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CropLinks

information on forages, corn and cereals

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Farmers throughout most of western Nova Scotia particularly, and some other areas, have experienced a long dry summer. It seems like the driest April-August for many years. The Environment Canada site at the Kentville Research Station only reports 333 mm total rainfall for this timespan. We've had drier years though in 2012 (278 mm) and 1998 (265 mm) from April to end of August.

Many farms that rely on good pasture production have been supplementing heavily with stored forages for the past 10-12 weeks. There are concerns of not having enough forage for the winter period if we don't see heavy rainfall in early September to jump start some grass growth for a decent fall harvest. Farmers that have the soils to grow alfalfa forage mixtures and silage

corn will have more adequate stored forage supplies where these deeper rooted crops have 'weathered' the dry summer much better. Here are a few more forage comments for September management consideration.

Winter Wheat the Better Grain Option

If your growing area is suitable for winter wheat, it's usually a much more reliable grain option than either barley or spring wheat. Winter wheat should consistently yield above 2 metric tonne per acre and not have as much risk of fusarium (vomitoxin) presence. With the proper seed drill, winter wheat is a good no-till option into silage corn or soybean crop residue. Situations to avoid with winter wheat are growing it two years in a row on same field (get much more grass weed problems that can't be sprayed out), planting your winter wheat too late or too early (more chance of winterkill) or growing it on flat-heavier soils that had too many 'saucer' areas that hold water & are more apt to ice sheet.

My preferred seeding date for winter feed wheat in the Annapolis Valley, West Hants and central Nova is September 17-30th (and around Sept 11-16th if you are in a more marginal growing area such as North Mountain in western NS,

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1) **Check new seeded forages now.** The drier summer has meant some new seeded forage is thinner than should be. More seed will still germinate and overwinter once the September rains start. Grass species such as tall fescue, timothy, and reed canarygrass are often slow starters in spring seeding and can still germinate in September. If new seeded fields are really sparse then broadcast or drill some additional timothy, alfalfa or red clover seed NOW at about 5 pounds per acre.

2) **Don't cut good alfalfa fields past September 5-8th unless you can't get through winter feeding months without this extra forage.** Fall cutting alfalfa really shortens its lifespan. If soil test potassium (K₂O) levels are below 350, these fields could likely benefit from 150 lbs/ac 0-0-60 now, depending on what you've applied for fertilizer and manure this year. Call Bill or Jack to discuss.

3) **Consider applying weed control for GRASS forages in mid to late September.** The dry summer has really given a competitive edge to many weeds. You can't get these weeds controlled in alfalfa or clover-grass mixtures without really damaging the legumes, but can if you just have GRASS only. On grass hayland or grass pastures consider 2,4-D Amine (dandelions, dock & non-resistant wild carrot types) or Banvel II (wild carrot, goldenrod, plantain, most thistles) or Milestone (bedstraw, knapweed, thistles, etc.). Lower growing weeds need to be sprayed before covered over by grass growth. Call Jack or Bill to discuss herbicide rates, grazing or rotation restrictions.

Winter Wheat (cont.)

Pictou/Antigonish Counties or suitable North Shore areas). In the Valley there are several growers that plant wheat after soybean harvest from October 1 -15th. For seeding rates, I'd encouraged growers to use wheat seeding rates of 1.4- 1.5 million seeds/acre when planting in September and up this rate to 1.6-1.8 million seeds/acre for Oct. 1-15th seeding dates or in most no-till situations. To calculate the actual pounds per acre seeding rate, contact your seed supplier for the seed weight for each variety and then do the calculations.

For most winter wheat plantings, regardless of the prior crop, or if you've just applied manure, always use a little fertilizer at seeding to provide 15-20 units of quick release nitrogen (e.g. 100 lbs/ac of 17-17-17 or when P & K levels are lower, then use 200 lbs/acre of 10-20-30U).

Here are the 2015 & 2016 Maritime Winter Wheat Test results to aid you in variety selection from Doug MacDonald and Dr. Claude Caldwell's research program at Dalhousie Faculty of Agriculture, plus test results from PEI-Agriculture Canada & New Brunswick Dept of Agriculture.

VARIETY	Grain Yield (tonne/ha)	Straw Yield (tonne/ha)	NS SEED REPS
Branson	Not in trial		Brian & Edna Newcombe or Sonny Murray
CM614	5.3	4.5	Scotian Gold, Truro Agromart, Co-op Atlantic
HY412-SRW	5.7	5.1	Brian & Edna Newcombe
Pioneer 25R40	5.2	3.7	Kevin Baker (Valley) Amanda & Mike Eisses

Pre-Harvest Weed Burndown in Soybeans

There have been several calls lately from soybean growers not pleased with the amount of weeds in some fields. The only herbicide timing option left is just prior to harvest. A pre-harvest herbicide (likely glyphosate) can aid in a more efficient harvest, however does not speed up maturity, nor make soybean seed dry down faster.

Application timing is critical. Do not spray too early or yield losses can occur by shutting down the crop prematurely and chemical residues may be taken into the seed. You can't do a pre-harvest burndown in soybeans, until the crop is just below 30% moisture. Visually the soybean stems are turning from green to brown, pod tissue is dry and brown, and 80-90% leaf drop has occurred.

If you are just using glyphosate (e.g. Roundup) for the pre-harvest weed burndown it's important to apply quickly at the 80-90% leaf drop stage. That will give you the maximum time to get weed burndown before harvest, and hopefully not delay any winter wheat planting dates. For quicker burndown of annual weeds, you have the option to use a couple other herbicides that can be tank-mixed with glyphosate. These registered desiccants are; 1) Eragon (28.5 g/ac) + Merge surfactant (0.5% v.v) which is about \$15/acre cost OR 2) Reglone (0.92 L/ac) + Activate Plus (0.1 % v.v) at about \$35/acre, plus the glyphosate cost.

In Dr. Peter Sikkema's research trials at Ridgeway, Ontario (see Table below) it was observed that full burndown on the more common annual broadleaf weeds (i.e. lambsquarter, ragweed or pigweed) took longer than 8 days when using glyphosate alone. **So make sure you apply this pre-harvest desiccant right at 80-90% soybean leaf drop stage to get greater harvest benefits.**

Treatment rate (rate/ac)	Visual Control (%) 8 days after application			
	Lambsquarter	Ragweed	Pigweed	Foxtail
Glyphosate (1 L/ac)*	32	20	38	62
Reglone (0.92 L/ac) + Agral 90 (0.1% v/v)	74	80	78	48
Glyphosate (1L/ac)* + Eragon (28.5 g/ac) + Merge (0.5% v.v)	49	72	66	65
Glyphosate (1L/ac)* + Reglone (0.92 L/ac) + Agral 90 (0.1% v.v)	70	77	76	49

*glyphosate rate per acre is based on product concentration of 360 g/L (e.g. Roundup Original)