



Connect Inspire Achieve

April 2019 Enhance Webinar: Preparing for Planting Season, presented by Jon Erickson

Jon Erickson, a commercial agronomist with Mycogen seeds, reminded us of how pivotal planting season is. “The sins of planting will haunt you all season long,” said Erickson. As we well know, corn, especially in the form of corn silage, is an important part of production on US dairies. Most farms find it more economical to produce their silage on farm with cow performance then being a direct indicator of the quality of the crop. Jon shared the following list of practical points to help us produce high quality corn, dry and fermented:

- Choose a hybrid
 - Consider your goals and capabilities as a producer.
 - Choose where to plant each hybrid.
 - Manage to protect yield potential.
 - Provide nutrition.
 - Protect from pests.
- Fertility – “The key to a sound fertility program is a good soil testing program.”
 - Nitrogen
 - Sources include manure and added inorganic Nitrogen.
 - Will not appear on a soil test as it is highly mobile in the soil and therefore hard to measure accurately at any given point. A plant tissue test is a good option for monitoring nitrogen within the growing season.
 - Phosphorus
 - Promotes early root development.
 - Most operations utilizing dairy manure as fertilizer do not require additional P.
 - Deficiency seen in purpling of leaves.
 - Very important for your NMP.
 - Potassium
 - Important for disease resistance.
 - Aids in standability.
 - Secondary Nutrients (Ca, Mg, and S)
 - Deficiency seen in leaf streaking or lighter color.
 - Micronutrients (B, Cl, Cu, Fe, Mn, Mo, Ni, Zn)
 - Don't forget about these on your soil report, they too have an important role in plant development.

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- pH
 - Optimum: 6.0-6.5 (Unlike alfalfa which requires a pH closer to 7.0).
- Control Planting Factors:
 - Seed size
 - Ensure your planter is calibrated for the correct seed size.
 - Seed quality
 - Higher quality is always better.
 - Soil temperature
 - Less than 50°F is not suitable for planting, these temperatures (especially in combination with high soil moisture) can result in delayed emergence and increased risk of pathogens.
 - Planting Speed
 - 5.5mph is a good general rule to avoid fluctuation in seed depth.
 - Planting depth
 - Aim for 1.5-2 inches, this provides frost protection and facilitates good root development.
 - Important to dig up seeds to check both depth and spacing.

Jon shared some practical tools that producers can utilize to predict the production of individual fields by evaluating the percent germination, number of skips and doubles, and the number of plants that are behind (1-2 leaves and 3+ leaves). It's important to remember that the quality of your stand as well as the uniformity of the plants within it are directly correlated with production and feed quality on the dairy. Erickson reminded us of the importance of getting out in the field during planting to evaluate the above factors. The decisions made during planting will have a direct impact on your bottom line.

Written by DGN Press Corps Member, Kate Spaans

Edited by DGN Interactive Media Lead, Amanda Borkowski

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