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Spring 2018



We are thankful for our dedicated, hardworking team of employees. Above is our group picture taken last summer. Pictured back row, left to right: Gwen Eberle, Josh DeGrave, Bob Smith, Brandon Clark, Steve Karnitz, Kelly Pinchart, Shaun Willems, Jerry Barta, Tammy Barta, Kurt Krueger, Jesse Albert, Zach Sutter, Adam Villers, Dylan Leonard, Darren Barta, Brandon Knoflicek.

Front row: Hayley Doell, Faith Fenendael, Karlee Haas, Allison Barta, Andy Barta, Adam Barta, Sam Barta, Jake Barta, Amanda J Barta, Amanda Bliss, Tina Jandrin, Courtney Dorner.

Employees not pictured: Bob Buresh, Quin Fenendael, Tim Froelich, Danny Haumschild, Dale Kinnard, Dane Marach, Moe Neuzil, Nicole Neuzil, Dan Rank, Bradyn Willems, Aaron Zellner, Ashley Zellner

SAVE THE DATES

~for our upcoming events~

- March 22nd Agronomy Meeting (Luxemburg)
- April 2nd – 6th Open House Week **see the specials inside** (Rio Creek)
- April 3rd Kent Show Feed Clinic (Luxemburg)
- April 4th Seed Pick-Up Day (Rio Creek)
- April 11th Kent Feeds Calf Clinic (Luxemburg)
w/Dr. Thornsberry D.V.M., M.B.A.

Watch for updates in your mail, on our website and Facebook page for more information!

We will be CLOSING AT NOON on GOOD FRIDAY, March 30th.

Please plan accordingly.

HAPPY EASTER!!!

Zach's Facts

Zach Sutter; NMP Specialist



Hayley and I have been hard at work on nutrient management plans and crop plans. She has been an excellent addition to our crop planning team. With her helping me out, I'm proud to say that I think this batch of NMPs and crop plans is shaping up to be our best yet. You'll see more detail on the crop plans than ever before. We try very hard to make the crop plans tools you can use throughout the growing season to help manage your crop as it matures. I'd love to get your feedback. Is there too much detail? Too little?

Don't forget that the Kewaunee County winter manure spreading ban on fields with less than 20 feet of depth to bedrock remains in place until April 16th. If you aren't sure if this applies to you, check out your restriction maps or give me a call. Kewaunee County producers should also remember to sign their Operator Signature pages and get them back to me. If you pick up your plan in the office, you can sign when you pick it up. Dairies with liquid manure in Kewaunee County should also remember to take a manure sample if they are spring hauling and record all liquid applications with all the information the county has requested. I've got manure sample jars and example log sheets available in the office. Let me know what you need. There has been a lot of discussion and concern about updates that are in the works on the section of the DNR administrative code that regulates agricultural runoff (NR 151). This update includes substantial revisions to

rules regarding manure applications on shallow soils. When it is implemented, it will likely mean major changes for some farmers who crop significant acreages of shallow soils. We already have a version of the rule that will likely be very similar to the final version when it passes. What we don't know is exactly how and when it will be implemented on the county level. We will keep you updated as things become clearer.

I'm starting on my second year as a member of the Board of Directors of Peninsula Pride Farms. If you have questions about the organization or you would like to become a member, reach out to me and I'd be happy to tell you more. I've participated in field days, board meetings, public meetings, and media interviews. I've enjoyed getting to know our customers who are members better and meeting new producers with a passion for conservation. We've got an exciting 2018 coming up. If you are doing something interesting on your farm with cover crops or other conservation practices and you'd like to share it, we can set up a tour through the NRCS Door-Kewaunee Demonstration Farms Network. This year we will be doing a lot of "field days on the fly". Since Mother Nature makes it nearly impossible to plan out field days for field work, we have a list of numbers that we send a text out to when something interesting is going on. Sharing new ideas is a big part of PPF's mission. The recent field day at Buresh Farms focused on no-till and strip till and modifying conventional planters to no-till.

Since fertility is one of the biggest line items in a cropping budget, a lot of producers are looking to cut there along with elsewhere to get budgets in the black. I read an interesting quote from an Extension agent in one of the ag papers recently. He said that we can only profitably cut our cropping budgets if we are using inputs that aren't adding to the bottom line. Fertility is definitely one of those inputs that are going to add to profitability in most cases. There has been a lot of talk about cutting phosphorus and potassium fertilizer during my crop planning meetings. In some cases, this may be necessary, but we should do it smartly. Keep in mind that we have taken off very high yielding crops in the past couple of years, especially forages. The more yield you had, the more nutrients were removed. Some producers have been mining the soil for the past couple of years already. You can't take off maximum yield from low fertility soils that haven't had sufficient fertility added and replaced. We can, however, cut smartly by looking at soil samples and applying less fertilizer on fields with higher fertility or by using VRT (see Hayley's story!). The pieces of the puzzle that we shouldn't cut are fertility protectors and enhancers.

