

Farm & Field

Chippewa Valley Agriculture Newsletter

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May 2008

Volume XII Issue V

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Good Day!!

Last month I mentioned that some winters seem to hang on forever. Here it is April 28 and snow is melting again. There have been some reports of alfalfa winterkill. They appear to be scattered in our area, but the southwest corner of the state seems to have fared worse. Check your fields as they begin to green up in May. Chances are the problems will be in older stands that suffered more in last year's dry weather.

There are some concerns relating to this season starting out wetter than normal with delayed field work. There is plenty of time to plant our crops in a timely fashion without changing hybrids or varieties at this point. I would not consider changing maturities until after May 10. Higher seed, fertilizer, fuel and rental rates combined with price volatility make this a season to make decisions after careful study.

Take some extra time to make needed repairs and perform maintenance before you go to the field. Take extra care to farm safely, get plenty of rest and not take unnecessary risk.

Mahlon Peterson

Mahlon Peterson
UW-Extension Agricultural Agent

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Calendar

May

- 8 English Classes for Spanish Speaking Workers—Zion Lutheran Church
- 26 Memorial Day**
- 27 Nutrient Management Class—Ag & Resource Center
- 29 Nutrient Management Class—Ag & Resource Center

June

- 2-7 Tractor and Machinery Safety Program at Fall Creek High School
- 13 Breakfast in the Valley -Eau Claire County Expo Center –

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH TO SPONSOR ENGLISH CLASSES FOR SPANISH SPEAKING ADULTS STARTING MAY 8TH

The church is sponsoring English classes for Spanish speaking adults to assist them in the workplace. If you have such workers, the classes may be what you've been looking for to assist them as they live and work in our community.

There is no charge for the classes, but students will need to purchase a workbook for the classes. Social time and Bible study will be part of the classes. Please call 878-4512 for details.

Please call our office for more details, registration fees, etc.

For more Extension Information go to our website:
www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/eaucnaire/

Something To Chew On . . .



*Mahlon Peterson Ag Agent
Eau Claire County*

RENTAL RATES; A MOVING TARGET

I receive a number of questions relating to rental rates of all kinds every year. The rental rate questions involve cropland, pasture, hay ground and custom rental rates. Here's what I see happening at the current time. I'll be analyzing the issues, not suggesting rental rates.

Cropland

I did a land rental survey in December, 2006 asking dairy farmers what they paid for rent or what they received for rent on farm ground for cash crops in 2006. The results varied from \$28.00 per acre to a high of over \$100.00 per acre in 2006 with an average of \$46.00 per acre county wide.

You may ask yourself why the range is so large. Rental rates boil down to soil type (the heavier soils are higher) to field size to competition for rented land. Many of our soils are sandier and less productive than others. Certain areas of the county have higher rental rates because of that productivity difference.

Field size and competition for quality rental land have a large effect on rental rates. It appears that cash croppers will pay higher rates for land, but that varies throughout the area.

2007 statewide rental rates for our area quoted in the 2007 Wisconsin Custom Rate Guide show that average rental rates in west central Wisconsin were \$70 per acre, northwest Wisconsin average rental rates were \$52.00 per acre and the statewide average was \$81.00 per acre. The reported statewide range was from \$20.00 to \$200.00 per acre.

In the end, rental rates are variable and they depend on a number of factors. What two people agree to is the ultimate rental rate charged and paid.

Pasture

Pasture rent has many of the same variables associated with cropland. I grew up in an area where pasture rent was always by the acre, but here the normal procedures were related to animal units per month. An animal unit is 1000 pounds of animals and the going rate seems to be in the \$7-\$10 per animal unit per month range. You still have to agree on stocking rates, who pumps the water and who fixes the fences.

Assuming that you have good pasture that can support an animal unit per acre and that your pastures are productive for six months, the average rental rate would be \$40-\$60 per acre including water. Statewide averages in the 2007 Wisconsin Custom Rate Guide were reported at \$57.00 per acre for tillable pastures and \$39.00 per acre for permanent (non-tillable) pasture.

Hay Ground

Hay shortages statewide have led to increased interest in renting hay ground. We have less hay acres available in today's market and hay prices have skyrocketed to over \$200 per ton in recent months. As is the case with cropland and pasture, hay ground rental rates are driven by demand and quality.

High quality alfalfa fields (1st or 2nd year stands) are in greater demand than clover or grassy stands. Even though the county alfalfa yield averages near 3 tons per acre per year, some fields have never produced that much and some have produced much more yearly.

