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Tri State Seed Spring Newsletter

It looks like spring is coming in like a lamb; we hope the lamb doesn't have big sharp teeth. Wheat is growing, trees are budding and spuds are getting planted. The event that concerns us the most is the possibility of a few really cold nights. Dad always told me to only worry about the things you can control, not the ones you can't. It just seems like the negative externals in our chosen profession of agriculture just keep building up, the ILWU blocking activity at the ports, the threat of interest rates going up soon, a federal government that is totally disingenuous and removed from reality, and a world political scene that continues to degrade along sectarian lines. I have always tried to live my life with my cup half full instead of half empty – so enough with the pessimism and let's talk about some things we can control. I just got back from a week in Korea and Japan, it was good to meet old friends and renew acquaintances. We met with both the Korean Flour Millers and the Japanese Flour Millers and reported on the crop prospects and the club wheat supply among other topics. These guys really like our PNW soft white wheat, but they are also buyers of HRW and HRS from the north coast. This is a valuable relationship and we will continue to communicate with them to improve our consistency and quality. Just another bit of information, they buy our wheat because of the high milling and baking quality – not price. So when you have a choice between varieties always pick the ones with the highest quality rating. Some breeding companies release varieties that are consistently rated at the bottom of the quality list. You should know who they are and urge them to improve their products performance in the mill as well as in the field. Take home message – no quality, no market.

There are some bright spots we can focus on this spring. But with margins getting thinner everywhere this is not the time to cut inputs. It is the time to carefully evaluate which inputs have the highest return on your investment. This newsletter is sent to a very diverse clientele so pick the topics that have some value to your operation and skip the ones that don't.

Let's Talk About Alfalfa and Headline Fungicide (BASF)

One of the things we found most interesting, and profitable last year is this: BASF has a label for alfalfa at a rate of 6 to 9 oz/ac and it looks really promising. The target pathogens here are leaf spots and stem blights. The increased plant health benefits and subsequent increases in yield and feed values make this a no brainer especially on first cutting which tends to be heavy anyway. Have you ever noticed all the leaves at the bottom of the plant that are discolored and falling off just before cutting? Some of this is normal senescence but most of it is fungal damage. Headline is especially effective on spring black stem. Most of the fields we treated this past year were in the south basin and were first year seedling alfalfa. The results were very good. The following numbers and test were conducted from replicated research done by BASF and then in Rupert Idaho in 2013. The measured yield difference was 15.9% on first cutting. On this field that meant .34 tons/ac. If you assume \$220/ton hay, that amounts to \$68.00 return for an investment of about \$25/ac including application. But wait --- The returns just keep coming. Second cutting was 9.4% better than the untreated control and third was 2.4% better than the control and fourth was 4.7% better. The cumulative return on investment was .62 tons/ac in Rupert Idaho over four cuttings. That means an additional \$106.26/ac. This application was applied to 4-6 inch alfalfa before first cutting only. This is important because first cutting is always a big one, and seedling alfalfa is pretty fine stemmed, which all combined means it will be hard to dry down and there is more risk of damage from fungus. Call us and we will send you the pictures and give you the website for more info.

Ample ZSB Chelated Micro-nutrient Foliar

In a year where commodity prices are starting a bit lower than we would like, it is even more important to make good decisions up front. So if you really want to look like a genius this year, go ahead and put on the Headline fungicide we mentioned above and add the Ample ZSB. Ample is a well-balanced micro-nutrient blend designed to supplement the deficiencies normally occurring in alfalfa. I just had two growers from Ritzville come in today and say they planted Trifecta 2 alfalfa, used Headline and micros and cut 9.3 ton/acre. In Ritzville!! Everything tested well also. It does not take rocket science to understand that for every ton of alfalfa removed certain micro-nutrients are also removed, not just Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sulfur. Here is the list:

Nitrogen – 51 lbs. Phosphate – 12 lbs. Potassium – 49 lbs. Sulfur- 5.4 lbs.

Magnesium – 4.5 lbs. Calcium – 19 lbs. Copper – 0.01 lbs. Manganese – 0.05 lbs.

