

Prairie Grain

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When

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Building a Better Company

By SCOTT MAUCH, GENERAL MANAGER

Through the snow of winter and the mud of early spring, there's been a lot of building going on at Prairie Grain Partners. Our new chemical shed and the grain expansion project both required months of planning. No matter how many factors you take into account during that planning process, there's always room for improvement. That's where all of you come in.



We've learned to keep our eyes and ears open as you use our facilities. At the open house for the chemical shed, a lot of you gave us some good input on how we can use that facility to most efficiently serve all of our customers. It's all about accuracy and speed, and you had some mighty good ideas. It just points out once again the value of the partnership between Prairie Grain and the farmers we serve. We're both working toward the

same goal—providing great service and improving the return on your investment.

Progress update

Regarding the progress of our construction projects, the chemical shed is basically ready to go, though we will be pouring more cement once the ground settles. We do want your feedback on how the facility performs as we move through the production season.

If you've passed through Clarkfield, it's easy to see the progress on the grain expansion. The dump and boot pits are in, the tower is up, and bin foundation's being poured. The work is right on schedule, despite the tough winter and less-than-ideal early spring. If we can maintain this schedule, we should be using the new expansion for harvest this fall.

Operationally, with the inverted market we have, we expect a pretty good move between June and July. So don't wait until August and September to move your grain. Opportunity is only there until you miss it.

A short season like this can ratchet up the pressure. When you're tired, take some time and walk away for a bit. It may not feel like you can afford the time. But not doing it can cost you a lot more. Remember that we have resources, and we're here to help. Use us. 🍷

Workers have made good progress on the new expansion despite less than ideal working conditions.



Summer Scenarios Could Yield Opportunities

By JEFF DAVIS, GRAIN DEPARTMENT MANAGER



The planting, growing, and harvesting season lasts about 28 to 30 weeks minus the preparation time. Markets, on the other hand, require daily attention and can span 24 to 36 months starting with: USDA planting progress reports, a relatively short time frame on emergence, and then the weekly crop condition reports. Some time between the emergence discussion and the weekly conditions reports, those of you who still have some of your 2010 crop to market may have an excellent opportunity to do so. Others could see opportunity to continue marketing their 2011 and 2012 crops.

Weather and early crop conditions will be the first force to drive prices higher or lower depending on conditions. Based on today's price levels, summer weather and corrections to USDA inventory reports could yield opportunities of higher prices, or reveal that the market is getting the rationing of supplies, and prices may decrease.

In my estimation, there's approximately 15 to 20% of last year's corn harvest yet to be marketed in the area, and even fewer beans. I suspect that the basis may be more of an issue for that 2010 crop than concern about futures prices. Up to this date, the basis has been relatively subdued with minimal volatility. But as we move forward and

end users look to secure supplies, we could see increased basis volatility with potential swings of 30¢ to \$1.

To further complicate things, the market is inverted from July to September, so you'll see some unusual basis numbers through September and into the early harvest of both corn and soybeans.

In addition...

Of course, weather isn't the only market influence in play. We also have to account for unrest in the Middle East, northern Africa, and the constantly shifting worldwide economic environment. The U.S. dollar value and fund positioning will also give the market some weekly swings that will test your patience.

At some point, the basic economics of supply and demand should come into play. The last time corn ending stocks were this tight was 1996. In 1996, ethanol usage was minimal. Now, it's accounting for 5 billion bushels annually.

Whether you're marketing 2011 and 2012 crops primarily to cover early operational expenses or simply see profitable numbers above your breakevens, stay the course. Even with this volatility, you have to continue to market as cash flows, bin space, and other factors dictate. The industry is offering some excellent profit opportunities, so continue to capitalize on them. ◀

When It All Breaks Loose, We're Ready to Help

By NATHAN WILBER, AGRONOMIST

We've certainly played the waiting game this spring, and that only makes for a tighter, busier planting season. Under those conditions, another set of eyes on your fields can be particularly valuable—especially if you can put those eyes to work for free.

Prairie Grain offers free scouting services to our customers. At these commodity prices, every bushel counts, and we'll put our Rangers and agronomists in the field to help you get the most from every acre. Our scouts will monitor three basic areas to maintain crop health.

Start strong, stay strong

Our first focus is on early weed control in both corn and beans. The quicker you jump on weed issues, the easier they are to control and the fewer nutrients they rob from your crop. Early control also helps slow the development of weed resistance.

Of course, we have strategies to deal with weed problems at any stage of development, whether you choose a pre-emerge product like TripleFLEX and Harness®, or glyphosate tankmix partners like Calisto® or Status®.

In addition to weed pressure, our scouts will be on the lookout for nutrient deficiencies. This cool, damp spring could move some nutrients out of the root zone and reduce

the uptake of others. Add to that the increased yields we've seen and the resultant nutrient mining, and you have the potential for crops to run short of critical nutrients. Higher commodity prices make careful nutrient management essential.



