Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities
Cornell Cooperative Extension

**Capital Area Ag Report**
**April 23, 2014**

**Announcements**

**Wednesday, May 7, 6:30 pm**—On-Farm Hay Management Meeting—Evaluating and Managing Hay Fields—at Juniper Farm (Mary Menard & Larry Hume), Cassidy Ln, Shushan. ID weeds and desired hay species. Managing soils, hay crop, harvest, and pests. RSVP appreciated and for questions contact Aaron, 518-380-1496 (call or text), adg12@cornell.edu. RAIN OR SHINE. (DIRECTIONS: State Rte 22 to Co Rte 64, continue 1.1 mi, then go straight onto Perry Hill Rd; continue 0.1 mi & bear right onto Juniper Swamp Rd.; after 0.8 mi continue left on Juniper Swamp Rd.; continue 1.8 miles to Cassidy Ln on the right; Go up Cassidy Ln.)

**Wednesday, June 11, 6:30 pm**—On-Farm Hay Management Meeting—Conditioning Hay With A Macerator & Using Hay Preservatives—at (Don) Skott Farm & Equipment, intersection of Quaker and Grove Side Rd (Co Rte 109). Demonstration of the Macerator 6610 (made by AgLand Industries, Inc) which super conditions hay with its roller mill system to speed up drying time by one day with the proper weather. Also see and discuss propionate hay preservative applicator and use. RSVP appreciated and for questions contact Aaron, 518-380-1496 (call or text), adg12@cornell.edu. RAIN OR SHINE. (DIRECTIONS: From Rte 7 in Pittstown, go north on Co Rte 109 (Groverside Rd.) for 2.1 mi, farm is on the left at Quaker Rd.; From State Rte 67 in Buskirk, go south on Co Rte 103 (Buskirk/
West Hoosick Rd) after 2.5 mi, turn left then right to stay on Rte 103; continue 1.4 mi, then turn right onto Co Rte 109, Long Woods Rd.; continue 0.8 mi and bear left to stay on Co Rte 109/ Groveside Rd.; continue 1.7 miles to Quaker Rd. intersection and farm is on the right.

FYI:

- **Be on the lookout for Invasive Species:** The *Brown Marmorated Sting Bug* is in our area and uses it piercing mouthparts to feed on soybeans, fruits, and vegetable crops. The *Western Bean Cutworm* is a caterpillar that feeds in corn ears and on dry beans. It has been showing up in late July. If you see crop damage from these pests, please give me a call.

- The latest issue of *What's Cropping Up?* is available at [http://css.cals.cornell.edu/cals/css/extension/cropping-up/index.cfm](http://css.cals.cornell.edu/cals/css/extension/cropping-up/index.cfm) with timely articles in this issue on soybeans, corn, small grains, and weed control.

- The archived webinar entitled "Corn Rootworm Management in the Transgenic Era" is now available by visiting [https://www.ncipmc.org/videos/index.cfm](https://www.ncipmc.org/videos/index.cfm) and clicking on the link for the webinar.


**Corn:** *Planting depth* is a critical decision. Last year (it was dry early), corn planted at 1 1/2” was in dry soil and sat there and resulted in uneven emergence. I suggest planting at 2” for a more uniform environment. If you usually get *bird damage to seedling corn*, I suggest that you plant at 2 1/2”. Birds have a harder time pulling up the deeply rooted seedlings, and will give up (and perhaps go to your neighbor’s field). I have seed birds reduce corn populations from 32,000 to 25,000 plants per acre. Plus, they create very large gaps between plants, which really hurts yield. Corn will perform very well being planted at 2 1/2”. Bill Cox completed a
study of planting corn at 1” up to 3”. Read When, What, and How Deep to Plant Corn on Well-Drained Soils in New York? at (http://css.cals.cornell.edu/cals/css/extension/cropping-up/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=1119475). Remember, that this study was on well-drained soils. Planting deep when the soil is wet may cause some problems—you should not “mud it in”.

How will you control corn pests this year? I have found that seed-applied insecticides provide poor protection against seedcorn maggot and cutworms. Liquid insecticide at planting or the old style granular insecticides that go through a separate insecticide hopper on the planter are other ways to control seedling pests.

You can tell now if you had severe corn rootworm (CRW) damage last year. Look for stalks that escaped harvest because they were laying down. All the stalks laying in one direction could mean just wind, or wind blowing over rootworm-weakened plants.

Corn rootworm are becoming resistant to genetically modified corn in the mid-west and New York. University entomologist warned seed companies that the CRW is a different beast than the European corn borer and needs a big refuge, much larger than what is provided by “refuge in a bag”. Be proactive and plant at least a 20% refuge of corn without the Bt-rootworm resistance.

Nitrogen management in corn is a bit tricky. We want 30 lbs of nitrogen as starter fertilizer. It is hard to get this much with some liquid fertilizers. It is best to side-dress additional nitrogen when the corn is from 6” to 12” tall. This can be frustrating, trying to avoid mud and compaction—and you may say that “if I put all the nitrogen (N) on with herbicide near planting, I do not have to worry about it”. However, if you get too much rain early on, most of that N will be lost. You will have to put more on anyway as a side-dress once it is dry enough to get into the fields. Side-dressing pays (with better yields) and saves (with less N loss and more efficient N use).

Alfalfa: Now is a good time to check alfalfa fields. I am finding some plants regrowing slowly or not at all. This may be a symptom of “brown root rot” (Phoma sclerotioides).

I have seen only slight heaving of crowns.
I am not a fan of using nurse crops when seeding hay unless it is needed to prevent erosion. The small grain (typically used as a nurse crop) compete with the hay crop for moisture. In a year like this, we can go from cool to warm very quickly, and moisture stress could be a big concern in our hay seedings.