Zinc – 0.04 lbs. Boron – 0.05 lbs. Iron – 0.21 lbs.

We recommend applying Ample before first and after second cutting when the alfalfa is 4 – 6 inches tall. The application rate is ½ gallon by ground, ¾ gallon by air, and 1 gallon by chemigation. This program will definitely improve the longevity of your crop. Call us for current pricing – last year's pricing is still in effect. Micro-nutrients don't just appear out of thin air – think about it. If you have any doubts about what I just said, call us and we will take a petiole of your alfalfa just to see where you are deficient. You don't put fertilizer on a crop before you take a soil sample do you? Well, some do... I guess that's our point! And some people wonder why they don't make money.

SAS W-4 Forage Wheat

One of the things we like to do at TSS is commercialize new germplasm. SAS W-4 is one of these varieties. It has its origins in the United Kingdom as a winter by spring wheat cross. We were initially attracted to it for its forage potential. Craig and I are both excited about this variety. We were looking for a forage crop that was less expensive than triticale to grow and had similar utility for forage end-users. One of our customers owns a Mabton dairy. His brother is a vet and he is a nutritionist. I invited him to look at the W-4 seed production field last May. Everything was still green and lush. Early one Saturday we drove to the field and upon walking out the pivot road he said, "I'll take 400 acres of this right now." This – from a man who makes his living on forage. Triticale seed is very difficult to produce, a great forage plant, and absolutely terrible seed producer; hence the product is expensive. W-4 has a much higher seed yield hence the more affordable price. Our seed field was planted in November and survived the winter just fine. Not very often do I get to see a bonafide right out of the box lead pipe winner, this is one of those times. It has the same or better tonnage as any cereal forage I have ever seen, with 25% less seed cost per acre. The forage has a little higher lignin profile but is still a great value especially for dry cow feed. Tri State Seed is the licensee for this variety in the US.

A new fall planted DNS for irrigated production from Syngenta Cereals.

We are very impressed with the variety called Basalt primarily because we have seen it for several years in trials. When TSS was testing spring wheat for winter survival under irrigated management practices several years ago, we noticed that this experimental line "RSI-40240R", was always at the top of the winter survival index and had about ½% higher protein than the balance of the trial. It is a mid-tall semi-dwarf but has excellent straw strength and yield capacity. When we tested this variety in 2009, 2010, and 2011 on Grandview Farms in Burbank as part of our winter hardiness studies it topped the yield trial producing 137 bu/ac and had 13.96% protein. It has a good disease rating and we believe it will do well either fall or spring planted.

Cool Season Forages – there is more money in forages this year than corn.

The important thing to remember when you are planning your forage production is simple. Plant cool season annual forages in the spring and the early fall when temperatures are cool, and warm season forages during the heat of the summer. Just look at your lawn – it grows like it is on fire in the spring, but languishes in the summer. That is because it doesn't like the heat.

Selecting the correct forages for the intended use is the most important decision you can make. For lactating mother cows you should concentrate on those forages that have high crude protein levels and more soluble fiber in the rumen. Typically this is a balancing act between product quality and quantity. The late boot stage of development in cereal forages always contains the densest concentration of nutrients for the animal. After the plant is done with the vegetative stage of development and enters the reproductive stage of development, which we call anthesis, the plant will have the most tonnage, but the penalty for more tonnage is higher lignin levels and lower soluble fiber. That's okay for dry cow feed, but certainly not acceptable for the higher nutrition needs of lactating momma cows.

Here are some tips.

Where manure is commonly spread on the fields and the soils are becoming more saline, (higher salt content), plant beardless barley. Barley has all of the salt tolerance on the C genome, which wheat and oats and triticale do not have. Barley will do well on soils that have excessively high pH also.

