

August 2004

Agrimanagement Newsletter



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Walking the Fields:

How do politics and farming or consulting fit together? Quite extensively, I'd say, if you look at the history of Parity policy (a real old term), land and soil bank programs, subsidies, deficiency payments, EQIP and C.R.P. payments. Even more currently, the issues of labor availability, immigration policy and labor law or Right to Work (R.T.W.) Laws do affect our competitive position. R. T. W. Laws are an advantage to farmers in States as the Midwest belt of N and S Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas, but we do not have R.T.W. in WA, ORE, CA and 25 other states. Forbes Magazine and the Pacific Research Institute identified that 19 of the 20 worst economic opportunity states are forced-union-dues states, (i.e. no R.T.W. laws).

All this is to stress our civic duty (comes with citizenship) to vote. The final date to get registered for the September primary for yourself or qualified employees is the 13th of August. This is a vital year with water shed elections on the line. It is easy to register by mail, we have enclosed a form as a reminder and if you need it in Spanish that is also available.

So in the words of two great sources let us be energized. Exodus 18:21, "*Let it be impressed on your mind that God commands you to choose for rulers just men who will rule in the fear of God.*" Noah Webster (1758-1843) Founding Father, "*If the citizens neglect their duty and place unprincipled men in office, the government will soon be corrupted. . . If government fails to secure public prosperity and happiness, it must be because the citizens neglect the Divine commands, and elect bad men to make and administer the laws.*"

"Experience is that marvelous thing that enables you to recognize a mistake when you make it again." F.P. Jones



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Remote Diagnostics:

This summer we have taken the step of using digital cameras to transmit photos of situations where we need a diagnostic opinion. Likewise, we can receive such photos from you too. In the upper left corner is a photo of verticillium wilt in mint to show you an example of this capacity.

"If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you; that is the principal difference between a dog and a man" Mark Twain

Our Summer Help:

This year we've had a great summer crew. Those working full or part time have been: Ricky Adams, Ryan Bohlke, Cameron Charvet, Chris Friberg, and Ryan Malecha. We wish to thank them for their hard and conscientious work. ☺

Mint Pest Controls:

For Mite control this year, we have worked with four products across our service area. All have been used successfully and include: Comite, Kelthane, Onager and predator mites. Any of these four options may be applicable in different settings or situations.

Beneficial and predator insertions can be successful even with application in the fall preceding the crop year, as we did in 2003. Believe it or not, predator management is often 1/4 to 1/2 the cost of conventional miticide products. Further, as certain fields border water bodies with a no spray buffer zone restriction, this option becomes necessary. As we wrap up the 2004 grower season, our strategy for 2005 mite control may include careful attention to techniques of management of the mint root borer, or powdery mildew in the September/October period. ☐

"Women and cats will do as they please, men and dogs should relax and get used to the idea" Robert A. Heinlein.

A statement on Mint Root Borer:

It is birthday number about 27 since Jim Todd of Agrimanagement is credited with first identifying the Mint Root Borer in WA state. Early aggressive studies by Dr. Keith Pike on the biology and Dr. Harry Davis USDA on pheromones gave us great information on how to control this pest. Understanding its mating and reproductive biology is an important step. Mating flights begin after July 4th.

Because double cut and first year scotch or peppermint are least susceptible, we usually recommend first starting to sample rhizomes on the higher probability fields. We now sometimes do an initial, abbreviated sampling in late August to early September, and then depending on the evidence of a positive or especially negative reading, a further confirmation sampling 10-12 days later.

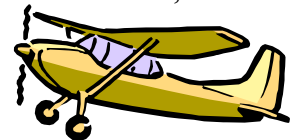
Control options pretty much come down to summer moth sprays, post-harvest Lorsban or parasitic nematodes, which are now on the market again.

We can help. Call us to rhizome sample your field. The fee is typically about 15-20% of a Lorsban treatment. Further, since we take a great number of samples per field and rate rhizome weights, the reliability of our data to direct a decision to spray (yes or no) is very dependable. But to do the best job for you we need to know of or see the field two weeks before cutting. So please schedule soon. ☐

Soil Fumigation:

The date to fumigate (if needed) is often influenced by the prep of the field or when the current crop is off, but best management requires a fast push. Vacant or fallow fields scheduled for planting 2005 as orchards should be sampled soon. Likewise ground going to potatoes, receiving Metam-Sodium or Metam-Potassium (K.PAM) or even Telone are best applied before the 20th of October. In 2003, discounts for products were actually meant to promote the best management practice of early (more efficacious clean-up) treatment. Thus identifying fields in August to early September is to your advantage. Also we need to manage profile moisture drier for Telone and wetter for Metam-sodium.

