Especially with biotechnology, new hybrid corn seeds mean a reduction in insecticide and herbicide use. Increased corn yields mean more efficiency when it comes to how much nitrogen, phosphate and potassium are used per bushel of corn grown. Modern tillage practices, including no-till farms, are becoming more prevalent and have greatly decreased soil erosion. AG WEB

Western New York CROP MANAGEMENT

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Summer Scouting Topics

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Insects

The arrival of **Potato Leaf Hopper** (PLH) in alfalfa fields has occurred. Expect them to be here until late August. Each year we anticipate finding them in alfalfa regrowth. (These insects are not a problem in grass hay.) Last year they were worse due to hot, drouthy conditions. This season certainly is not dry or hot at this date but that can change rapidly.

Regardless, scouting is needed to manage this insect. Most fields may not need treatment. Early harvested (May) fields should be good until second cutting, but monitor those fields that were cut later or remain standing. Every field needs to be checked after second. We have had 4 to 5 inches of rain so far in June so there is an enormous amount of late cut alfalfa.

Black Cutworm is done for this season. We have seen damage in no-till fields planted into weedy or grassy fields. There is no substitute for early-season burn down on those types of fields.

Slugs were and are a problem in no till and zone till fields. They love the wet weather and come out from under groundcover to feed at night. They continue to be a problem on late planted corn fields. Follow recommendations from your scout and/or consultant.

Corn Rootworm larvae should be hatching now; they coincide with the appearance of adult fireflies. You will see the fireflies from now on during warm nights. Extremely wet June weather usually means low rootworm larval survival. But, only scouting will tell for sure. We will start scouting for adults (beetles) at the end of July.

Weeds

Corn (glyphosate tolerant or RR): The ongoing wet conditions have allowed many weeds to grow beyond the size for optimal application of herbicides. Check fields closely or follow the CMA scouting reports for your farm. If your application continues to be delayed, check with your consultant to determine if a change in product or rate is warranted.

If applying a Halex based program, use the upper recommended rate of 4 pint/acre.

Corn (conventional): There are many alternatives and limitations for larger weeds in conventional corn. Check with your consultant if you don't have adjusted recommendations now.

Soybean (glyphosate tolerant): As with corn, increase glyphosate rate by 1.5 times if annual broadleaf weeds are greater than 3 inches tall. A residual material such as Harmony SG or Unity WDG will be needed, particularly if the beans are in rows. Volunteer corn needs the addition of Fusilade, Assure/Targa or Select Max. The presence of nutsedge may mean the addition of Synchrony XP. Carefully observe label rates.

Crop Culture

Delayed or prevented planting: Many fields intended for soybean or corn after first cut hay have not been planted. Don't expect high yields from late June plantings. It may be better to look for alternatives or leave fields fallow for summer seedings or for winter wheat.

Corn and soy seed can be stored over the winter in dry sites with adequate rodent protection. Do a germination test next March or April.

VTA's

by Lori Whittington

VTA's (Vegetated Treatment Areas) are the new and improved version of the "old" filter field. Their purpose is to improve water quality by reducing loading of nutrients, organics, pathogens and other contaminants associated with runoff from such areas as feedlots, compost areas, barnyards, and other livestock holding areas or to treat wastewater from agricultural operations (i.e. bunk silo runoff, milking center wastewater). This is a practical choice if you are not able or willing to collect rainwater.

Along with the VTA comes its companion practice, the low-flow collection system. This design for collecting the low-flow (drainage not coming from rain) that seeps naturally from the nutrient-rich source is the heart of this NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service) standard ag practice. Failure to capture all that low-flow into a collection tank or send it (hopefully gravity-fed) to a manure storage facility can result in "kill-zones" in the VTA. Kill-zones are dead, burnt vegetation resulting from "too hot" of a liquid entering the VTA. To reduce the amount of this high nutrient cocktail going out onto your VTA, you must collect as much of the low-flow as possible. With that in mind, the following list was compiled to increase the longevity of your VTA.