Use a blended approach to forage production in most circumstances. Risk management is key. Always evaluate the research before you buy seed. Not all forages grow at the same rate and are therefore not necessarily timed to mature at the same stage of development to maximize nutrition and tonnage. It is very important to consult your seed man and research which components have been adequately tested to mature equally and provide you the optimum benefits for your individual needs. We like to add Flex Peas to the blend in irrigated spring forages to optimize protein level, this is especially true when growing for dairies. The peas are large seeded legumes, and the blend usually looks like this – 64% peas and 36% cereal forages. The reason this looks unbalanced is peas have more seeds per pound than cereal grains and in order to get a 50/50 stand in the field you have to blend by seed count, not percentage. The cereal forages can be split between Everleaf Oats, Beardless barley or Spring forage triticale.

Using straight forage triticale or a blend of cereal forages is great for maximizing tonnage for dry cows. Just remember that as the plant matures, protein decreases and lignin or insoluble fiber increases. Makes great shit, doesn't put much weight on cows.

If you are rotationally grazing, move the wire before all of the leaves on the plants are gone to optimize regrowth. The plant has to have a way to produce food too – photosynthesis. If you apply fertilizer in between grazing, let the regrowth get well along and then test for nitrates. I don't want you to turn any of those \$3000 cows upside-down. Any test below 1200 ppm is okay. If the test comes in too high, just irrigate and let the plants get a little bigger thereby diluting out the nitrates and retest. Usually takes about 10 days for the plant to dilute out the excess nitrogen by increased biomass, but the following plant growth response will be huge. Adding forage brassicas to the grazing blend is very cost effective and pays big dividends. They take about 4-6 weeks to get big enough to graze, but they regenerate just fine and are a good complement to the annual cool season forages. The grazing types also have a root type like a carrot, not a large bulb, that translates into much less choking hazards.

Warm Season Grass Production

In the greater Columbia Basin we don't have many choices. Sorghum X Sudan crosses are a great choice. Michael Dixon and I traveled to Hereford TX last summer to attend field trials at Gayland Ward Seed Co. This is a family owned breeding company that

employs three plant breeders, Michael and I spent most of two days with them. They have some unique material. They have varieties that are conventional crosses between grain sorghum and sudan grass. They have BMR 6 hybrids that have the brown midrib gene – meaning less lignin and higher digestibility. They also have photo-period sensitive hybrids which remain vegetative until the day length gets shorter than 12 hours and 20 minutes. They just introduced a dwarf type sorghum sudan cross with a brachytic gene that has the same number of leaves on a much smaller plant.

Along with these they also develop and market forage sorghums. They have similar characteristics as the sorghum X sudan crosses but are much taller and have a longer season. The reason we are telling you about these crops is they are phenomenal forage plants in limited water situations. They use approximately 1/3 the water as a corn silage crop would. So in a year where water is limited and the need for lots of high quality forage exists, this may help you get through a tough spot and still maintain good nutritional value for your animals. They are suitable for grazing, for silage, and for baled production. Let us know if you have interest and we will point you in the right direction.

Here are some tips.

These warm season Sudan grass crosses are bred in an area that has high sodium soils and relatively high pH's. This adaptability is perfect for dairy applications and most other parts of the greater Columbia Basin. Do not over water this crop. It will produce 75% of the silage as corn on roughly 1/2 the water. It has deep roots and is an efficient user of nitrogen. Planted when soil temperatures are 60 degrees or warmer they will not tolerate a frost. Once again – let us help you choose the product to fit your needs. For green chop or baled product, the first cut will come 45 days after planting when the crop is 40 -45" tall. Leave the stubble 6 to 8" tall to facilitate faster regrowth. The plant has to have some leaves left after cutting to regrow. 40 days later you will be ready to cut the second time. If you get a freezing event – get the cattle out of the field if you are grazing for at least 10 days so the Prussic acid that has formed as a result of the frost, will volatilize off and then you are safe to put the animals back in the field to graze it out. Total fertilizer usage is 1.5 lbs. per day of growth. So 45 days between planting and cutting means 67.5 #'s of N. Use a 5:1 N to S ratio on Sudan grasses.

