

WNYCMA NEWS

Western
New York

CROP MANAGEMENT



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Summer Crop Tips By: Nate Herendeen

Grain Bins: Grain harvest will be starting early in 2012. Look for first wheat harvest the last couple of days of June. Winter barley will be off by the end of June. That means grain bins and handling systems need to be ready to go earlier than ever.

Clean up around drying and handling systems is of utmost importance. Remove any grain debris from last season. Clean out pits and low spots in handling systems. Granary insects can survive in these areas. Remove weed debris from around bins and mow any new weed or grass growth. When you are cleaning the inside of bins, insects can crawl out and survive outside the bin on grain pieces or weed seeds.

Clean the inside of the bin as thoroughly as possible. Use a labeled bin surface insecticide after cleaning. Spray the surfaces to the point of runoff as high as you can reach. Spray around the outside base and up the wall at least six feet. Briefly turn on the aeration fan and suck some spray into the sub floor and/or duct system. If possible, let the bin set empty for a week or more. Use the surface spray on dump hoppers and other low areas in your handling system.

Summer Seedings: The "A" months – April and August - are the optimum times to make new alfalfa or alfalfa-grass seedings. If the seeding acreage was not established in April, plan on making an early August seeding. Days are shorter, nights are cooler and competition for your time may not be as serious. If lime is needed, based on soil testing, it can be applied easily in the summer.

No-till drills always give good seed to soil contact when properly operated. Usually no-till means the seed is placed into moist soil. To make no-till work, weed control must be properly planned and executed depending on the conditions and probable weeds. Burn-down of existing vegetation is absolutely essential and needs to be done a week or more prior to seeding. Don't assume this is the end of weed problems. Summer rains bring germination of weeds and grasses. Volunteer wheat can be a problem when no rains have occurred to germinate seeds that may have been left on the surface at harvest. Have your pest management scout follow those new seedings for weeds and leaf hopper.

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Conventional tillage seedings in early August also work well. Tillage destroys many of the potential weeds. Small seeds need a fine, firm seedbed. Be sure to culti-pack before and after seeding or use a grain drill seeder and packer wheels. Seed to soil contact is absolutely essential. Germination depends on moisture in the soil or summer rains.

Early August gives time for the seedling plants to make enough growth to provide good winter hardiness. Late August and September seedings are much more prone to winter kill.

Insects: Potato leaf hopper (alfalfa leaf hopper, in my mind) can still be a problem in August and early September. When our scouts are checking for weeds, they will also scout for hoppers. Controlling them, if needed, will help keep alfalfa ahead of weed competition and improve winter hardiness. There were high populations of alfalfa weevil in May, but that insect only has one generation in our latitude. Although you may see some tip damage on regrowth from May harvested fields, they are not an economic problem once first cutting time is past.

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Air Quality Compliance Agreement Update

Lori Whittington, Jr. Farmstead Consultant

You've been hearing us talk about the EPA Air Emission Regulations Estimation Methodologies that will be released soon by the EPA. I've compiled the overview below from EPA's website, magazine articles and attendance at a one-day Air Emissions conference this past Fall.

Goals of the Air Quality Compliance Agreement:

1. Ensure compliance with Clean Air Act (CAA), CERCLA (Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act), and EPCRA (Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act) requirements
2. Reduce air pollution
3. Monitor and evaluate AFO (Animal Feeding Operations) emissions
4. Create a national methodology for estimating AFO air emissions

History:

In 2005, US farmers voluntarily entered into the Air Compliance Agreement with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In turn, EPA agreed not to sue these participating farms for alleged violations of air emissions regulations (among other terms and conditions) if they agreed to pay for a National Study Program to analyze farm air emissions.

As part of the agreement, in 2007-2009 a National Air Emissions Monitoring Study program ensued to collect data to develop science-based **emission estimation methodologies (EEMs)** for regulated emissions for all farms.

Regulated emissions that are likely to be emitted from animal housing and manure storage facilities include ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, volatile organic compounds and particulate matter (breathable dust particles).

In 2009/2010, the monitoring study was completed and data began to be compiled and analyzed.

Once the EEM's are finalized and released by the EPA (anticipated date is June 2012), the EEM's will be the recognized method to determine if a farms' regulated emissions exceed thresholds for reporting.

IF YOU SIGNED THE AIR COMPLIANCE AGREEMENT :

- The participating facilities must use the results of the monitoring study to determine their level of emissions, apply for one or more permits if their emissions are above regulatory levels, and install any pollution controls required by law. The facilities must also agree not to contest the study's results. Failure to fulfill any of these commitments revokes EPA's commitment not to sue the facility for environmental violations covered under the agreement.
- Where the methodologies indicate that a participating farm is not obligated to obtain permits or follow reporting requirements, that farm has 60 days after the methodologies' publication to certify its compliance with the applicable laws. Where the methodologies indicate that a participating farm requires permits, that farm has 120 days after the methodologies' publication to apply for any necessary permits.