VTA Maintenance to Optimize the System

1) Don't let waste silage pile up around your screen system or near the low-flow collection area. This is essentially a tea bag of low-flow sitting around waiting for rain to come and rinse it out onto the VTA. **Dilution is not the solution.**

2) Clean the screen system regularly. This may mean several times a week.

3) Don't put a stone over the top of your low-flow collection pipe. (Really, I've seen it.)

4) Take a few minutes to stop and watch when you have low-flow flowing to make sure it really is going in the low-flow collection pipe as designed. This should NOT be sitting in the high-flow area waiting for a rainy day to come and wash it out onto your VTA. (Remember, "dilution is not the solution.")

5) Mow at least twice a season and REMOVE the vegetation from your VTA.

6) REMOVE the vegetation from your VTA after mowing. Yes, I said it twice, because this is really important. The vegetation uptakes the phosphorus and you are only adding it back to the soil when you leave the clippings on the VTA. Essentially you are setting your VTA up for failure. I cannot stress how important #5 & #6 are.

7) Clean the level-lip spreader. Remove vegetative growth from the lip-spreader that is prohibiting a sheet-flow action from the high-flow. (Stone berms should be weed-free.) Ideally, high-flow water should spread out across the width of the VTA, not run down the middle in a straight line that will eventually erode and cause a gully.

8) Puddles anywhere in your VTA are indications that repair is needed. You may need to add some soil to the area, or possibly re-grade portions of the VTA. It should look smooth, clean and green; nicely cut with clippings removed; and free of debris such as trees or animal carcasses.

The NRCS standard requires your VTA to be soil tested once every three years to monitor phosphorus levels. If the level is above the 80-lb/acre threshold, you are confronted with two options. Option 1 is to build a brand new VTA in a different location. Option 2 involves replacing the topsoil on the current VTA. Neither choice sounds very appealing, not to mention labor intensive and costly. It's not cheap to replace 6,000 sq. feet (20' x 300') of topsoil, and those calculations are for a small VTA. Try this….tomorrow morning look at yourself in the mirror and say "Do I want to maintain my VTA or do I want to spend money on a new design, labor and topsoil to fix it every 3 years?"

Don't think it doesn't happen. Yes, we have had to advise farms to replace the topsoil or move the VTA because the phosphorus levels in their soil test came back above 80 lbs/acre. Trust me, this is not a pretty conversation to have, especially when you are small like me. Staring up into the eyes of a farmer who hasn't had enough sleep, is thinking about the vet who is coming in an hour, had to take over feeding cows this morning because one of his laborers got arrested yesterday, and is about to make a do-or-die decision about what fungicide to apply to his crops is not enjoyable. On top of that, hearing his stomach growling as you begin to tell him he needs to replace 6,000 square feet of topsoil on his VTA or build a brand new one because his CAFO permit doesn't allow high phosphorus levels doesn't help. (And, whether you are a CAFO or not, if you received funding to install a VTA, you are required to maintain it for the life of the practice, which is 10 years.) Bottom-line, it's just a matter of time before this conversation will be confronting you if you are not maintaining your VTA.

CAFO Regulation Update

by Lori Whittington

CAFO Thresholds: Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's initiative to increase the CAFO threshold is well underway. As you may remember, he had proposed that the CAFO threshold be increased to 300 mature dairy cows before being required to file for a SPDES permit (previously it was 200 mature dairy cows). The regulation was released on May 8th and the DEC is in the 60-day statute of limitations period that extends to July 8th. Essentially, this means that there is a two-month period in which lawsuits can be brought against the new directive. If no one objects by July 8th, the new threshold is a go. On the other hand, if environmental groups file challenges, everything reverts back to the previous regulation until courts can resolve the issue. We advise all of our farmers to wait for the July 8th date before initiating steps to terminate a CAFO permit based on the new guidelines and to speak with your CAFO planner.