Biocide crops — For several years we have promoted the use of white mustard plantings in certain fields. In the Valley, an ideal mustard planting date is before August 10th. If Sudan grass is selected as a biocide crop, it needs to be planted by 20-25 of July to get going in time before cold nights slow it down. A White Mustard will cost about \$10/ac for the seed, but needs 120 lbs of available N in the top foot. Incorporation time will be about 15 October. Mustard research shows the seed variety is important depending on the focus of the end result, suppression of nematodes, weeds, or soil diseases. ☐



Aerial Photography: Can be a great tool to document trouble areas in a field, or incorporate into soil Grid or zone sampling. We believe June/early July photos have been a great part of our potato nutritional management program. Likewise a photo of hops in August can be referenced for future fertility or water management. Aerial photos of vineyards, especially vinifera in October can greatly aid to manage zone soil sampling and subsequent fertilization, or to identify areas for next years sampling or soil moisture sensor placement. [See Moisture Monitoring Pg 3].

There are also several sources of inexpensive government photos of all fields available. Sometimes, we supply these with fertility work performed on new ground. If you have fields in question for which you would like a print, we can do this for direct costs. ☐

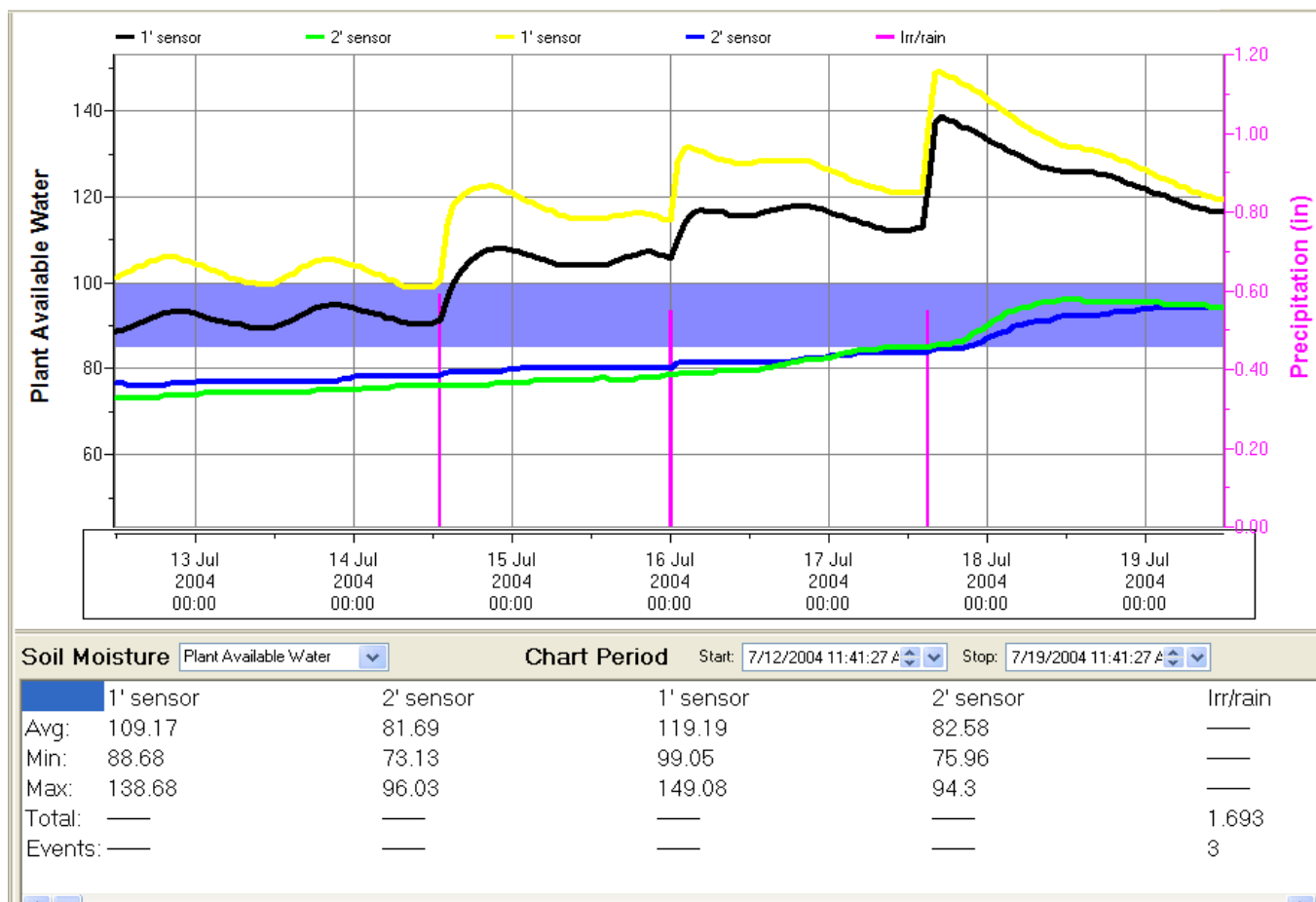
Moisture Monitoring by Real Time:

