had a mini celebration in honor of our anniversary here with cookies and coffee.

Despite the struggles we faced last year with volatile fertilizer, chemical, and grain prices, wet weather, late plantings, wet fall harvest we all survived and in many ways had a very good year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their business and the opportunity to continue working with you. We continue to try and offer services that will help make your life easier as well as put more money in your pockets. We have another intern this year to assist Brandon and Jason with crop scouting; we still offer variable rate application of fertilizer and lime, seed treatment, and bulk delivery to the farm on seed. Diana and I work every day for market opportunities for your grain.

I do have a few things as I write this for you to keep in your minds.

- 1) Please check your bins – Grain was put in wet and even after it has dried it still has been hard to keep this year. Core your bins.
- 2) Many of us have skipped the past couple years on pasture fertilizer and it is beginning to show with broom sage showing up. Best plan is soil test, but at least consider putting on some potash. Potash is down \$300 a ton from a year ago so consider taking care of pastures to avoid more expense and clean up later.
- 3) It is time for grass tetany, so don't forget the high mag minerals or tubs - both are available.
- 4) Calving season is here as well so consider creep feeding for added weaning weights to try and capture early demand for heavier weight calves.

None of these are earth shattering revelations but good reminders and simple ways to maintain gains

and better utilization of your assets.

Once again thank you for a good 2009 and we look forward to serving and working with you in 2010.

Jesse Medlin
G.M. Lamar Group



Planter Adjustments (cont. from page 1)

Speed is sometimes overlooked because it is not an adjustment on the planter, but proper speed is very crucial in seed placement and overall yield.

Excess speed causes stability problems with the row units affecting the depth and not allowing the seed to properly drop. Studies at Purdue and Wisconsin show a loss of 1.8 bushel per acre for every mile per hour increase over 4 mph.

The above steps are crucial for obtaining a good stand, but soil temperatures are very important for even emergence and need to be considered. Corn

should be planted when soil temperatures are near 50 degrees Fahrenheit. The seed will readily absorb water when soils are below 50 degrees F, but not germinate; leading to seed rots if prolonged. Recommendations are to begin planting when soils are near 50 degrees F, but if the soils are not optimum then the planting population should be increased 10-15%. Always feel free to call me or any of your MFA, WestCentral, or AGChoice retail locations or agronomists with any questions.

Brandon Bruce

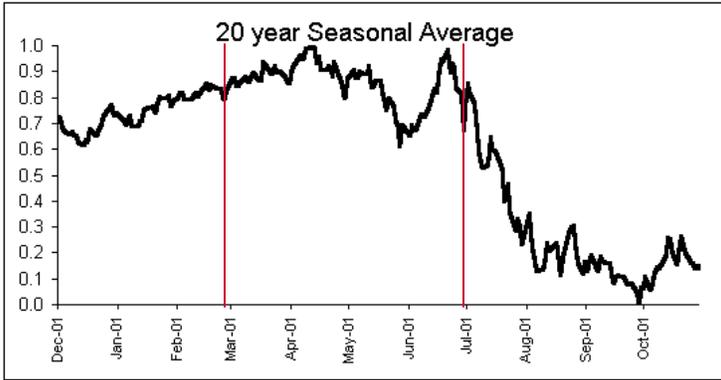
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Forward Contracting Grain

By: Diana DeHart - Grain Coordinator

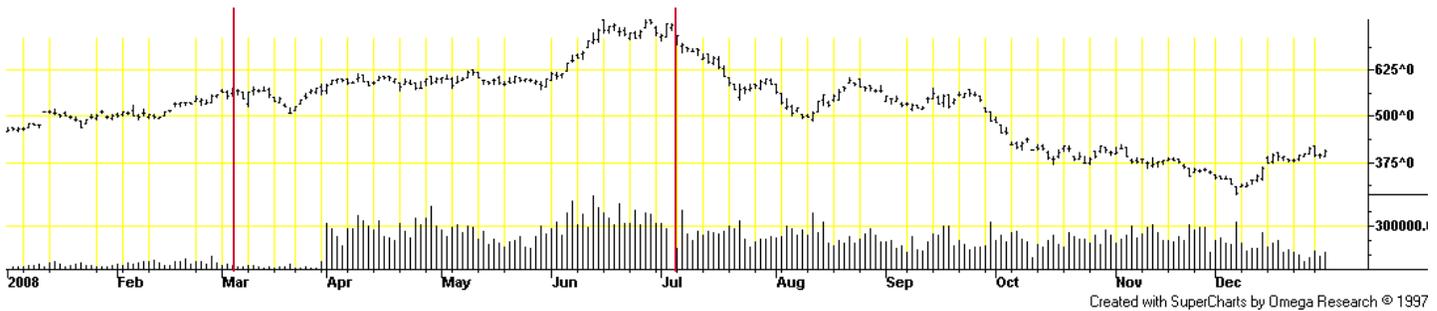
Spring is a time of new beginnings and new opportunities. It is a time to shake off the winter blahs and approach the new year with a new attitude and new knowledge from lessons learned in the previous year. Although no two years are identical we can see patterns, trends and likenesses from one year to another.