As a reminder, here are WNYCMA's top reasons for ***maintaining your CAFO permit:***

- Having and maintaining a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) increases the value of your farm.
- Financial lending institutions often require that a current CNMP be in place and request a copy of your Annual Compliance Report.
- Most NRCS and Soil & Water Conservation District Programs require a CNMP to apply for funding.
- Medium CAFO's have already taken on the responsibility of implementing the practices required under previous CAFO regulations and falling to the wayside seems impractical.
- You maintain your status as a responsible, progressive farmer who is following environmental laws to protect our future, the future of our children and the future of farmers across NYS.
- You stand out as a leader and an example to those farms who fall short of the thresholds.
- With a permit, you are protected from a citizen suit filed under the Clean Water Act.
- Any funding you may have received to install Best Management Practices to become compliant with your existing permit can still be jeopardized for failure to properly operate and maintain those systems.

CAFO Permits: Both permits (ECL & CWA) are targeted for renewal June 30, 2014.

General Regulation Updates

by Lori Whittington

Petroleum Bulk Storage regulations are still currently under review. Operators must demonstrate their knowledge of how to properly operate and maintain UST (Underground Storage Tanks). The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is currently revising its Petroleum Bulk Storage (PBS) regulations, which will incorporate the federal UST operator training requirements. Yes, they said "training requirements". As of this writing, new documentation should be forthcoming late in 2013. You can monitor new developments at the following site: http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/remediation_hudson_pdf/tb2012.pdf.

Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasure Regulation (SPCC): The deadline for completion was May 2013. This is a federal regulation whose goal is to prevent oil spills, even a drip, into waters of the Untied States and adjoining shorelines. A key element of this program calls for farmers and other facilities to have an oil spill prevention plan, called an SPCC Plan. There are thresholds regarding the type of plan required as well as secondary containment. Contact your CAFO planner for more information or visit this website, www.epa.gov/emergencies, and click on "SPCC".

Water Withdrawal: Just a reminder, if you are withdrawing 100,000 gallons or more per day of surface or groundwater and haven't previously registered, you are now required to have a DEC permit. More information on this law can be found at http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/55509.html or by speaking with your CAFO planner.

Open Burning: We are still seeing plastics and unauthorized substances being burned on farms. Agricultural Plastic Recycling Programs are available through Wyoming County Cornell Cooperative Extension and Genesee County Soil & Water Conservation District. Many farms are now participating and it's good to see what a positive impact this has had.

The above information is not a complete summary of all regulations you are required to follow, however, point out new and recent regulations you may need to consider. If you are interested in receiving information on any of these regulations or have questions, please contact your CAFO representative.

Does Your Corn Have Enough Nitrogen to Finish the Season?

We have all heard the old adage: when it rains; it pours. Lately this has taken on a very literal manifestation. As a result, you may be wondering if your early nitrogen applications are still available for the crop or if you should raise your side-dress amounts.

In previous years, we have depended on PSNTs (Pre-Side-dress Nitrogen Tests) to determine the amount of nitrogen still available in the soil. In the past few years, Cornell University has developed a model entitled Adapt-N that can provide site-specific estimates of nitrogen content in fields without requiring soil testing. It takes into account many factors, including rainfall amounts and timing (accurate to within 1 km), manure and fertilizer applications, previous crops and resulting residue, soil characteristics, and the needs of the specific cultivars. After entering the full battery of information into the computer program, a total of available nitrogen is generated as well as the amount required to bring the crop to maturity at the targeted yield.

If you are interested in utilizing this technology to analyze your available nitrogen, please discuss this topic with your crop consultant. You will have to provide some initial information including tillage and planting methods and dates, fertilizer and manure records, burn-down methods and dates, percent legume in the previous crop, residue left after tillage, cultivars planted, and yield targets. Although this seems like a lengthy list, the information is crucial to provide an accurate recommendation, specific to your site and situation.

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