Avail is a liquid product that is added to DAP to make the phosphorus more available. **Contain** and **Contain MAX** are products for protecting nitrogen from leaching and volatilization. Adding these products can seem like you are just adding a cost per acre, but we should really think of it as an investment for protecting the nutrients we are applying.

In crop planning meetings and discussions with producers this winter, I've often been reminded of the joke about the farmer that won the lottery. The newspaper man came by and asked what the farmer planned to do with his winnings. The farmer replied, "I'm going to keep farming until it runs out." We all laugh and shake our head, but the joke holds an important truth: the work we do in agriculture is about much more than making money. Let's keep that in mind and try not to let the normal stresses of the planting season and the additional stresses of low prices get the best of us!

Shaun's Seed Corner

Shaun Willems; Operations Manager & Agronomy Sales



With a new year comes new challenges. Everyone has been working hard to find ways to stretch an already tight dollar. With the commodity markets looking more like a set of Christmas lights (flashing reds and greens) and the milk prices that are low enough to even make the cows cry, it's more important than ever to have a plan for the upcoming year. There are still a lot of good deals on seed available, plus 0% interest until December from JD Finance and Rabo Agri-finance on all Syngenta and Great Lakes Hybrids. RCFM continues to offer volume and pre-pay discounts along with competitive pricing on select hybrids (call for details). When it comes to your seed needs, don't wait to order for the upcoming year as some hybrids are already sold out and small grains (oats and barley) are becoming harder to find as we move closer to planting. When you put an order in we can guarantee that you will get the seed you need when you need it. As always, we will deliver your seed for free before Seed Pick up Day, April 4th. Crop protection has been another topic of conversation this year with everyone looking to cut costs on inputs. We recommend using pre-emerge products on both corn and soybeans. Most of us have been using branded products over generic products; therefore we have been seeing excellent weed control. Acuron on corn has provided yearlong weed protection with the option to still plant cover crops or wheat in fall. Acuron is a guaranteed product, which

means if there is a weed escape, you get the glyphosate to respray the field at no charge (conventional corn is also covered). In soybeans, a pre-emerge mix of Boundary & Thundermaster (also a guaranteed program) has shown exceptional weed control with little to no weed escapes all season long. The advantage of pre-emerge products over post-emerge products is that if the field is dry enough to plant; it is dry enough to spray. Also, you get product applied before weeds have a chance to start robbing moisture, nutrients and ultimately yield from your crop. With most crop protection products only accounting for approximately 6% of the total input cost, pre-emerge products may have a higher up-front cost but are more cost effective than having to spray a field twice and risking nutrient loss, compaction, and crop stress.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in the RCFM Deer Picture Contest. Congratulations to Josh Trembl (left) and Mason LeFevre (right), the winners in the Adult and Youth categories. I hope to see more pictures next year from all of our RCFM friends and customers. Make sure to come see us for your wildlife plot needs. We would be more than happy to help you get that big buck! If there is anything else I can help you with, please don't hesitate to call. We can meet at the office or at your farm. I would like to thank everyone for the opportunity to do business with you and I look forward to seeing you soon.



Fertilizer

Frost spreading fertilizer should be done very soon, if possible. Early spring is one of the best times to fertilize your wheat and alfalfa fields. Getting the needed nutrients out on the field when the plants are coming out of dormancy will result in quicker growth and accelerated moisture and nutrient uptake leading to higher yields. In wheat, this promotes better tillering, which is important to top end yield potential, especially in late planted, stressed, and thinner stands. We have a very limited time frame to get this done so please place your order now, so we can get the correct fields, locations and spreading rates to be prepared for when conditions are right. As Zach stated, we highly recommend protecting your investment, especially on nitrogen-based fertilizers. PSNTs (pre-side dress nitrate tests) verify that these products (Contain and Contain MAX) perform exactly the way they are meant to. Compared to the test areas that were not treated, they consistently save from 75%-100% more of the previously applied nitrogen. RCFM sells the coarsest grades of dry fertilizer available, which are the best for mixing and spreading, and are therefore worth the most. We can blend any fertilizer we carry to come up with the mixture that suits your needs best. Ask us about our expanded YieldMAXX line! If you want bagged fertilizer for 2018, we are asking that you pre-order it now! Otherwise, it is difficult for us to know how much to order. It will cost approximately \$160 per ton more than bulk this year, so it's obviously to your advantage to use bulk if at all possible! For those of you who have liquid fertilizer attachments on your planters, we highly recommend RCFM's YieldMAXX LCS powered by AgZyme! This premium liquid corn starter (LCS) is a custom blend of specific nutrients and biological growth stimulants to get corn plants off to a strong, healthy start! YieldMAXX LCS not only has seed-safe N-P-K, but also has balanced micros of Zinc, Iron, Manganese, Copper, Boron, Cobalt, and Molybdenum for your pop-up starter needs. We also stock 80% ortho 6-24-6, a seed safe, in furrow liquid starter fertilizer. Both of these products are non-corrosive and will not "settle-out" or plug up the lines in your planter, like some cheaper competitors' products. Liquid 2x2 starters like 4-10-10, 10-34-0, and 7-21-7 are available (with a minimum 3-day advance notice) by special order only. These products are more likely to "salt-out" or plug up the lines in your planter when temperatures are 50 degrees or less.