This season, we have installed the ECH₂O system on several farms. The ECH₂O line of products is manufactured by Decagon Devices, Inc. out of Pullman, WA. This system uses small capacitance type sensors to measure soil moisture that can be attached to a datalogger that can be queried via a laptop or data station unit attached to your own computer. Other sensors available include a rain gauge, temperature sensors, etc. The dataloggers provide for up to five sensors that can include soil moisture sensors at different depths and locations as well as a rain gauge and/or temperature sensor. Our first demonstration unit is South of Union Gap and is easy to show. If you'd like a presentation call Scott or Don. See graphical report example below. ☐

Irrigation Strategies:

Look at the neighborhood lawns to understand the issue of uniformity and adequate infiltration or depth of soak. Most lawns do best with watering only 2-3 times per week with 2/3" to 1" each time.

In our crops, we match schedule advice to the crop stage and now in August a plunging Daily Consumptive Use (DCU) curve. For instance: In **hops** the DCU of late July, can now be expected to increase by 10-15% until \pm August 15th and then after, drops rapidly. In **spuds**, water use slackens at about 100 days after planting. Research shows over watering into September may often reduce specific gravities, or reduce number 1's. If vines are strong in Aug/Sept soil moisture should be down to 55% of available water at the time of vine kill. In **Tree Fruits**, we used water control early to influence fruit size and hopefully minimize bitter pit in susceptible varieties as Honeycrisp. At this time of year if the profile dries out, it is usually from the subsoil upwards. We currently use several different technologies to monitor the subsoil to ensure proper moisture reserves. Tim Smith's research has shown an advantage to reducing bitter pit, by irrigating more frequently and avoiding long intervals with large 24 hr sets in July to early August. From mid June to August 25th monitoring is very beneficial as excessive watering and excess vege-



tative growth draws Ca out of pears and apples. Monitoring to reduce excessive growth can also help reduce pruning and to efficiently utilize N fertilization. [See Leaf Analysis].

Our goal in the 4 weeks pre-harvest is to water judiciously to enhance firmness and develop soluble solids. ☐

Leaf Analysis:

We have heard from most of our Leaf Analysis Clients who have re-ordered. We will be in your blocks over these next 2-3 weeks. If you have tree fruit blocks and have not yet made arrangements let us know, but we normally also try to call and be sure of your plans.

Harvest & Safety: Remember to brief workers how to avoid accidents, mostly just slow down a notch.

Juice grape petioles are usually taken the first week of September. Vinifera timing will vary from bloom, to veraison to some September work. Currently the vinifera industry uses both true petioles and in some cases whole leaf analysis.

If we are scheduled to do fruit mineral analysis, we like to take those samples about two weeks pre-harvest. ☐

From a Veterinary friend of mine who has a small animal practice here in town. Believe it or Not: Received a call this past year to “patch-up” a run over rattler someone found along the road. Case refused!

Mission Statement

Agrimanagement is an agricultural consulting company that provides production services, independent of product sales, to farmer, orchardists and vineyards. Our main objective is to enable growers to be more efficient and achieve higher profitability. We achieve this by applying ag-science principles and techniques to address the needs and problems of the modern farmer. Our reputation is based on providing reliable, objective, timely, and affordable services adapted to individual client

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