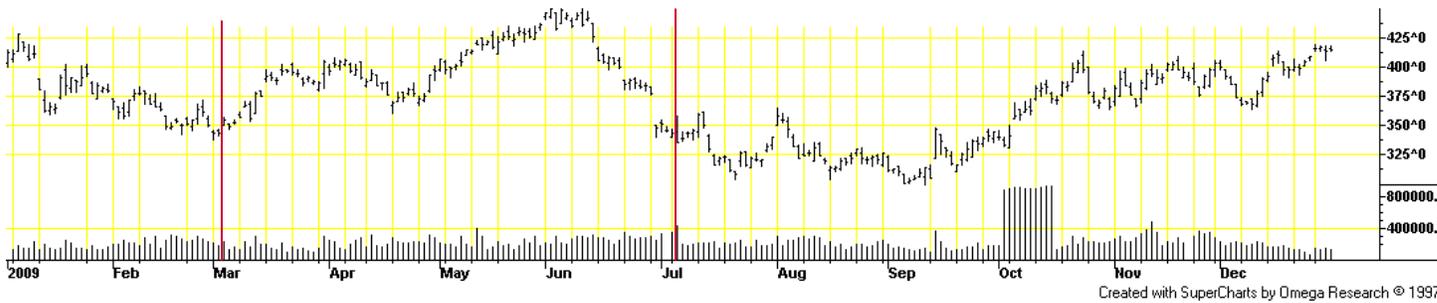
Above: 20 year seasonal average for corn futures. This chart shows us that over the past 20 years the March through June time frame offers us sales opportunities in the top 1/3 of the market.

One thing I have learned in the grain business is that spring typically offers producers their best opportunity for maximum profit at harvest. The general pattern for grain markets shows us that on average from March through June we will see our best pricing opportunities for the new crop—especially if we take into consideration interest expenses, storage capacity and valuable time at harvest.

It is important for producers to know their break-even point when considering forward contracting grain. There are many variables to consider when determining your production costs and break-even price, but use a 5 year average as a starting point on available bushels for forward contracting.



Above: 2008 corn futures



Above: 2009 corn futures

The two charts above show that even in the past two years when grain markets have tested general trading practices, the March through June time frame has still offered some of the best pricing opportunities seen all year. Looking back at corn prices delivered locally for the Fall 2009 crop, we find that corn prices peaked in late May and early June. Soybeans followed a similar pattern but showed a better post-harvest rally than corn, trading back to the levels reached in early June. The post-harvest rally in soybeans was short lived however due to the USDA report released on January 12, 2010 showing a larger than expected production and bigger carryout numbers, which drove futures prices sharply lower.

Each operation is different so there are no cookie cutter solutions. Give me a call to discuss using forward contracts in your operation. *Diana DeHart* 816-297-2118 office 660-200-6898 cell

Fly Control

By: Jon Roberts-Area Sales Manager Livestock Products

When evaluating a season long fly control program, one of the critical aspects is matching a program to the management of the producer. The styles of management will often times determine how insecticide is delivered to the target animal. Labor and facilities are another factor that determines what our delivery device will be. Feed through larvacides, sprays, contact applicators, and fly tags are the standard in the industry today. Regardless of how you pick your poison, we will take a closer look at each application method.

Feed through larvacides are about the easiest on man and beast if you already have a mineral or supplementation program in place. IGR, Altocid, S Methoprene dominate the feed through larvacide market. It is very environmentally friendly and is the clear leader when it comes to Horn Fly Control.



To a lesser extent, the organophosphate, Rabon, is used. Rabon has activity on other flies, however, that activity is limited to flies that lay eggs in medicated manure and unlike horn flies, these other varieties aren't as picky about where they lay eggs. Most manufacturers encourage producers to initiate use in March and discontinue in November.

If you are a producer who likes to feed a high Mag mineral product in the spring and might not establish your larvacide program until late May or early June, you can mitigate the tardiness by putting an insecticide over the top of the animals to kill all of the adults and disrupt the life cycle at that time. In fact, an application of insecticide on June 1 and establishment of feed through larvacide, might be a good balance between cost and control of flies.