Hayley's Helpful Hints

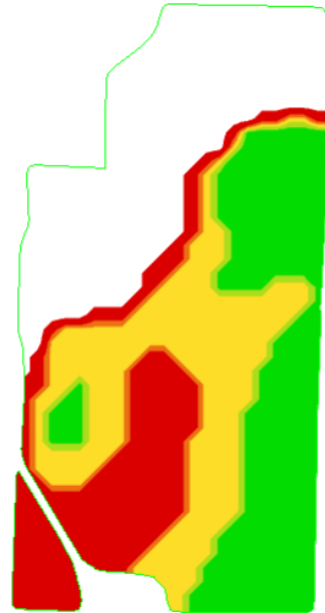
Hayley Doell, NMP Specialist



This year's tough economic times have everyone thinking about how they can save on costs to get the most profit from their crops. If we cut back on costs, monitoring the fields more closely will be a higher priority. We'll have to look out for issues that we didn't have to worry about before if we are cutting back on traits, sprays, or fertilizers that prevented it in the past. A big problem we may see this year is winter kill in both winter wheat and alfalfa due to the recent weather. All our scouting customers will be getting their fields checked in early spring. We offer two scouting packages that will help in monitoring your crops more closely. In the Standard package, we will visit the fields 4 times per growing season, to monitor winterkill, weeds, insects, diseases, deficiencies, herbicide and harvesting timing. A scouting report for each field visit will be sent to you. The Elite package covers everything in the Standard package, but doubles the visits to 8 times per growing season. It also includes alfalfa stand counts, emergence check for all spring crops, corn and soybean population counts, and corn yield estimates. There are many problems that can only be

solved if they are noticed during scouting. For example, we might have a problem with cutworms, as in 2017. Cutworms have a very small window to spray for, so scouting is essential. We received calls from non-scouting customers whose field stands were reduced by as much as 50% in some cases; by the time they noticed them. Scouting your fields can save you money in the end by fixing a problem early before it becomes a major issue, whether it's weeds, diseases or insects. Fertilizer is usually one of the first things we cut back on when looking at the market prices for any crop today. When we cut back on fertilizer we don't give the crop the nutrients it needs to maximize its full yield potential. A way that can save you money, but still give the crop the nutrients it needs, is by using variable rate technology. VRT spreading puts the amounts of fertilizer the crops need in a specific category based on soil fertility. The picture on the right, shows how DAP requirements vary across the field. In this example if we averaged the soil samples taken, it would tell us we would not need any DAP applied, but you can see from the picture, the colored areas are parts of the field that are low in "P", therefore would have lower yields (Green=230#/ac, Yellow=170#/ac., Red=100#/ac., White=No Fertilizer Needed). If you applied a straight rate of DAP on this field, you would be over-fertilizing the red and white areas, but under-fertilizing the yellow and green areas, wasting money and yield loss that could be prevented. If you would like to know more about our scouting programs or VRT, or have any questions please contact me to talk more about the valuable products and services we offer to our customers here at Rio Creek Feed Mill.

DAP - 2018



Andy's Agronomy Minute

Andy Barta, General Manager



As we get closer to spring, I think it's fair to say that there's plenty of uncertainty on many fronts in agriculture. Whether you're a cash cropper or a dairy producer, most are looking for opportunities to be a bit more conservative. Our experienced staff is prepared to offer some valuable recommendations. Shaun, Adam, Zach, Hayley, Jerry and I are more than happy to do so. Another option is to attend the meetings that are being offered. Whether it's your local equipment provider's or RCFM's, these meetings are opportunities for you to learn about new and improved techniques or products that might not only save money, but also help you become more efficient. We will have updated times and topics for all of our upcoming meetings in our mailings and posts on our website and Facebook page. Also, please look through our Open House Specials insert for all the great deals being offered!