IF YOU DID NOT SIGN THE AIR COMPLIANCE AGREEMENT :

- and you are a Medium CAFO, you are exempt from any reporting.
- and you are a LARGE CAFO, you are required to use the EEM's to calculate your farm's emissions and file reports to your local and state authorities, **IF the outcomes exceed reporting thresholds.**

*The EEM's have not been released, and we will update you when they become available.

The benefit of completing the EEM's is that you will know if your dairy farm falls into a regulated category and reduce the risk of lawsuits for alleged non-compliance. Proper documentation in your CAFO (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation) Plan will ensure compliance.

As you may know, some of the regulations we've been advising you of over the last few years have "thresholds" (i.e. water reporting, SPCC). If you did not originally exceed the threshold, but at some future time you do, you are then required to begin reporting or actively complying with the regulation. We will provide you with updates and Fact Sheets on regulations for your review.

For more in-depth information, check out EPA's website at: <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/agreements/caa/cafo-agr.html>

GEESE and Other Wildlife Problems

By Don Mitzel

With the growing season well under way, goose and bird problems can be as bad or worse than weeds, insects and plant diseases for some growers. As far as geese are concerned, I was told by the wildlife section at the Buffalo DEC office that getting a permit is not as restrictive as it used to be, but you still have to get approval from your Regional DEC Wildlife office. The following is quoted directly from DEC regarding permits for agricultural producers to take geese:

“Depredation order for Canada geese at agricultural facilities (50 CFR 21.51): Any agricultural producer, or their employees or agents, may take any number of Canada geese between May 1 and August 31, and any number of nests or eggs of Canada geese between March 1 and June 30, from property they own, manage, or control, and where geese are committing depredations to agricultural crops.

Agricultural producers wishing to take geese under authority of this depredation order must obtain authorization in advance from their local DEC Wildlife office, and they must submit an annual report summarizing activities, including the dates, numbers and locations of birds, nests, and eggs taken. Reports must be submitted by September 15 of each year to: NYSDEC Game Management Section, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4754. Failure to submit a report may result in denial of authorization the following year.”

As for other birds – blackbirds, crows and the like, not much can be done other than shooting, which usually isn't very effective due to numbers. Also, Avitrol bait isn't very effective due to abundant food supplies this time of year and wasn't intended to kill whole flocks of birds. Most of us know there are creative concoctions that work very well and are not legal. Please DO NOT make your own baits! I can speak from experience that it's been done before. The persons/farms responsible were easily traceable due to birds and even eagles falling out of the sky into neighboring yards. These cases resulted in heavy penalties from DEC and the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

DEC still issues permits to landowners that have excessive deer damage. Again, contact your Regional DEC office. Happy hunting!!

WHAT HAPPENED TO MY SEEDINGS?

By David Shearing

This year we've seen some very disappointing seedings, and that prompts farmers to ask what went wrong. Here are two frequently asked questions:

1. Why do my seedings look good on the headlands but are so sparse in the rest of the field?
2. Why did my seedings come up good in some places but not others?

One answer may be related to when the seedings were put in. Some fields were planted too early and were hit by a freeze when the plants were vulnerable. That was just bad luck.

Seedbed preparation is another reason for disappointing seedings, and one you have more control over. You need to develop capillary action so the seed can get water from the soil. To do that, a firm seedbed is essential.

For tiny alfalfa and grass seeds to grow, they need water. If they don't get it from timely rains, it must come from the soil through capillary action. In other words, water moves up from below, like water coming up through a drinking straw. Loose and fluffy soil does not have very good capillary action.

How do you get good capillary action? One way is a firmly packed seedbed. Some farmers plow, fit, smooth and plant. Sometimes this creates a firm seedbed; sometimes it's still fluffy. A conventionally tilled seedbed must be firm enough so you can barely see a footprint. Sometimes a field can be firmed correctly in the low spots, but the hills are still fluffy. This means the operator isn't aware of soil conditions all over a field. You may not always be able to fit a field two or three times before putting down the seed, but sometimes that is necessary on the knolls to properly prepare the soil. Otherwise, the seed will either never swell and sprout, or it will get pushed in so far with the roller you'll never see the seed again. Either roll the field or cultipack it before air-flowing the seed on. If it is really dry, then roll the field once one way and a second time crossways on the dry knolls.

Plowing for a seeding gets the ground soft enough to push down stones still in a field. Some people try to get everything except the last cultipack fitting done in the fall. In the spring they hit it once and air-flow on the seed.

No-tilled seedings are the best ones I've seen this year. They have good capillary action.