If you decide to spray your cattle, you might want to consult your local weatherman or soothsayer whichever is the most accurate and plan the application for the longest rain free window, as frequent rainfall dilutes the chemical on the animal and reduces efficacy.



Back rubbers and dusticators are probably the most popular and cost effective method of fly control. The success of this chemical delivery system rests squarely on two fundamental factors; keeping the delivery device well charged and having the cattle use it frequently and consistently. Having a back rubber with face fly flaps between the cattle and the water source is a good set up, as long as the rubber does not deter visitation to the water. Problems here can be as simple as a ditch that holds water for several days after a rain, thus creating an alternative water source.

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To receive nightly grain bids and comments via e-mail, send your e-mail address to ddehart@mfa-inc.com and request bids be sent either nightly or once a week.

Hi- Mag Season

By: Tony Koger –Livestock Specialist– SW Missouri

Spring is approaching fast and with all the moisture we have received could mean more potential for grass tetany. Rapidly growing grasses in the spring could be low in magnesium and / or high potassium content. Dr. Jim White nutritionist for MFA says when the concentration of potassium is 2.2 times greater than the sum of calcium and magnesium, the forage is tetany conducive. Other factors which increase the possibility of grass tetany are:

High soluble crude protein content of forages

Weather stress, both for plants and animals, changes in plant metabolism- causes cattle to be off feed

Lactation, milk is a significant magnesium and calcium drain.

Growing beef cattle have a magnesium requirement of about 0.1% of the dry matter; for lactating beef cows, that requirement is double, triple that for wet dairy cows. Nursing cows have a higher risk for grass tetany, especially those heavy milking cows. Lactating cows should consume 15-25 grams of magnesium a day.



MFA has several products available to supplement forages that are deficient in magnesium. MFA Salt Mix with magnesium is the fastest and most certain method of addressing grass tetany. 20% tubs with magnesium are also a good choice. If your forage base is adequate in protein and energy we have two mineral available that would be good options, MFA High Mag. Mineral or Mag.-ADE Meal. If you have been hand feeding MFA Breeder Cubes, MFA Super 20 Cubes or an MFA Supplement at recommended rates, the likelihood of tetany is extremely remote.

Magnesium is not well stored in the body, so frequent consumption is needed. One should start supplementing magnesium 2 to 3 weeks before tetany is likely to occur. So around the 1st of March would be a good time to start supplementing magnesium.

(Continued on page 7)



Receive cash back on your purchases of Trimble EZ Products for a limited time



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The EZ Products Cash-Back Program runs from February 8 – May 15, 2010. The maximum cash back amount per customer is US\$5000.

See your local Trimble dealer for complete program details. Visit www.trimble.com/locator or call 1.800.865.7438.

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Fly Control (Continued from page 4)

When it comes to fly tags there are a lot of things to pay attention to and here are just a few:

- The basic chemical class
- Specific ingredients
- Tag weight; especially on baby calves
- Length of control
- Label claims
- Label clearance

Proper applicator as it relates to the product manufacturer



The MFA animal health department distributes an insecticide ear tag comparison chart each year that compares products. This year there are 16 different tag options to choose from. My advice would be to stop by your local WCAS location or contact myself to schedule an on farm visit so we can discuss the tag option that will suit your operation best. Regardless of the strategy you choose, WCAS has the products and services to make your fly control program successful this season.

Jon Roberts

660-641-1333 cell

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Hi-Mag Season (Continued from page 5)

The demand for Source and Age Cattle has been evident from the sales I have been to this winter. Add value to your calves by enrolling them in the Health Track Program. I would be more than happy to visit with anyone interested in participating in the Health Track Program.



Attention 4-H and FFA members: MFA is offering cash if you use MFA branded feeds for your livestock project. Stop by the store and ask for details.

From all of use at MFA we truly appreciate your business –

Tony Koger

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AGMO Crop Input Loans Available

By: Viann Downing
Area Credit Manager

Planting season is fast approaching and final plans for your crop inputs should be in place at this time. If you have not finalized your financing needs for your crop inputs, we may still be able to help you with this. The AGMO loan program is an excellent method of obtaining financing for your purchases from us. AGMO has very competitive interest rates with good repayment schedules and is a great convenience for you.

The deadline for making application for an AGMO loan has been extended to April 15 this year. As this date is almost here, please see your location manager promptly to inquire about making application for a loan.

May your pockets be heavy
and your heart be light,
May good luck pursue you
each morning and night.
~Irish Blessing.



Sometimes it's important to work for that pot of gold. But other times it's essential to take time off and to make sure that your most important decision in the day simply consists of choosing which color to slide down on the rainbow.
~Douglas Pagels, *These Are the Gifts I'd Like to Give to You*



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