Switching a bit to talk about feed, with the uptick in the grain markets, many feed byproducts have also moved up in price. Therefore, this can affect which ingredients are a better buy! My challenge to you all is to take a look at your rations and figure out what works best for you. When milk and/or beef prices were good, some producers took their feed mixes and totally revamped them. Right now, it looks like the best buys overall in the world of cattle feed still are grain corn, corn gluten feed pellets and distillers grain. Some of the most expensive products to feed are barley and oats. The prices of vitamins, particularly vitamins A and E, have skyrocketed. This has resulted in a jump in the prices of anything containing these products, which you may have noticed on your feed bills. Thankfully, the major plant that produces approximately 45% of the world's Vitamin A & E expects to resume full production sometime in March or April. We probably won't get relief until late 2018, when stocks are replenished. While this doesn't mean you shouldn't feed these ingredients, it may alter the amount you put into your mix. As prices continue to fluctuate, feel free to ask us about how we can adjust your rations to be the most cost-effective, while still making sure your animals are getting the right nutrition they need.

Lastly, I am not a fan of talking about my health in every newsletter (at least it feels like every newsletter!), but many customers have been asking for an update. Long story short, I finished chemo the first week of January and had scans and tests done to verify that I am currently NED (fancy abbreviation for "No Evidence of Disease"). With my diagnosis, there is always a chance of my cancer returning, but the highest chance is within the first five years. Needless to say, I will be watched very closely, including scans and bloodwork every three months or so, among other things. I want to thank you all for the continued prayers, support and understanding, especially while I was out, if I didn't get back to you promptly. I'd like to also thank everyone on our valued team at RCFM, especially Shaun and Jerry, for covering for me while I was out.

Credit Policy

As mentioned in other articles in this newsletter, money is tight. It is very important to have a plan going into spring for financing your crop inputs! Because 2018 commodity prices are projected to be relatively low, our lender is putting strict guidelines on the credit that we can extend to our customers. If you currently have a past due balance with Rio Creek Feed Mill, a credit approval will be required before being extended further credit. **If a balance is not paid within 90 days of its due date, further credit will not be extended without a legally binding agreement.** There are many financing options available: your financial institution, the local FSA/USDA office, or RABO or John Deere Credit programs (we can help you with this option). These businesses offer a wide variety of input financing choices with rates much cheaper than carrying an overdue balance with RCFM. Our payment terms remain the same, *"all payments are due by of the end of the next month following the date of invoice"*. This allows basically 30-60 days from the date of invoice to make a payment. Some customers may qualify for a "Contract for Credit", meaning RCFM will extend credit equal to the amount of grain you contract with us. To qualify, RCFM requires proof that the crop is insured and approval from your creditor/lender for RCFM to put a legal lien on your crop with first rights to proceeds. Credit approval is considered on a case by case basis for accounts with a history of contract default. Please take care of making these arrangements as soon as possible so there are no delays during the busy season. We want to work with you to the best of our ability, though please remember that we are not a financial institution.

Jerry's Jargon

Jerry Barta, Owner & President



We would like to again publicly thank our employees for all of their hard work and dedication. We realize that the type of work we do can also be stressful for their families, especially during the busy season. We are thankful for the understanding and support of our employees' wives, husbands, significant others, and children. It takes an enormous amount of teamwork to make Rio Creek Feed Mill run efficiently and serve our customers' needs. During 2017 and into 2018, we've had a few employees absent due to health issues, including three who underwent major surgeries. Their co-workers stepped up to cover for one another and we couldn't be more proud of them for that! We have hired some new employees since our last newsletter, so you may see some new faces around! *Bradyn Willems* has been helping us in the feed mill during some co-worker health absences. He will likely transition to other roles as the busy season progresses. Our second new hire is *Tim Froelich*. Tim

is mainly driving semi-truck, picking up products and delivering to customers. He is also an experienced spray applicator. If you're interested in becoming a part of our Rio Creek Feed Mill team, stop in for an application. Even if we aren't posting any jobs at the time, we save all applications for future opportunities. We are currently hiring part-time and seasonal CDL drivers for fertilizer spreader deliveries and applicator tending.

In closing, let's all count our blessings and thank God for every day. We sincerely wish you and your family a Happy Easter! We also wish you a healthy, safe and prosperous 2018!

Happy Birthday (belated and future) to these RCFM Employees:

Andy Barta—January 16th
Dane Marach—February 3rd
Tina Jandrin—February 7th
Allison Barta—February 11th
Karlee Haas – February 11th
Dan Haumschild – February 25th
Nicole Neuzil—February 27th
Bob Smith—March 3rd
Jesse Albert – March 16th
Hayley Doell—March 24th
Casey Groessl - May 4th
Dale Kinnard - May 12th
Aaron Zellner - May 16th
Adam Villers - May 21st
Ashley Zellner - June 6th
Bradyn Willems – June 11th
Faith Fenendael – June 27th
Brandon Clark – July 6th
Shaun Willems – July 10th
Dylan Leonard – July 13th
Moe Neuzil – July 20th
Quin Fenendael – July 26th
Zach Sutter – July 28th
Adam Barta – July 30th