



Introduction

As we head into spring there is at last some optimism appearing regarding our present health situation and hopefully we will be able to return to some sort of normality.

In agriculture we are moving into our own new world with the disappearance of the Single Farm Payment and the introduction of ELMs which no doubt will create challenges.


One of the pleasures of being a Regional Merchant is that we can react to our customers circumstances very quickly and we are able to provide advice and help if needed, or even an arm around the shoulder! Nasty surprises come in many forms and the blanket introduction of NVZs in Wales has certainly been one of them. Through our political contacts we are making the case, as I am sure every Agricultural organisation is.

This is our second newsletter and feedback is always much appreciated.

Here's to a good growing spring.

By David Roberts

Grain



We had a relentless drive upwards in the grain market in January. This was driven by large American funds and was based on dry weather conditions, around the world, particularly in Argentina. It rained there and we very quickly lost £12 per tonne off the wheat market. That said wheat and rape prices are still very strong and with rape prices for August at circa £350 that must be worth looking at. New crop grain, particularly wheat, are quite firm and a reasonable amount has been traded forward. My crystal ball for the end of this season is a little cloudy but my gut feeling is that on the west of the country the sheds are getting empty so it will all depend on what's left in the East. Please bear in mind that old and new crop prices will merge together at some point and with a potential £40 difference between the two we could well be in for a large readjustment. As always we are very happy to talk through the grain markets on a personal basis so please don't hesitate to ring.

By David Roberts

Sprays

It is important at this time of year that plans are made to get in the field an early Nitrogen Sulphur, application in a split dose can really give the crops the necessary nutrient that they need. By the time crops start to turn yellow they are already low on nutrient and not reaching full yield potential.

On that very same theory, we start to look at the fungicide routine. Some varieties have had their disease resistance reviewed since the autumn and are now significantly lower. Whether for Feed or Premium contracts, 2021 will be the year to be vigilant, with the changes in Yellow Rust scores for the 2021 recommended list. Skyfall has been downgraded to a 3, so it could pay dividends to spend more to reap the returns.

By Owain Roberts

Seed

Spring seed production is well underway, with repeat orders of Diablo and Planet after they proved their quality last year. We are all hoping for a slightly more traditional weather pattern after last years unprecedented heatwave in April and consequential draught in May.

Looking forward to the winter campaign we remain hopeful that we will see the return of our trials evening at Harper Adams University in late June. We have lots of new wheat and barley varieties coming through the system to look at, with what looks like some bumper yields coming our way! With new winter varieties such as KWS Palladium and Dawsum coming through the system it could be time to review old and trusted varieties as they slide down the recommended list.

By Owain Roberts





Fertiliser

Silage making time is fast approaching and with this in mind it's important to start planning how we can reduce costs of winter feeding and maximising milk and meat from forage by producing top quality silage.

The D-Value of grass drops by 3.3% every week harvest is delayed so by completing first cut in the first two weeks of May is key. With this in mind try and finish applying any mineral Nitrogen (bagged fertiliser) six weeks before cutting.

Is there a need to split applications? Firstly, if using slurry, try and get it out as early as possible, when ground conditions allow, so you can ensure that you utilise your slurry to its full potential and by doing so reduce your requirement for bought in fertilisers. If you apply 30m³ (3,000 gallons/acre) there is a limited need to split bagged applications, however if you are going to apply purely synthetic fertiliser then there may be environmental gains from splitting applications. Aiming to do a third relatively early and the other two thirds six weeks before the desired cutting date.

Applying Nitrogen, Phosphate, Potassium and Sulphur in bagged fertiliser will ensure that all the nutrients are supplied to the growing plant helping ensure maximum yield and quality. This should be repeated throughout the season and using a 22.4.14+S or 21.8.11+S will help achieve this aim.

By Ed Roberts

We are delighted to announce that Dave Buxton has joined as our new pick up driver. Dave is arguably over qualified as he recently retired from Mercedes, Shrewsbury where he was Dealer Principle. Dave is already out and about delivering seed, sprays and fert. Our best wishes go to Chris Hinks who fully retired in December and will be on a golf course near you soon!

Forage

Good grassland management offers immediate financial gains, there is a direct correlation between the amount of quality homegrown forage you can produce and utilise and farm profitability – across all the livestock sectors. Therefore, it is worth spending some time on sward assessment and reseeding decisions.

Firstly, look at the records of yield from each field. If you don't have any start some for this season. Identify fields that have not performed in terms of number of days of grazing or trailer loads of silage at the most basic. Take a thorough walk of all fields, paying particular attention to those poorer contributing ones, noting perennial ryegrass content and grass and broad leaf weed content.

Remember weed grasses, Yorkshire fog, rough stalked meadow grass, annual meadow grass and bent grasses all produce considerably less grass forage. What they do produce is of a much lower digestibility and therefore ME and this is what ultimately drives production. They respond to nitrogen fertiliser between 17% and 42% of the level a perennial ryegrass plant will respond.

Select a field and assess for soil compaction, dig holes in the field but also under the hedge or a permanent fence. Comparison of the same soil type but with different ground pressure is easily made to determine the level of compaction. Then make a plan to soil test for pH P, K. Plan cultivations to ensure a fine firm seedbed before seeding with the appropriate mixture.

By Ed Roberts

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*Perennial ryegrass:
Dark green plant
with red base of plant,
no stolons or rhizomes.
Upside ribbed and dull.
Lower side smooth and
glossy. Tiller for new
leaves folded.*

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