**Grasses:** Both temperature and daylength affect the time of flowering for grasses. Daylength is a big influence (not so in alfalfa). So, even though we are having a cool spring (so far), do not expect grasses to enter the flowering stage much later than usual.

Check grasses for winter survival. They can winterkill, especially when we had a spring with ice sheets in the field. I have not seen any snow mold.

**Grazing:** The grazing chart from Troy Bishopp is a great way to plan your grazing season, [http://thegrasswhisperer.com/grazing-assistance/](http://thegrasswhisperer.com/grazing-assistance/). It involves more than just pasture management, but wholistic management system.

Also, “On Pasture” is a very good online newsletter about grazing, [http://onpasture.com/](http://onpasture.com/).

It is late to do any frost seeding, but not too late to use a no-till drill to interseed into what you already have. For success, you need a vigorous species (clovers, orchagrass, ryegrass) and little competition from the existing stand. Also, you need good soil structure—friable, granular structure that is not compacted.

**Cover Crops:** This is a picture of what is left of tillage radish that was seeded last fall. The radishes leave holes in the ground as they rot away after being frozen. I do not think that tillage radish relieves any deep compaction, but the topsoil seems to be in good condition. Although, my penetrometer went into the soil just as easily in this area where the radishes grew, compared to the adjacent section of hay. I think that this field after radishes is ready for no-till corn or other no-till crop without needing any tillage.

**Soil Health:** The shovel is an excellent diagnostic tool. In a continuous corn field I simply lifted out a shovel full of Belgrade silt loam soil, and you can see how the soil (with a little coaxing) separated into layers. Layers of soil like this is a sign of compaction. Water movement is inhibited, both to infiltrate the soil and wick up from the subsoil during times of little rain.
Manure Spreading Discussion from DFBS Wrap-Up Meeting
BY: Sandy Buxton

Are you efficient and effective? Part of the discussion with Jason Karszes of Cornell’s PRO-Dairy Team at the Dairy Farm Business Summary (DFBS) Wrap-Up meeting revolved around some of the preliminary data collected in a manure spreading study in 2013.

Jason and Betsey Howland, also of PRO-Dairy, worked with more than 30 dairy farms to document info about how the farm moved and spread the farm’s primary source of manure. They tracked expenses, time, investment, loads and gallons which are now being crunched into some very interesting numbers. They will be releasing articles and other info later this spring and summer.

One of the key questions they are wrestling with is efficiency. What does it mean to the farm? What is the farm’s capacity for spreading their manure? Using a base of a 10 hour work day, how many days does it take to spread a year’s worth of manure?

When a farm is on a daily spread regimen, it is possible that a small concrete storage capable of holding 3+/− months of manure would provide a number of options. It might allow the farm to improve capture of N by concentrating the spreading at best possible times, by reaching far flung fields and by limiting application at times when the weather makes it inappropriate.

This gets to the concept of effectiveness. There are some definite dollar values to keep in mind as a farm works through the information. Potential fuel, labor or fertilizer savings might combine with available NRCS money to make such a structure a reality.

Another piece of wisdom Jason relayed to the group was his “30 Second AIS Rule”. The rule sounds something like this: “if your butt (a**) is going to be out of the seat for more than 30 seconds, the piece of machinery should be shut-off”. Not idled down but shutoff.

He frequently talks about farms and their un-seen fuel consumption during every day work like feeding, scraping and spreading. Because the tractor gets filled each day before a big day of fieldwork, fuel consumption is on everyone’s mind. The daily chores are far more insidious in their level of fuel useage or waste, causing dollars to flow off the farm.

The reality is starters are easy to replace…..OK, relatively easy to replace IF you know what you are doing and you have a replacement on the shelf….at $4.00/gal for diesel fuel, it is still far cheaper to turn the equipment on and off.

So keep watch for some of the final info and start thinking about these topics when you are moving around the roads and fields this spring.

Milk Price is High, What should I do with my Money?
By: Sandy Buxton

Every year, dairy farmers talk and meditate on the milk price and where it is headed. Right now, we are still experiencing a strong system. And that looks pretty stable, so it begs the question: what should I do with my money?
Jason Karszes, PRO-Dairy, gave his top 4 items at the DFBS Wrap-Up meeting.

Pay off Accounts Payable (A/P) – pay off anyone you still owe to get you on track.
Line of Operating Credit – if you have an operating LOC with your financial institution, pay that down in hopes that you can borrow it back if the price goes south and you are short on cash.
Pre-pay during the year. Buying usable items (fertilizer, seed, supplies) when you have cash will allow you to get discounts, lower your cash operating expense for next year and possibly receive a lower purchase price (due to fuel increases, regular price jumps or inflation). Even better if you get paid interest to have money “on account”.
Accelerate debt payments or bank cash. One of the challenges of accelerating debt payments is the money is not always available for re-borrowing AND principal repaid is NOT deductible.

The farm’s overall goal should be to improve efficiencies and lower operating costs. This means the farm should plan for upcoming capital improvements and ideally use borrowed money to achieve them. Right now, debt is still very cheap (low interest rate) but to relieve pressure and stress on the business, having 6 months of debt payments sitting in the bank as cash will help to prepare for a down cycle.
All capital investment opportunities should be analyzed for what they will mean to the business. Each decision should be made to position the business for the next down cycle… because it will be coming…..or to reduce operating expenses.

Don’t forget – this is what to do with EXTRA money. Regular investment in some type of retirement system (SEP, Roth IRA, or regular IRA) should already be part of the business plan to set farm owners and managers up for the future succession/transition process.