We know that the highest priced hay for the year is being sold in May before first cutting hay or pastures are available. Normally, summer alfalfa hay ranges from \$50 - \$90 per ton. We may see significantly higher prices this year based on availability and increased fuel and fertilizer costs... IF the prices move up \$30 per ton average, then rental rates for hay ground will increase.

We used to make a lot of hay on shares in the past, but that has gradually moved to 60-40 split or greater in recent years where the landlord receives 40% of the hay or value of the hay. and the tenant the remainder based on their labor and machinery costs.

If hay is \$100.00 per ton and the field yields 3 tons per acre on a dry matter basis, there is a \$300.00 crop to be harvested for the year. The landlord's share would then be \$120.00 per acre but they are normally responsible for fertilization. Generally we get 50% of the year's crop at first cutting, 30% .in second cutting and the balance in subsequent cuttings.

Custom Rates

The 2007 Wisconsin Custom Rate Guide is available in our office. The information is Wisconsin specific and covers a wide variety of information from haying to tillage to harvest costs. Pick up your copy today!



The Assassination of Creeping Charlie

Do you remember the TV show, "Mission Impossible"? Every week, Peter Graves (code name Jim) would get an impossible assignment. Personally, I think the assassination of Creeping Charlie would make for a great episode!

Imagine Jim playing his tape recorder and listening to his assignment now:

"Jim, a nasty weed is creeping all across Wisconsin. Called Creeping Charlie, he's one of the toughest weeds to control in the lawn. Creeping Charlie is very aggressive and he has taken over thousands of lawns. He must be destroyed.

To identify Creeping Charlie, a.k.a. Ground Ivy, look for his delicately **scalloped leaf edges and lavender flowers**. But don't let his dainty appearance fool you. Charlie is as tough as nails. He laughs at gardeners who try to kill him with traditional herbicides. His extensive underground system makes it almost impossible to pull his roots out of the ground.

Time to get out the big guns! Attack full force! Yes, that means using the most potent weapon ever developed to kill broadleaf weeds in lawns: **Salt of dicamba**.

Jim, look for this chemical in the list of ingredients on the label of your broadleaf herbicide. Dicamba is one of three

ingredients contained in Trimec formulations. Trimec formulations consist of 2,4-D; mecoprop; and salt of dicamba—the most powerful combination of broadleaf herbicides available to homeowners.

Now that we have the best weapon, we need to **attack him when he's weak**. That's very soon, while he blooms. While Charlie blooms, all he thinks about is sex and making new offspring (seeds). He is very vulnerable at this stage -- a perfect time for assassination!

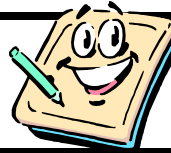
When killing broadleaf weeds, you will have better success **using a spray** rather than a granular formulation. The **leaves of the weed must absorb the chemical**. Once the chemical hits the ground it is worthless.

Some gardeners do not like using traditional herbicides on their lawns. That's fine. Intensive "undercover" research has found a special weakness in Creeping Charlie. Yeah, we found his soft spot— **he hates boron**. Iowa State University recommends mixing 5 ounces of borax (look for this in the laundry section of your supermarket) per gallon of water. This will spray 400 square feet (an area of 20 feet by 20 feet). If used at the recommended rate, no harm will come to the grass. Unfortunately, other weeds will not die from the use of borax.

Good luck Jim! This taped message will self-destruct in five seconds." 5-4-3-2-1. Kaboom!

Randy's Rumors . . .

Randy Knapp, Chippewa County Agricultural Agent



Using Farm Records Effectively for Business and Financial Management

Last month, we took a look at how the farm manager can use financial and production records—service tool, diagnostic tool, indicator of progress and forward planning. This month, we are continuing the record theme, looking at the types of records required.

Income and Expense Ledgers

An income and expense statement is required for tax purposes and can also perform other functions as a business management tool. Income and expenses should be recorded and totaled on a current basis for greatest accuracy and to provide a running account so problems can be identified when corrective action may still be taken.

Depreciation

A depreciation record is required for tax filing purposes. It provides a list of all depreciable capital assets used in the farm business and can be used in constructing the inventory record and financial statement. Depreciation records are almost always kept to conform with IRS regulations and recently have had little relevance for financial decision making. It may be necessary to maintain a second set of depreciation records that better reflects true economic costs for analysis and budgeting purposes.

Production

Production records for the individual crops, livestock, and other enterprises are essential for the manager to evaluate his performance as a production manager. Accurate measurements of input quantities consumed and outputs produced in each enterprise allow for construction of meaningful enterprise budgets.

