



Ag & Hort Update



December 2008

2008 is slowly coming to a close. Let's take a step back and look at this past year. It was supposed to be the year of the drought, no drought in Western Iowa; it was supposed to be an "off year" for soybean aphids, plenty of aphids in Western Iowa; several soybean diseases showed up early, like SDS and we thought that it would wipe out our soybean crop, but average to above average soybean yields in Western Iowa. It was a year in which Mother Nature threw us a curve ball and many of us got caught looking. Mother Nature is not easy to understand but sometimes we get positively surprised, and things have sure turned out better than we all expected, considering the outlook back in April and May.

Grain storing will be very important this year; check your bins every two weeks for moisture and temperature readings. Aerate periodically to match grain and outside air temperatures. Your goal is to keep grain and air temperatures within 10-15 degrees of each other in the fall and winter. It will also be extremely important this year to know the test weight of each bin's grain. With fluctuating and lower test weights, this will help make storing decisions. Corn that has a test weight of 54 lbs/bu after drying should not be stored into spring and should be dried to less than 14% moisture before storage of any duration.

I will not talk to many of you again until after Christmas, so I encourage all of you to take a little break and spend some time with family and friends this holiday season; you deserve it. The sounds and joys of a new year are right around the corner. Happy Holidays!

Kent Ganzer

Upcoming Dates:

- December 10 = Cow/Calf Producer Meeting @ Dunlap Livestock Auction, 5:00 p.m.
- December 11 = Soil Survey Computer Training @ Harlan Community High School, 4-6 p.m.
- December 15 = Ag Chem/Retailer Update Meeting @ Lewis, 9:00 – 3:00 p.m.
- December 16 = Private Pesticide Training @ Irwin Community Building, 9:30 a.m.
- December 18-19 = ISU On-Farm Research Conference @ Ames, All Day
- December 20 = Shelby County Fair Beef Weigh-In @ Fairgrounds, 9:00-11:00 a.m.
- December 23 = Farmer Coffee @ Extension Office, 9:30 a.m.
- December 25 = Merry Christmas! / Office Closed
- December 26 = Office Closed
- December 30 = FSQA Training @ Extension Office, 10:00 – Noon
- January 1 = Happy New Year! / Office Closed
- January 13 = Private Pesticide Training @ Therkildsen Center, Harlan 9:30, 1:30 and 7:00 p.m.

Low Cost Cow-Calf Ration Meeting at Dunlap

Iowa State University Extension is hosting a meeting at Dunlap Livestock Auction on Wednesday, December 10th for local cattle producers to discuss the use of distillers grains in cow rations. This meeting will

address feeding ethanol co-products in combination with low quality forages, like cornstalks or poor quality grass hay, to cows and back-grounded calves.

Using distillers grains in cow/calf operations can be advantageous, especially when it comes to enhancing low-quality forages. When producers feed these low-quality forages the energy level can fall below nutritional requirements, therefore supplementing a diet with energy or protein becomes necessary.

Distillers grains are high in soluble fiber and rumen-undegradable protein. When using distillers in a cow herd, it will have 110-125 percent of the energy value of corn, making distillers grains an excellent supplement for forage-based diets.

Product costs, storage and handling methods, ration balancing insights, and other management aspects will be some of the topics discussed. Presenters include Daryl Strohbehn and Darrell Busby, Iowa State University Extension Beef Specialists and Jeff McDonough from Amazing Energy in Denison.

This will be an excellent meeting to mingle with area producers while learning the benefits of adding distillers grains to corn stover to make low cost rations. In addition, Amazing Energy has announced some changes in their process that removes a portion of the corn oil prior to processing. Current users of distillers grains will want to learn how these changes affect their rations.

The event will start at 5:30 p.m. and will include a meal and refreshments. The meeting and meal are FREE if preregistered by December 5th, to register please call 1-888-644-2105. If you are not preregistered the cost will be \$5.00 at the door (to cover meal expenses). For more information please contact Kent Ganzer at 755-3104 or Clint McDonald at 644-2105.

The Dunlap Livestock Auction and Amazing Energy are sponsoring this meeting.

Training Set For Shelby County Soil Survey

The Natural Resources Conservation Service along with Shelby County Extension Service will be offering a hands-on training session on the newly released interactive Shelby County Soil Survey on CD. The training will be held December 11, 2008 at the Harlan Community Middle School Computer Lab from 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Space is limited so please call (712) 755-2417 to reserve a computer spot. Training will also be available to those interested in learning about the print version (hard copy) of the new Shelby County Soil Survey at the same time.

The new and updated Shelby County Soil Survey was unveiled on June 19, 2008. This project is of great significance to landowners, realtors, investors, and ag producers as it combines soils and other natural resources information in a user-friendly way. With the latest in Geographic Information Systems technology, users can review the information they would like to see, including aerial photography, roads, towns, slope, drainage, soil types, CSR and average CSR, and crop yields.

For more information regarding this training or to reserve a computer spot, please contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service at (712) 755-2417.

