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Capital Area Ag Report
July 24, 2014

“Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without the strategy. — H. Norman Schwarzkopf

Announcements

August 21st, 2014 Soil Health Field Day with CCE at Kinderhook Creek Farm, Inc., 5168 South Stephentown Road, Stephentown, NY from 4:30-8:30 pm. The meeting is FREE, but please RSVP by August 18th, 2014. For more information or to RSVP please contact Marcie Vohnoutka at (518) 272-4210 or mmp74@cornell.edu.

Soil is the backbone of every farm and needs to be managed for maximum production. Are you using the most current techniques for the best results? Experience: Dinner on the farm; Demonstration cover crop plots; A farmer panel; Soil health demonstrations; Equipment demonstrations.

Our speakers include: Olga Vargas, NRCS Soil Scientist; Paul Salon, NRCS Plant Materials Specialist; Frank Gibbs, Certified Professional Soil Scientist and Certified Crop Advisor

1.5 DEC Credits and 4 CCA Credits Available

The Ag Report is produced by Aaron Gabriel

The NYS IPM Weekly field Crops Pest Report is at http://blogs.cornell.edu/ipmwrp/
Weather Data—July 22, 2014

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FYI

The August Issue of the Beef Cattle Comments (from Mike Baker, Cornell U.) is at http://beefcattle.ansci.cornell.edu/. Table of Contents:

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5. NYCG GRAZETTE
6. BQA-UPDATE – CURT PATE TO HOLD LOW STRESS HANDLING CLINICS
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8. EXPANDING YOUR HERD? “Choose a cow that is profitable in your market and environment”
9. “BEEF UP YOUR BOTTOM LINE” CORNELL BEEF FARM BUSINESS SUMMARY
10. TO/DO AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

Crops & Soils…Aaron Gabriel

Soil Health: I want to encourage you to attend the Soil Health Day on August 21 at Kinderhook Creek Farm (see the Announcements). This year, spring came in slowly, but overall we have had good weather for crops. If you are not happy with your crops so far this year, then you need to evaluate the soil health. Actually, you should be evaluating soil health every year
in every field. Do you evaluate the health of every animal on your farm? Then why not evaluate the foundation of your farm productivity—the soil. It is routine for us to send soil samples off for a chemical analysis, but that is just 1/3 of the picture. Would you evaluate just 1/3 of an animal? Along with the soil chemical profile, the physical health and biological health of the soil are just as important. They can limit yield even if you spend lots of money on lime and fertilizer. The workshop on August 21 will teach you how to evaluate the other 2/3 of soil health—the physical and biological aspects of your soil. What happened the last time you ignored a little problem?? If you have not been to a soil health training, your opportunity is here—do not procrastinate.

**Corn:** Many fields look really good. Now is a good time to take a walk into fields and look at how your plants are doing. Dig up some roots. Have corn rootworms eaten any roots? Bill Bauer, Farm Journal Corn College, has an interesting video clip online about checking stalks on pollinated corn to see if enough nitrogen has been applied. Slice the stalk length-wise and get to the middle. You will see dark lines across the stalk, which are the nodes. And then there is the white pith of the internodes. The pith in the internodes should still be firm, not soft. At brown silk, there should be at least 3 firm internodes, and at least one at black layer (grain maturity). If you have too many soft internodes, that can mean that the plant is cannibalizing the stalk too soon. You could possibly be short of nitrogen, according to Bill Bauer. Although, it can also be a shortage of potassium as well. If there is an excess of nitrogen and the plants are really growing fast, a potassium deficiency can also lead to stalk cannibalization. When the stalk gets cannibalized, it can break easily and stalk rots can progress easily. Take a good knife, and perhaps a sharp hatchet and slice a few stalks to the center to see if the pith is still healthy and firm.

Keep an eye out for corn diseases. If you are seeing leaf spots above the ear, then it could progress enough by the end of the season to cause a yield loss.

I have not seen any corn rootworms yet, but I expect that they will be out very soon, if they are not already. If there is an average of one adult beetle per plant, then that field

*Northern corn leaf blight*

**Alfalfa:** We have had decent moisture for the second and third cuttings of alfalfa. Potassium becomes less available during the summer as the soils dry out. Now is a good time to plan any needed fertilizer applications for alfalfa. Fall is around the corner, and soon alfalfa (and clover) will build its energy reserves. Potassium (and phosphorus) are an important part of helping alfalfa prepare for winter. If fields do not get manure, a boron soil test is also advisable when you soil sample this winter. Continue to watch for potato leafhopper.

**Grasses:** Take note of leaf diseases in grasses. They seem to be increasing, especially in or-
chardgrass. If you see disease spots on grass leaves, record what variety it is, and use that for future planting decisions. It is okay to apply nitrogen to grasses now to get another cutting. By late-August, nitrogen fertilization should stop, so plants can harden off for winter.

**Small Grains:** SLAM is the acronym used to explain the management practices of grain storage. You simply cannot harvest grain when it is dry, put it in a bin and forget about it. Several management steps must be taken to maintain grain quality. It starts with **Sanitation.** Clean around bins and buildings as well as inside storage bins and structures. Remove spilled grain, weeds, dust, anything that will harbor rodents and insects. Lights near grain storages will attract bugs at night, including some that are pests. Area lights should not be right next to storages and not left on all night. The next management area is **Loading.** Store only clean grain, **without** broken kernels, fines, plant parts. This trash only impedes air flow through the grain and is a haven for insects and molds. After filling a bin, level the pile so there is no peak. FOLLOW SAFETY PRECAUTIONS. Go to https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/grainhandling/ or many other grain bin safety websites. (Last year there was a death from a grain bin accident in the mid-west.) **Aeration** is the next management area. Moisture will migrate and concentrate in one area, **even in dry grain.** It only takes a difference in temperature for moisture to concentrate in one spot. A bit of engineering is involved in aeration, but the principle is to keep the entire pile at the same temperature. Aeration redistributes any heat to even out the hot and cold spots. **Monitoring** must continue after grain is stored—at least once per month during the winter and once every two weeks during the other seasons of the year. A thermometer is the simple and preferred tool. You must also use sight, smell, and feel to examine the grain, at both the top and bottom of the bin. Some bins will have ways to monitor the middle of the grain mass as well. Go to https://utextension.tennessee.edu/publications/documents/PB1724.pdf for an excellent publication entitled “Maintaining Quality in On-Farm Stored Grain.”