

July-Oct 2000

Agrimanagement Newsletter

Congratulations

are in order for
Scott Stephen
who recently
became the
second con-
sultant in our
office to re-
ceive his CCA



(Certified Crop Advisor) certifi-
cation from the American Soci-
ety of Agronomy. Garrett
Henry also holds his CCA.
Don Jameson is also certified
CPCC-I (Certified Professional
Crop Consultant, Independent)
through the NAICC. ☐

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Look for these articles
in the November-
December 2000 issue:

- ☐ Our Recap of the
2000 Season.
- ☐ Nutrition Manage-
ment with Aerial
and Satellite Im-
agery.

This front space has been designated as the "editorial column". Sometimes I hope to give it human interest, and then at other times to discuss some of the serious problems facing agriculture. This time I will allocate the space to two topics.

Now to the "E" word which brings my blood pressure numbers up to my weight numbers. This being the State's expenditures of money on Ergonomics regulations. If ever a Pandora's box to labor management has been created, this is it! In fact it has the potential to be very restrictive to employee's opportunities for work and financial self support. Business and Labor alike should voice their opinion to representatives, the Governor, and even to a L & I staff office (see footnote). While implementation has been delayed for 2 years, we should work again to get the legislature to bury this idea!

Sometimes we wonder how other farmers in our neighborhood are doing, or how farming is going in another state? Well here are some answers from one of the e-mail communications I've been receiving throughout the summer from a Crop Consultant friend in Louisiana. He is a fellow NAICC (National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants) member and very prolific with the written medium of communication. The following are an assortment of updates, reviews, and observations from a few different weeks of the growing season.

◆ May 6. "Rain the past 3 days totaled 0.5 to 5+ inches. Lots of Roundup ready cotton will be at 2nd true leaf which means producers have only about 7 days to complete their application of Roundup." "Soybean cutworms are destroying stands of soybeans in some areas. Half rates of pyrethroids are being used, but the worms were 1-3" below the surface in loose dry soil. Rain fall should make control easier by forcing worms closer to the surface".

◆ May 18. "The Negro Bug, or its close cousin, the Burrowing Bug, is causing excitement in many fields. Huge numbers

(300-400/hill in cotton) are accumulating around root systems of corn grain sorghum and cotton. One report is that 1/4# Orthene for Thrips gave 75% control!"

◆ June 12.

For Cotton. "Supplies of Cypro or Bladex are diminishing quickly..... therefore we are encouraging producers to beg, borrow or steal enough Cypro 4C to lay by their heavy land."

◆ July 23. Cotton: "Nematode problems are very apparent this year. Rotation will be the key to control. Corn or Milo will be excellent choices, but only Milo will reduce root-knot. Land owners must allow farmers to rotate or else land owners and tenant may have to accept 200-500 lbs/ac yield loss in cotton."

◆ August 13. Corn harvest 75% complete. Very little Aflatoxin reported. Fields will approach 120 bu/ac. average — exceptional in a year of drought. Corn and grain sorghum may be the only crops that break even this year for most farmers.

◆ September 6. Round Up ready cotton farmers that have been planting "naked", without Prowl or Treflan or any other pre-emergence, are thinking they will return to the "yellow stuff" next year due to the re-infestation of fields by grasses following each rain or irrigation.

Well, there is a taste of farming in Louisiana!
Any takers? ☐



To obtain a copy of the new Ergonomics rule (Chapter 296-26-051 WAC, Part A-1 Ergonomics), go to <http://www.lni.wa.gov/wisha/ergo>. You may also contact the WA L & I office closest to you: Yakima 454-3700, Kennewick 735-0100, Moses Lake 764-6900 or in Olympia, Jennie Hays, Project Manager, WISHA Services Division (360) 902-5523, raws235@lni.wa.gov.

MIS for your Agribusiness Part II

By David Marshall

In my last article, I discussed some techniques for managing your data, from an Agribusiness perspective. This article will focus on some of the data management *tools* that are available to us. Most of these tools have been around a long time and most of us are familiar with them, and yet there have been great improvements to these programs in recent years. While I refer to programs within the MS-Office suite in this article, I am not necessarily endorsing these products in particular.

