

“Ag Happenings”

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Jim's Thoughts

by Jim Farley

Spring is about to spring and I am ready for some average, or above average rainfall.

I am constantly asked about fertilizer prices for this spring. Predicting fertilizer prices is about like predicting what the stock market or the weather is going to do.

elements after the drought that they experienced last year, which could lead to a reduction of usage in 2013.

Nitrogen is a different story. Corn acreage nationwide is going to be up again this year.

Corn prices are high. Those Midwest farmers are making money, even at high nitrogen

prices. They will use a lot of nitrogen this spring. Nitrogen prices are about the same

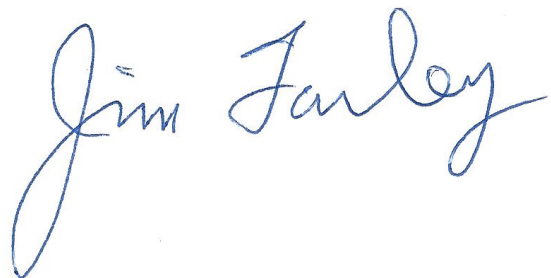
now, as they were a year ago. I anticipate additional increases, as spring approaches. I

think, when it all shakes out, that nitrogen prices will be about the same, later this year, as last year.

For instance, let's look at 200# of liquid nitrogen plus weed killer plus Dimilin for grasshoppers plus application in April or May. My best estimate is \$60.00 per acre.

With that in mind, here are my best guesses about the direction that I think fertilizer pricing is going. You can take my prediction, and a couple of dollars, and buy a cup of coffee just about anywhere, except Starbucks.

Phosphorus and Potassium are both \$60 - \$80 per ton less than a year ago. I don't see a lot of upside in those markets. The Midwest should have a substantial carryover of those



By the way, I have already had several



reports of **small grasshoppers** being seen.

I would encourage you to consider putting out a balanced fertilizer on bermudagrass this year. We have had two years of drought in a row and the root system is in bad shape. We can also impregnate Grazon Next HL herbicide on dry fertilizer. We tried it last year, and it



worked very well, when applied before the first of May.

Woolly Croton

I bet you saw plenty of this weed at the end of last season. Woolly croton loves a drought and because of the drought and no competition it grew like a tree this past summer and fall. Don't worry it is an annual plant that can be easily controlled if sprayed when small. Unfortunately the drought left lots of room for it to germinate late after weed sprays and so we saw a huge problem in pastures late in the season.

Early Maturity

This wheat picture was taken on February 18 as about 10% of the wheat was in boot stage and the rest in pre-boot. It is an unusual year that had little growth in the fall because of drought, severe cold in December, rains and high temperatures in January and mild temperatures in February. Small grains received the cold they needed and then the warm weather started maturity and since the weather kept warm plants moved quickly to reproductive growth. So we have very little vegetative growth meaning plants are smaller, grain production is less and overall yields of forage or grain will be 10-25% less. Also we have the chance to get freeze damage on grain heads.

Mix 30

Mix 30 Liquid Feed is a "high energy" protein supplement created from a combination of corn and soy based co-products that is good for all ruminants. It is an alternative to the traditional molasses-urea liquid feed and has the versatility to be used in a wide variety of feeding situations. Many of our

customers feed Mix 30 but as with all supplements producers want it cheaper to buy and meet animal needs in very low volume - almost impossible!

I did a survey of some of our larger buyers to find out their thoughts on feeding Mix 30 and results are not too surprising:

1. 50% said they fed less than 6 lbs per hd. per day and 50% fed over 6 lbs a day.
2. 90% feed a mineral supplement in addition to Mix 30. As a side comment I have been in many cattle pastures and over 50% of the mineral feeders are empty!
3. 40% of producers feed hay free-choice and 60% limit feed hay. In



order for supplements like this to work hay or forage must be free-choice.

4. Finally, 30% are satisfied with Mix 30 while 50% are not satisfied. The 50% not satisfied relate to those feeding over 6 lbs per hd. per day which can be expensive long term.

I have seen cow herds go up in consumption for awhile only to return to normal patterns usually when a new batch of hay is fed or a new pasture is made available. With green grass now

appearing, consumption is falling dramatically.

Grasshoppers

It may seem early to talk about this subject but just the other day Daryl Medford stopped by and in the conversation mentioned seeing hatched grasshoppers in a lawn. Others have seen the same thing and if you drive



around much you can't miss the large adults still in pasture areas. There is every indication that this will be another bad grasshopper year and being early is the only way to win the war.

There are 150 species of grasshoppers but five species live in our area and they all have different hatch dates. This creates a problem for treatment but

knowing what you have can help. The picture above is a Packard's grasshopper that likes sandy soils with sparse grass.

Fortunately we have an insect growth regulator called Dimilin that is very effective on grasshoppers. It is used at very low rates and is cost effective but must be used early in the growth stage of grasshoppers. Catching them small is the key because this product prevents molting to the next growth stage. If they are mature the chemical has no effect meaning, early is better!

