

CropLinks

information on forages, corn and cereals

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Sprayer Calibration & Weed Control Sessions

This is a reminder of the Perennia-Environmental Farm Plan (NSFA) sessions that will offer 3 Pesticide Re-Certification Points. These classroom sessions are on Monday, November 27 from 1-4 pm in Clifton Fire Hall (3830 Route 236 just outside Truro) and Tuesday, November 28 from 1-4 pm in Berwick Fire Hall (300 Commercial St.) No pre-registration needed, but all attendees need to bring their current NSE Pesticide Certification Card. Try to be there 10-15 minutes early so the form can be filled out properly before the session starts. If you need more info call Jack @ 1-902-670-5777.

Maritime Corn Testing Team

This is my last fall as coordinator of the Maritime Corn Testing Team which provides growers with independent silage & grain variety (hybrid) testing results. I joined the 'corn testers' in the mid 90's after Agriculture Canada- Kentville stopped doing this work that had been initiated by Gerry Smeltzer way back in the mid 50's. Several people have provided both fine & lengthy service to the Maritime Corn Test. A big thanks to Bill Thomas (NSDA/Perennia) for over 30 years, to Peter Scott & Anthony Smith (NBDA) along with Walter Brown (NBDA/NBSCIA) for 20-25 years, to Chris Fleming (AAFC-PEI) & Doug MacDonald (NSAC/NSCDI) for over 15 years and to Melanie LeClerc (Perennia) for 10 years. This group, plus younger energy of Caitlin Congdon (Perennia) have all done a fine job in getting corn data completed quickly from trial harvests in early November & ready for your use by November 17-20th. Long-term recognition also needs to go out to Winding River Farms in Stewiacke (J&C Vissers & L. Harbers) who have hosted the central NS corn test site for over 25 years. Also in the Valley to Menkhorst Farms (M&T TeBogt & Sons) and Marshcrest Farms (the Palmetter family) in Grand Pre area who have hosted this trial for 10 & 5 year stints, respectively. Many thanks!

2017 YEAR IN REVIEW

The 2017 corn year is all but in the bin. Moisture levels have been running very low, and yields are solid. There have been a few fields or even sections of fields that have run higher in moisture. I believe this is due to a variety of reasons including fertility, micro climate that may have received frost or stayed cooler in the spring, soil nutrition and variety selection. This is also a poor fall for corn plant integrity. This can be attributed to a number of reasons including dry weather during filling (the corn plant will pull nutrients from the stock to finish filling the grain), advanced maturity of the plant and some fields have shown some fusarium and giberella. We had a cool spring/early summer but heat units since September 1st really brought the crop home.

Valley soybeans have performed very well this year. Timey rains kept the crops producing on all but the sandiest of fields. Yields have ranged from 1.3-1.5 mt/ac on whole farms. The same may not be said for central and northern Nova Scotia where the drier conditions hindered yield. The cooler spring and summer delayed the start of harvest by about two weeks. Harvest, once started, wrapped up

(cont. on page 2)

Tall Fescue Our Best Multi-Cut Grass

I've enjoyed getting on many farms this fall with Sonny in central and eastern Nova Scotia. One thing that's really impressed me is the extensive use of tall fescue (TF) across this province on farms that want 3-4 high quality-high yielding silage harvests. Tall fescue has really become the best companion grass with alfalfa or clover in these multi-cut situations. The nice attributes of tall fescue varieties are; 1) early maturity in 1st cut, but it doesn't lose digestibility as quickly as either reed canarygrass or orchardgrass; 2) TF handles 3-4 yearly cuts well, however not suitable for grazing (if after-grazing silage fields you want meadow fescue instead); 3) tall fescue really has lots of thick basal or tiller growth and will really reduce the amount of dandelions & other weeds that might establish over time (this aggressiveness of tall fescue means you need to get the right seed ratio with either alfalfa & red clover which depends also on your soil drainage & seedbed situation) 4) TF is very winterhardy and has great long-term productivity if you fertilize/manure it well.

Some of you are buying tall fescue & alfalfa in these 'shotgun mixtures' that also includes timothy, orchardgrass, brome-grass, perennial ryegrass and white clover. I think that a 'shotgun mix' is a waste of some of your seed \$. If you want a 3-4 cut mixture just buy pure bags of tall fescue along with pure bags of either alfalfa or red clover or ladino clover. Whatever seeder you're using will likely have a coarse seed or grain box to throw the fescue in and a fine seed box for legumes. These other grasses mentioned above are not aggressive enough to co-habitat with tall fescue, while white clover (New Zealand types not Ladino types) will out compete everything and become a low-yielding weed in a 3-4 cut scenario. Here are some tall fescue mixtures to consider:

- 50% alfalfa & 50% tall fescue @ 18-20 lbs/acre (for variable soil types that have problems holding alfalfa 3-5 years because of winterkill, root rots, imperfect drainage or for stony soils you don't want to work often)
- 80% alfalfa & 20% tall fescue @ 15-18 lbs/acre (this is for well-drained and sandier soils that are early seeded into perfectly smooth-firm seedbeds).
- 15% ladino clover & 85% tall fescue @ 16-18 lbs/acre (for fields that won't work for alfalfa, but be careful not to go too heavy with this California ladino clover...it's the tallest type of white clover. Some festulolium could be substituted in for 1/3 of the TF, however most festuloliums won't be as hardy as TF over the long haul)
- 35% red clover & 65% tall fescue @ 15-18 lbs/acre (only expect 2-3 years from red clover, where ladino could be a bit longer)

Tall fescue is a big and lighter seed so you really need to seed as early in the spring as possible and have great soil to seed contact from a smooth-firm seedbed. Use a land leveler if possible and only use zero to 40 lbs/acre oat 'nurse' crop.

2017 Year in Review (cont.)

very quickly due to the good weather. The incidence of disease, particularly white mold, is definitely on the rise in this year.

Winter wheat benefitted from cool spring weather which encouraged vegetative growth, and timely rains followed to support grain fill. This made for very strong wheat crops ranging from 2.0-2.5 mt/acre on many farms, with tremendous straw yields to boot.

Forage volumes look very good. Many farms were getting 3-4 solid cuts, thanks to the lengthy growing season. Quality first cut dry hay maybe hard to find do to humid weather during harvest. Depending on the area some of the 2nd & 3rd cut yields may have been down due to the dry weather, but the number of cuts probably made up for it.

Winter Wheat Crop Status

When checking wheat this fall, I have seen a lot of it planted too shallow. Shallow planted wheat has suffered a little this fall due to the dry planting conditions. In dry tilled soil, shallow planted wheat tends to take longer to imbibe enough water to initiate and continue the germination process. In no till conditions, planting shallow can mean that the seed is not making good seed to soil contact and is actually drying out in the organic duff material that the seed is left sitting in. The longer it takes the plant to emerge the more yield you are giving up. OMAFRA studies have shown that you will lose 0.5 bushel for every day emergence is delayed.

Shallow planting also leaves the wheat more susceptible to frost heaving next spring. Repeated spring freeze-thaw cycles can jack the shallow plant out of the ground. What we prefer to see is the seed at 1-1.5 inches deep, with good secondary root development. This depth will put the crown at 3/5 inch deep and primary and secondary roots developing at 45 degree angles. This will help anchor the plant against frost heaving.