- Database. If you are using an accounting program or keeping a name and address list, you are already familiar with the database concept. Database programs like Microsoft Access, FoxPro, or Paradox work well in situations where there is a lot of data, number crunching, or sorting involved. If you are entering the same data over a long period of time (like weekly observations over a summer season), then a database is usually the preferred tool. However, these are generally not good for charting, and report design is limited. They do a good job at helping you organize data, but not for making on-the-fly calculations. The good news is that modern database programs allow you to link queries with spreadsheets, giving you further math, statistics, and charting capabilities.

- Spreadsheet. This is the best tool for making attractive tables, charting, managing simple data projects, statistics, and



financial analysis. Most people can get up and running quickly with MS Excel, yet there is still a lot of functionality that you undoubtedly will never touch before the next version arrives. Who needs to buy a statistics program any more when most kinds of statistical analysis can be done right in Microsoft Excel? I have even found myself leaving my favorite stats book on the shelf in favor of Excel's help menus.

- Word Processor. Use this for letters, proposals, outlines, and papers. You can create small tables in Microsoft Word, and you can even do some limited math. However, it is generally much easier to create your tables in Excel, which allows you to do more calculations. One function worth playing with in Word is the Mail Merge function. This allows you to create a letter or document that relates to a database

table you've created in Access or a contact list in Outlook.

- Personal Information Manager (PIM). These programs, which are essentially computerized day-timers, are increasing in popularity. As an example, Microsoft Outlook is commonly used for sending and receiving email, however the program also offers a task manager, calendar, appointment manager, and notepad. Palm devices and most other small handheld computers have the ability to sync up with Outlook. This makes it easier for you to carry it all with you out in the field. I find myself using the word processor less in favor of the color-coded, categorized notes I can create in Outlook's Notes section. PIM functions are also available for free on the Internet. Check out <http://my.yahoo.com> or <http://www.hotmail.com>. Both of these services allow you to sync with Outlook, Outlook Express, or other PIMs, plus you can access the same information from multiple locations, say work, home, or your laptop.

- CADD vs. GIS. Many farmers use CADD (Computer Aided Design and Drafting) programs, such as AutoCAD for field mapping, crop planning, and irrigation main-line layout designs. This is an upgrade to a pencil and straight edge; however, many are finding GIS (Geographic Information System) based software tools to be more useful for these purposes, especially if they are already using other information in GIS form.

A Note about Learning Curves

A farmer friend of mine once told me that he spends 1/3 of his time driving in his truck, 1/3 of his time on the computer, with only the remaining third of his time available for farming. Using the right tool is always more efficient in the long run. However, we've all experienced times where we are better off just using what we are familiar with to get the job done. I would observe that most people feel fairly comfortable using a spreadsheet like Microsoft Excel. However, there is a longer learning curve associated with database programs. And yet there are times when these tools are preferable. In these cases, it may be advantageous to delegate the work to someone else who has already gone through the learning phase.

Synergize Me

We believe that one of our strengths at Agrimanagement is our ability to pool various agronomic disciplines together. We can consult with each other in the process of consulting with our clients. Even more synergies result when cooperation occurs between grower and consultant. (to page 3).

A new kind of labor management

Reading recently of a shortage of harvest labor we thought some of you would enjoy this international perspective.

The Canadian paper "The Globe and Mail" reported in its September 22 issue that Farmers in Thailand also struggle for adequate farm workers to pick their fruit. The rising cost of hiring farm workers is of concern, and they, like us, are on the look-out for profitable alternatives. Reportedly, for generations the Southern Thailanese have used Monkeys to harvest coconuts.

Now, Mr. Tawee is attempting to train 20 macaque monkeys to pick his sweet tamarinds. Mr. Tawee says, "But monkeys are still an alternative, they are loyal... and not afraid of heights. On top of it, they neither complain nor ask for a raise." ☞



ENTSYS 2000

This year marked the completion of a move from handwritten to computer based reports for all of our IPM Services. How do you like these new reports? Do you have suggestions? Would you prefer to receive them via fax, mail, email, or on the web?

reports@agrimgt.com fax @ 509-452-6760

(continued from page 2) For instance, some of you will share with us your yield and packout information -- this gives us more pieces to the puzzle by which we can help you see a better picture of what is happening in a given field. Of course, other parties contribute to synergism, such as chemical fieldmen, extension agents, lenders, or laboratories. Because of this, we are always on the look out for new ways to coordinate and communicate directly with you, or with others you work with.