Grassburrs

If you ever had a problem with grassburrs in your pastures you should be thinking about them now! Grassburrs are hard to control because they are an annual grass growing in a perennial grass pasture and the same chemicals that control one will control the other too. We do have some choices but timing is the key.

First we have Pastora, a relatively new chemical product that controls many broadleaf weeds and lots of grasses in bermudagrass pastures. BUT, you have to apply this product early, when the weeds or grassburrs are small. Looking at the grassburr picture above Pastora will not work, the damage is already done! Ideally we must use Pastora when the plant is small, 2-4 leaf stage which is probably late March, maybe early April. This is well before most growers want to fertilize and spray weeds. I use a "nursery" area of grassburrs to know how they are progressing. Just find a spot in the field where they were bad last year and watch for seedlings. As they germinate you can easily know when to



spray.



This pictures shows the perfect size for control.

Sendero Herbicide

Sendero is a fairly new mesquite control herbicide for either broadcast or individual plant treatments. This is not a replacement for Remedy/Diesel used as a stem spray but it is a replacement for Reclaim that is sprayed on the foliage to wet in summer.

Sendero is a mixture of Aminopyralid and Chlopyralid. Aminopyralid is the new product in Grazon Next for pasture weed control and Chlopyralid is the active ingredient in Reclaim, long used for foliar spraying of mesquite. This mix in Sendero is very active on many species of brush and applications we have made here on mesquite have been outstanding. Timing is critical but basically we need warm soil temperatures. Rate on mesquite is 1.75 pints per acre with a surfactant. If you have lots of mesquite per acre you might consider broadcast applications of Sendero instead of bulldozing. Cheaper, less invasive weed control and grass growth returns quickly!

Pecan Budbreak and Zinc

The way things are moving we are not far away from pecan budbreak. Certainly pecan prices last year were the worst we have seen in a long time and you may not want to even look at your trees again but they keep growing and keep needing care. One of the most important things you can do for this years crop and even long term health is to apply zinc. In most cases we have lots of zinc in the soil but pecan trees in this part of the world just cant take it up. Because of this our trees get really deficient in zinc and can exhibit the symptoms of small leaves, short branches and lower yield.

In order to take care of this we have to make zinc applications starting at budbreak (see picture) and continuing

through the end of June or when leaves have matured. Zinc is not translocated in the plant and so all new leaves are deficient while older leaves already sprayed are fine. This means we need to



make 4-5 sprays in the spring to take care of the problem.

One of the most common materials is zinc sulphate but growers also use zinc nitrate. A product used for years in this area all the way to West Texas was NZN. NZN was made by an Arizona company and was a favorite of growers with the larger variety pecans. Unfortunately the company stopped making NZN years ago and growers have been looking for a replacement.

Larry Graham with CNI AgriMinerals, our micronutrient supplier, is now making **Chem-Poly Zinc** which has the same chemical makeup as NZN - 15% nitrogen and 5% zinc from Zinc Nitrate. This has 3 different sources of nitrogen including 5.9% Ammoniacal Nitrogen, 7.7% Nitrate Nitrogen and 1.4% Urea Nitrogen all designed to enhance zinc uptake. We think it will fill a real need in our area.

Soil Samples in Our Area

that is processed for the oil fracking business. Guar, is a drought-resistant legume that was brought to the United States in the early 1900s. It prefers a hot, dry climate like that of West Texas, southwestern Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona. Guar is well-suited to these semiarid regions and thrives in areas receiving less than 30-inches annual rainfall. When there is a lack of moisture, guar will stop growing but it will not die. It is even tolerant of soil salinity and alkalinity and grows in many well-drained soils. It really likes sandy loam soils like we have in our area!

The buyer is **West Texas Guar** and they are working with local growers to produce the crop and buy it for processing. Several growers have signed contracts and others are considering the potential. If you need more information just stop by our office in DeLeon.



means that lime is needed to correct pH and make fertilizer more available.

Farley Farm Supply uses A&L Labs out of Memphis, TN for all our soil and water samples. Since 2008 we have sent 2450

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samples to the lab for analysis which means there is a lot of data to analyze and a lot of information to help our customers as they decide how to care for their land.

Out of all these samples the average pH is 6.5 (7.0 is neutral) which is about what I would expect and the median, which means the number halfway down the list, is 6.6. The unusual part is that the lowest pH is 4.1 and the highest is 9.1. 461 of these samples are less than 5.7 pH which

Phosphorus and Potassium are necessary for plant growth and used in large quantities by plants. Of all the samples 50% are considered very low in phosphorus and 80% have to add at least some phosphorus for plant growth.

Of all the samples 50% are considered low in potassium and 40% have adequate levels and only 10% are very low.

Guar Production

We have an old crop newly introduced to our area - GUAR! This is a small seeded legume

