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Farm Update

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AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES
EDUCATION

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Summer Temperatures in March Advance Farm Activities

Warm dry weather was enjoyed in the last half of March with thousands of acres of soybeans and some corn planted in the last few days. Rain this past week was variable across the county, some areas receiving an inch or more, some areas receiving none, but it brought a decrease in temperatures to everyone. Before last week there was a lot of discussion about similarities between this spring and 2012. In general, the lower soil profile is not excessively dry. Most of the fields I've visited have more moisture at the surface and subsoil than in 2012. We'll need rain later this summer whether this crop is planted in dust or mud. Take time to enjoy planting fields that are dry for early April. Worry about a dry summer when summer gets here.

Despite the amount of crop already planted the ideal window to plant corn in this area is still April 10 to April 30 to achieve optimum or close to optimum yield potential. Planting depth should never be less than 2 inches for corn or 1 inch for soybeans. I know soil temperatures were warm the last few days but my advice is never return to the field to evaluate stand before two weeks have passed. Soybeans this time of year have been known to take as long as a month to emerge.

MESSENGER-INQUIRER

The last consideration for planting corn is what you were probably planning anyway. Plant the well-drained, upland fields first which will allow the corn to survive if the weather turns cool and wet. I hope everything that has been planted will emerge perfectly but we know from experience replant situations are more likely with crop planted in late March and early April than planted later in April and early May.

Alfalfa weevils are out in alfalfa fields. Growers should begin monitoring fields for weevil presence to determine if an insecticide application is necessary. Armyworm moth traps at the Princeton research station have recorded normal numbers for this time of year but pasture, wheat, and emerging corn should be scouted over the next three to four weeks.

Clover has come out of the winter with abundant growth. Closely observe your pastures, especially when turning out the first time after a winter of feeding hay. Bloat can occur with red clover but is much more common with white ladino clover and alfalfa. Little can be done to completely eliminate the risk of bloat but, if possible, avoid grazing very immature white clover or alfalfa. Put animals on lush legume pastures only when plants are dry of rain or dew moisture and after a full feeding of hay. Do not remove animals from the pasture during first signs of bloat. Continuous grazing results in less incidence of bloat than removal and return. Provide access to water and minerals. Observe animals closely following any abrupt change in the weather. Feed bloat-reducing compounds.

Grass tetany is a disorder in cattle caused by low magnesium levels in forages during the cold winter months and high magnesium requirements from cows that are nursing calves. Grass tetany is a very serious illness that will kill cows. Prevention is the key and it must be provided daily, most commonly through minerals containing additional magnesium levels. Four ounces

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per head per day of a 14-16 percent blend is suggested to prevent tetany. If not already, start feeding high mag minerals now! If magnesium uptake does not exceed the amount being used by the cow, deficiency occurs which leads to grass tetany.

Solar Eclipse Caution

I think most people are excited about the solar eclipse happening Monday afternoon. Remember to put a welding hood in the tractor if you plan to stop and enjoy the experience. I have been made aware that officials expect more traffic on our roads as people from areas around Elizabethtown and Bowling Green pass through Owensboro on their way to or returning from Evansville and Henderson. Both Ohio River bridges, roads to Reo and Rockport, the Audubon Parkway, and highways 60/60 by-pass, 56, and 1554 are expected to be crowded. If it works out, try to be in the field Monday afternoon and not moving equipment on those roads.

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