As an example of this, it has been my pleasure this past summer to work with a few of our customers via email. In addition to sending petiole and entomology reports via US mail and/or fax, we have been using email to transfer data files into our customer's own computers. This is a concept called data "pulsing" and involves a system on each end of the email "wire". Our system auto-sends data files to you while your system auto-reads (or manually reads) the email, and receives the data into your own data structure, say a database or spreadsheet. This is especially handy when dealing with a large number of circles or fields. *

The next step for us here at Agrimanagement will be gearing up to use our website as a way to securely convey

your reports. If you have been receiving our entomology reports via fax this past season, you may have noticed that these were generated in html/xml format (the language of the world wide web). For 2001, our goal will be to have these entomology reports available on our

web server, for those customers who request it. This will give you on-line access to your information whether you are at home or at work. If this sounds like a good idea to you, please let us know (reports@agrimgt.com) so we can respond appropriately. Our hope is that the Internet will be a good medium by which we can communicate to you timely information for decision making and by which you can easily communicate back to us. ☞

"This just in..."

EQIP funding for Washington State conservation efforts is tentatively proposed at \$3 Million for FY 2001. This would mean an allocation to the Yakima River Lower Reaches area of \$1,028,000, which compares to a three-year average of about \$500,000 per year. Contact the NRCS District Conservationist if you wish to evaluate if your farm will qualify for EQIP funding next year. ☞

* Please contact me (453-4851 -- dwmarshall@agrimgt.com) if you would like to talk about ways we can "pulse" together, or about ways to set up your own data system.

Are Nematodes Eating up your Profits? Sample Now!

Soil nematode populations are highest in September and October. This is the best time to determine whether pre-plant fall fumigation or spring treatments will be necessary. Our sampling procedure is based on scientific knowledge of nematode distribution and behavior. Sampling design is tailored to meet your particular situation and needs.

In **pre-plant** situations, soil is sampled to determine the density and species complex. This information is critical to good decision making, particularly in a crop like potatoes when one considers the potential threat from M. chitwoodi compared to M. hapla alone.

We also offer post-fumigation sampling as an important step in evaluating the effectiveness of that treatment. In some crops, **post-plant** nematicides are available for use.

Fall sampling in established mint fields for **root lesion nematodes** and **ver-ticillium** will help you determine whether a spring treatment is appropriate.

We will often take a good vs. poor comparative root and soil sample within a field or orchard. Results will indicate whether nematodes or diseases are contributing to poor performance. If so, then appropriate actions can be taken promptly.

Whether in a pre- or post-plant situation, we write a report with specific recommendations. Our interpretation is based on continuous involvement with researchers as well as our own experience and database.

So if you're planting that orchard, potato or mint field, trying to diagnose the cause of poor growth areas within a field, or just want to document the health of your root material prior to selling or planting it yourself, then contact us today. ☞

Knowing the Fertility of Your Soil.

Just as fertility drugs have caused a prolific increase in the incidence of twins, triplets, even septuplets, modern fertilizers and fertilizer programs have greatly increased both quality and yield of agricultural crops. But this does not always mean that more is better. Determining a crop's needs depends on such factors as residual (leftover) nitrogen, organic matter, winter moisture, and the type of crop (i.e. corn or potatoes, etc) to be grown. Soil fertility sampling is the only way to adequately and accurately determine the current nutrient levels of your soil so that you can efficiently meet the needs of your crop. With today's fertilizer prices it doesn't take very significant savings in the amount of N, P, & K applied per acre to both pay for the soil sampling service and save precious money. Not only can savings on inputs be of value, but providing the proper ratio and quantity of nutrients can help create the opportunity for producing at the yield potential of your crop on your specific soil.

Be sure to contact us soon to schedule your fields for sampling this fall or spring. ☞

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE: WWW.AGRIMGT.COM



Agrimanagement

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