Visual inspection is one way to detect some nutrient deficiencies, but tissue testing is definitely the most accurate and comprehensive. In addition to tissue testing, we also carry a full range of products to correct any deficiencies in corn or beans, including CoRoN® and ENC® nutrient concentrate.

Finally, we watch for foliar diseases and use fungicides to control them if conditions warrant. There are two primary application times for fungicides on corn, the first at the V5 stage. This application can be tank-mixed on one of your glyphosate passes. This approach yields about a five-bushel increase in corn, and roughly the same with soybeans.

We continue to recommend application at tasseling on corn, which generally returns a 10-bushel or better yield boost. We hate sitting around, so take advantage of our free scouting services and keep us busy this growing season. Call today to line us up, or to ask us questions about any of the products we've discussed here. ◀

Our Timing Couldn't Be Better

By ROGER BROCK, AGRONOMY DEPARTMENT MANAGER

This spring is making our decision to build the new chemical building look even better. It's designed for speed and efficiency—two things we really need in a compressed season like the one we're facing. And the fact that we're able to apply seed treatment under roof is a real plus with the wet weather we've seen.

With more government scrutiny than ever on chemicals and chemical application, be sure to read and follow the label directions on the products you're using this spring and summer. Roundup® in particular has been the target of several lawsuits in California. Use these valuable chemicals properly so we'll be able to keep using them in the future.

Good recordkeeping is also becoming more important. Keep track of the date, time of day you sprayed, wind speed, and which field was sprayed with what chemical. A field map works great for recording this information. The state will be checking, so accurate records will avoid headaches.

Finally, before handling any chemicals, make sure you are wearing the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) for that particular chemical. If you're not familiar with the PPE requirements for a certain chemical,

we have all the different PPE requirements here, so give us a call.



Plan ahead

Good commodity prices offer an opportunity to contract some of your 2011 crop. When you do, remember to lock in some of your input costs for the fall of this year and spring of 2012. We're always available to talk about a plan that makes sense for your operation.

With the spring that we have had and the late planting season we're seeing, make sure you keep an eye on your fields for diseases and emergence problems. We can help, and you can read Nathan's article for details on our no-cost scouting service. We'll set up a scouting schedule to suit your needs, and give you recommendations for action based on what we find.

All of us at Prairie Grain Partners hope that everyone has a safe production season. Remember to ask yourself "What if" before doing a task. Take breaks and take care of yourself so you can enjoy your family this summer. 🍷



With three loadout bays—one of which serves our fully enclosed seed treatment equipment—our new chemical shed is a real asset during inclement weather.



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Get the Drop on Pasture Problems

By SHANNON COHRS, DOVRAY LOCATION MANAGER

I'd like to begin by welcoming a new face here at the Dovray location. Adam LeClaire has joined us, and he'll be a great addition. He lives here in Dovray but is originally from Currie, where he helped his father on the farm and also in their commercial fishing business. Adam will be handling custom application and various other duties, and comes to us just in time for the spring rush. He'll help fill the gap left by Jeremy Anderson and my son, Caleb—both of whom are currently serving their country.



Yes, weeds will come

Seems like we're having a tough time getting anything growing this spring, but it's never too early to think about weed control on your pastures and CRP acres. We have some really good weapons in our arsenal that will keep pasture and CRP weeds under control while going easy on the environment.

Often, when you're thinking pasture control, your first thought is Tordon.® This is a very effective product,

but it is also very persistent. I have heard of several instances where farmers have used Tordon, baled and fed the grass hay, then spread the manure. The Tordon in the manure has killed their soybeans.

On the other hand, we've found ForeFront® to be very effective. Unlike Tordon, it's not a restricted-use product, and because it's easy on trees and fish, it can be applied right up to water's edge. ForeFront controls a broad spectrum of weeds, and has a residual effect that makes it effective on both early and late weeds.

For CRP, another good product is Milestone.® Like forefront, it's not restricted-use, and it provides good control of both biennial and perennial thistles. It's also easy on trees and other plants.

Finally, if you've got areas where buckbrush is a problem, we've got the answer. Another non-restricted-use herbicide, Chaparral,™ has shown good results on buckbrush. So get after your buckbrush and give aphids one less favorite place to overwinter. If you have any questions about these products, or any of our services, give me a call. ☛



Supporting Those Who Serve

Though our Dovray location has taken a hit, we're proud of the fact that two of our own—Jeremy Anderson and Caleb Cohrs—are doing their part to protect our nation. Jeremy is stationed in Texas for a year with the Army Reserve, and Caleb deployed to Kuwait May 1 with the Minnesota Army National Guard. Please keep Jeremy and Caleb—and all those who serve—in your thoughts and prayers. ☛