Permanent Pastures

Establishing permanent pasture is not difficult as long as you remember to treat it like a crop. The most surefire way to get cattle on the pasture quickly is to plant in the fall and let the grass establish over the winter. A good secondary root system is necessary before you begin your grazing. In reality 90 days after dormancy break is a good rule of thumb on new fall seeded grass. A judicious herbicide application will help establishment also; and that is a perfect time to add the micros. Remember that grass removes soil nutrients just like any other crop. So, measure the nutrient withdrawal and plan on replacing them. I like a late fall application. Don't forget the Sulphur and Phos. Want to know why most permanent pasture gets replanted – neglect. Most pastures are not planted on class 1, 2, or 3 ground. They are usually the piece that is too rocky to farm or has the worst irrigation system on it. That is okay, just plan for soils that are no doubt more variable in depth and soil type. Using a bracketed approach to grass selection is prudent. Some grass species like orchard grass have great nutritional value but do not persist very well on soils with higher pH and high salinity. Forage type tall fescues do that very well. We usually recommend a blend of species for this type of situation. Orchard grass, forage type tall fescue, tetraploid perennial ryegrasses and some bromes are all candidates for this application. Pubescent Wheat grass, Intermediate wheat grass, Basin Wild Ryes, and both Crested and Siberian Wheat grasses are easy to establish but produce too much lignin and not enough palatable forage. So stay away from the bunching types and head toward the sodding types.

Bullet Points:

- We have the best pricing on 6# Glyphosate in the state. We have both 250 gallon shuttles for easy use and 2 X 2 1/2's for finishing the smaller jobs. We like this particular product for one reason, it has two modes of entry into the plant instead of one. We have carried this particular product from NuFarm for several years and really like its performance, it is fully loaded 51% active called Credit Xtreme.
- Our water in this area tends to be pretty hard so make sure you use a buffering agent to neutralize the pH and enhance efficacy of your glyphosate. There are several products we recommend – call Dana for this.
- We can now source gypsum locally and in many cases can have it applied for less money than you can have it delivered by others. Those of you with high pH (High Acid numbers) will understand the value of this soil amendment. You will see immediate results. This product also has Potassium and Potash in smaller amounts and quite a few micro nutrients are included in this particular product. Talk to us about your needs and pricing.
- In order to use many of the newest wheat and barley varieties you must register your farm on the AgCelerate system in order to legally receive the seed. Call Michael or Dana and we will get this done for you – or show you how to do it yourself.
- In many areas of the PNW and California, water supplies will continue to be very tight – tight enough to not have enough water for full season crops like grain corn and silage. So this translates to us meaning the demand for emergency forages will be high. Place your orders for spring cereal forages early along with BMR Sorghum Sudan.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

- The soft white wheat protein levels from the 2014 crop were unusually high and some of the exporters are paying significant premiums for less than 10.5 protein wheat. If you have wheat left to sell, especially <10.5% protein call your elevator now. That is what our Pacific Rim customers really want.
- The newest alfalfa marketing rage is low lignin alfalfa and we have a very limited inventory left, so call if you are interested.
- We are constantly adding and deleting varieties to our portfolio to better serve your needs. Always know that we are looking out for your best interests and ultimately your profitability. We currently offer 31 different wheat varieties. We are always looking for your input on which varieties are best for you. Of course we have our own ideas of what is best for you and are always willing as part of our service to consult with you on the best fit. Occasionally we are unable to supply you with your choice. Please call us anyway, as we pride ourselves on knowing where any variety is inventoried.
- We are always looking for clean ground to contract seed acres. Call us and we will see if we can make you some extra money. Right now we are looking for SWW Spring acres.
- **How to Participate in the Monsanto White Wheat Settlement.** Any soft white wheat producer that marketed wheat during the period of May 30, 2013 and November 30, 2013 can file a claim to receive compensation for the adverse market conditions during that time caused by the discovery of Roundup Ready wheat in a field in Oregon. Growers should go to the web site: <https://www.swwsettlement.com/> to submit a claim form. You must submit this claim form no later than Tuesday, March 31, 2015 to participate in this settlement.

In closing we want to thank you for your continued support and confidence in our business. We just closed the books on our tenth year in business and we have enjoyed the time serving you. We are looking forward to ten more.

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