What are some good low-growing groundcovers?

Plant heights vary somewhat depending on the growing conditions at each site. However, there are several groundcovers that are 12 inches or less in height.

Low-growing groundcovers for shady areas include bugle weed, wild ginger, lily-of-the-valley, barrenwort, sweet woodruff, spotted dead nettle, creeping lily turf, vinca and barren strawberry.

For sunny areas, creeping or moss phlox and several species and cultivars of stonecrop are excellent low-growing groundcovers for sunny areas.

VeraSun Energy Files Bankruptcy

On October 31 at 8:00 p.m., VeraSun Energy filed chapter 11 bankruptcy in the United States Bankruptcy Court in Delaware. VeraSun has ethanol plants in Albert City, Charles City, Dyersville, Fort Dodge and Hartley in Iowa plus 19 other plants in 7 surrounding states. The VeraSun Energy bankruptcy filing probably doesn't affect any of us directly, but in time we could feel the ripple effect if VeraSun is not successful in reorganizing efforts.

Several farmers in northern Iowa are watching this situation very closely, especially if they have contracted or delivered corn to any of their ethanol plants in recent months. Are they going to be paid for their corn deliveries? Will VeraSun honor its contracts? What happens if VeraSun rejects a corn delivery contract? These questions plus several others are trying to be answered.

On November 14, VeraSun filed a motion to establish a procedure for assumption or rejection of contracts it has made for future corn purchases. Unfortunately, it doesn't set any date by which VeraSun would have to assume or reject contracts. The motion filed November 21 objects to VeraSun's motion and asks the court to establish a time certain for VeraSun to either accept or reject executor corn contracts. A hearing has been set for December 2 in Delaware where VeraSun corporate headquarters are located.

Fungicide Use: A 6-Year Summary

Prior to 2005, foliar diseases were not a major problem or concern. However, since the report of Asian soybean rust in South America in 2001 and then in the United States in 2004, fungicide usage has increased consistently, making fungicide use a hot topic. There has also been some disagreement between researchers, university extension recommendations, and industry applications. Many have been puzzled by the discrepancy and recognize that the soybean price doubling was a driving force to fungicide sprays, but not sure if it is the only force.

Dr. Elwynn Taylor presented at a seminar recently and sheds light on the increase usage of fungicides in Iowa. Data shows that Iowa's annual precipitation days are increasing, especially in the last five years. 100 years ago, the annual precipitation in Iowa was 75 days per year, in the year 2000; it was 100 days per year. Since 2004 the numbers have shown that to be 120 days per year, it seems to us that increased disease risk from higher precipitations lead to increased use of fungicides.

Since 1993, ISU has tested various fungicides at the request of chemical companies to determine optimal dose and application times. In most seasons, over 50 different treatments were tested in multiple locations with four replications for each treatment. Entries varied from year to year along with the different soybean varieties. Generally, ISU experiments were to find effective compounds and their optimum spray time in comparison to standard treatments. Therefore, many fungicide treatments didn't increase yield. However there were several other findings. 1.) There are treatments consistently ranked top in terms of increase in yields in our multiple year tests even when disease pressures were low to moderate. 2.) Applications at R1 or earlier did not pay, except for Cobra which is to control white mold. 3.) Applications at R3 consistently produced the highest yields. 4.) Applications twice in a season were no better than a single application at R3.

In closing, fungicide applications are best reserved for seasons when foliar diseases are severe. When disease is prevalent and severe in a season, application of fungicide is likely to increase yields. Research has indicated, the higher the foliar disease severity, the greater the return from the use of fungicides. *Information gathered from XB Yang, S.S. Navi, and John Shriver, Department of Plant Pathology*

Master Gardener Deadline is Fast Approaching

The deadline for this winter's Master Gardener Class is approaching; applications are due to the Extension Office by December 22. I have received only 2 applications so far and a total of 12 participants are needed (required). If we do not reach 12 trainees, the class will be cancelled and all applications will be put on hold until we have reached 12. 9 trainees just recently completed the course this fall, please contact me for an application or if you have any questions. The cost of the course is \$135.00 and it runs every Tuesday night from January through March. You can reach me at 755-3104 or by email ganzer@iastate.edu

Private Pesticide Continuing Instruction Courses Have Been Set

If you have a private applicators license and are in need of training, please mark one of these dates on your calendar.

December 16 at 9:30 a.m. / Irwin Community Building

January 13 at 9:30 a.m. (or) 1:30 p.m. (or) 7:00 p.m. / Therkildsen Center in Harlan

April 7 at 9:30 a.m. / Shelby Community Building

FROM THE SHELBY COUNTY EXTENSION STAFF
Have a Safe Holiday Season and a Prosperous New Year

FARMER COFFEE

**ISU SHELBY COUNTY
EXTENSION OFFICE**

**Tuesday, December 23
9:30 a.m.**

Speakers:

Kyle Jensen, Field Agronomist

Shawn Shouse, Ag Engineer

Clarke McGrath, CSI Manager

Kent Ganzer, Ag & Hort PA