Enterprise Accounts

Enterprise accounts are vital records to help evaluate the performance of each of the several enterprises making up the total farm business. At a minimum they should be broken down between the crop and livestock enterprises. Ideally, each enterprise should be in a separate account. Enterprise accounts can help farm managers see which of their enterprises make the most profit, determine which production methods within an enterprise perform economically under the individual farm conditions, and help determine what level of output is economically appropriate for each enterprise.

Feed

Feed is one of the largest inputs for livestock enterprises. Almost all home-grown feeds have a farm gate value. Managers should be very concerned about feed

utilization and efficiency in the various livestock enterprises. A good record of purchased and farm-grown feed is essential for the manager to make economically sound decisions about the livestock program as well as to properly credit crop enterprises for their share of input into the livestock enterprise. For example, using appropriate transfer prices, corn could be "sold" to the dairy cow enterprise which "buys" the corn from the corn enterprise at its "farm gate price."

Labor

With labor costs going up and greater scarcity of competent farm help, more attention must be paid to effective labor use in the business. Time study records can help provide this information. Also, labor records are needed for Social Security purposes, Workmen's Compensation, W-2 forms, etc.

Equipment

Larger, more expensive, complicated equipment, with its high fixed costs plus large operating costs, calls for special analysis on many farms. It may pay managers to keep an individual set of financial records for these types of machines. This information can serve as a guide to when to buy, sell, and trade equipment, as well as the basis for making decisions about appropriate rates to charge for doing custom work.

Experimental

With exploding technological developments, managers are continually faced with decisions concerning whether new technology can be profitably used in their business. Records of trial projects in crop and livestock enterprises can provide a guide to the physical as well as financial performance of that technology for a specific farm situation.

Production - Field Records

Increased concerns about ground water contamination and chemical carry-over make an accurate record of chemical and cultural practices on each field absolutely essential. Field records are a valuable tool for the manager to analyze the effectiveness of fertility, weed, and disease control programs.

Production - Livestock Records

Most successful dairymen have recognized the importance and value of good production and breeding records for the dairy herd. These production records help dairymen make the decisions faced daily regarding breeding, feeding and culling the dairy herd. More than half of Wisconsin's herds belong to the Wisconsin Dairy Herd Improvement Association.

Jerry Jargon

Jerry Clark

Chippewa County Soil & Crops Educator



PLANT DENSITIES FOR CORN GRAIN AND SILAGE

With corn prices at record high levels, corn growers are looking to maximize yield efficiencies in every area of corn production. Yield potential for corn is based on number of ears per area (per density), kernel rows per ear, and kernel number per row. The first part of the yield equation starts with plant density. Plant density may have the most potential to move corn growers off any yield plateau that they are experiencing.

Plant density has increased steadily over the years. When corn was “checked” back in the 1930’s, plant density was about 12,000 plants per acre. Today, the average plant density for corn for grain is between 28,000 and 32,000 plants per acre.

Research by UW-Madison has shown that plant densities can be as high as 35,000 to 40,000 plants per acre and still show an increase in grain/silage yield. However, silage quality does suffer slightly when plant populations reach these levels. Current recommendations for corn silage are 2,000 to 3,000 plants/A greater than the density planted for grain. One way to look at an optimum plant density is to set the price of 1,000 seeds to the current price of corn to form a seed:corn price ratios between 0.5 and 1.5 is 29,800 to 36,200 plants per acre.

Row spacing also has an effect on plant density. With the above plant density recommendations based on 30-inch rows, plant density recommendations change as row spacing changes. Compared to

30-inch rows, plant density of corn grown in row widths 36 to 38-inches should be decreased 2,000 plants/A. With row widths of 15– to 20-inches, plant density should be increased 2,000 plants/A.

Today’s hybrids are better equipped to handle high densities and appear to have plant densities higher than the current recommendations. Better seed treatments, insect resistance, and better resistance to lodging are encouraging higher plant densities. Some of the responses to higher densities will be driven by soil type and be field and hybrid specific. It is suggested that corn growers try slightly higher plant densities in the range of 30,000 to 34,000 plants per acre.

The corn plant will tell you a lot if your corn is planted to the maximum density. Check the field for tiller plants vs. runt plants. Tiller plants show that the density is too low, and runt plants show that the density is too high. Check ears to see if they are too big or too small. A one-pound ear is about right. Large ears indicate a population that could have been increased.

One place to begin to evaluate your plant density for each field is reference strips in the field. Increase the plant population in a strip to 10% of your normal planting density. It is best to do two or three strips per field, but one strip will at least give you some idea of the effect of plant density of your farm.

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*A newsletter designed to meet the needs of farmers and agribusiness professionals
in Eau Claire and Chippewa Counties.*

Published monthly by the Eau Claire County Extension Office, Altoona, Wisconsin

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