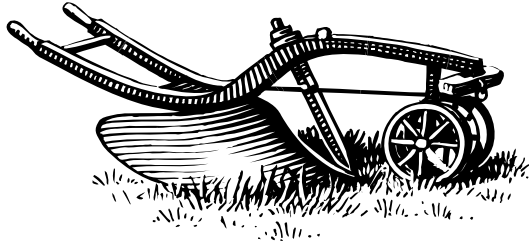


MID COLUMBIA FARMERS NEWSLETTER



October 2007

OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE

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GRAIN AND RAIN



The average price of soft white wheat in Portland for September was \$8.88 while club with a 2 cent premium was \$8.90 per bushel. Barley averaged \$259.27 per ton. These prices do not seem in line with today's current price but, again, they are averages and the difference only emphasizes how dramatic the price changes have been in a month.

Precipitation as reported at the Sherman Experiment Station for September totaled .24 of an inch. This may not relate to your totals but the Station reads the gauge at the same time each morning so a day "ends" when the readings are made and anything after that point counts on the next day. This only makes much difference when the last day of the month receives something of significance, like we had here. Erling Jacobsen reported that he also received an additional .34 on September 30, but that will count on the October 1 measurements rather than 9/30/2007. He notes the total for the storm was actually .50 of an inch.

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GRAIN PRICE CHARTS

Average monthly prices are shared in the newsletter due to the conversations the last few weeks regarding high prices in the past and when we had good monthly prices and how low the grain prices could drop in a short period. These are the numbers we report each month in the opening paragraph so if you want to keep track, this chart is the place to add them.

It's interesting to look back and "remember when..." but it's also important to plan as high prices don't last forever as the grain price chart will remind us. Too frequently.

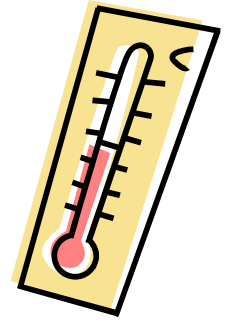
06-07 CROP YEAR RAIN FALL

Overall the precipitation for the last crop year (September 1, 2006 through August 31, 2007) was a strange one. We stood at around 150% of normal by the end of December, but the totals in the 2007 portion ran only about 50% of the long-term normal totals. So on the whole, we ended up with a "normal" year for moisture. The yin and the yang of reporting totals. They don't always tell the whole story.

We'd like to thank the cooperators who share their monthly totals because not only do we see seasonal shifts but there are variations within communities due to topographical influences and weather patterns. This information has been particularly useful in helping producers and researchers.



FIELD NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS



The 2007 crop is in the bin and despite the two distinct rainfall seasons (see above). There are guarded smiles all around. A good fall rain has helped as does \$10 wheat prices. But the 2007 crop average was a little disappointing especially following the great rain received in 2005-2006. Many yields were reported above average but not as high as was anticipated. So what happened?

Seeding date had a lot to do with it. Several growers said the best wheat was their first seeded and their worst was the last seeded. Even for those seeded in the middle of the normal acceptable seeding window, yields were disappointing. But remember, we had a week of very cold weather in mid-October last year. Small wheat just emerged really needs to be in about the third leaf stage to kick in its protective features. So even though a lot was seeded in the “normal” safe seeding window, it took a cold beating and recovered very slowly.

Not to be outdone, May just had to show its power, too, with a week of hot temperatures. When temperatures reach 82-85⁰ a plant shuts down photosynthesis, but it continues to burn energy up to 100⁰. That means its burning resources while not creating any food, so it's essentially robbing from itself. When temps hit 90⁰, the plant may go sterile in both male and female functions, meaning little or no seeds are formed. This may cause roulette curse, affecting some fields but not the next. The amount of damage would depend on where the development of the plant is during the heat period. A day or two difference in seeding date or a difference in variety can affect that impact by a day or two, making huge differences in the final yield.

Even too warm a temperature during the plant's stem elongation can result in fewer florets per spikelet, but that wasn't our problem this spring.

But we had decent rains right after the heat spell. Doesn't that help us? It helped those whose crops had already pollinated themselves before the heat but for those fields where the crop had already been prevented from pollinating, no amount of water would make a seed appear. Timely rains certainly helped in the past when we had the drought years but still pulled average or better crops, but in those years we missed the early heat spells.

NOTES FROM THE PNW

At an early September gathering of county agents and researchers from Oregon, Washington and Idaho, the following comments were recorded regarding the wheat industry:

- * Hard red wheat production which has grown in higher rainfall areas of Eastern Oregon and Washington will likely convert to soft white wheat to avoid having to deal with the risk of meeting protein.

- * Klickitat County's spring grains were short enough on spring rains that most spring grain acres were grazed rather than combined. The county also converted much of its 38,000 acres of quality alfalfa hay (down to around 6,000 acres) due to the damage from the Alfalfa Weevil. Acres were converted to small grains.

- * Some areas following no till practices saw an increase in grasshopper damage due to high amounts of undisturbed soil favored by egg-laying hoppers.

- * Banding phosphorous with spring grains seems to reduce the incidence of Hessian fly attacking the plant.

- * Waxy barley yields are equal to or better than those of Camas and Baronesses. Demand and uses for waxy and waxy, hullless barley is increasing.

- * Future harvests may return to a stationary threshing machine. Work is being done on a machine that utilizes a stripper header (strips the heads off the plant and leaves all the straw) and a stubble beater. Machine would sell for around \$100,000, but heads would need be delivered to portable stationary threshers to separate the wheat from the chaff. There would be added value in that broken seeds would be collected in the chaff which then has an improved feed value.

- * Cereal cysts nematodes (CCN) which can cause yield losses of 20-90% have been found in some Oregon wheat producing areas. Fortunately there are resistance genes that can be bred into the wheat. Tubbs 06 and Goetze both have good CCN resistance

- * A Washington Ag Economist warned that high prices don't solve bad management decisions and that more farmers go out of business in time of high prices than do when prices are low.

- * A Washington agent reported that if the price of wheat still hovered around \$8.50 level by September 20, he expected farmers would drop plans to plant hard red spring and replace it with fall soft white. In recent

years, HRS has reduced Eastern Washington acres of soft white from 90% of their total acres to 75%. A drop in the HRS premium also contributes to switch back to Soft White.

* Pesticide technologies continue forward with newer chemicals that have shorter withdrawal periods and some that are attacking weeds (especially china/prickly lettuce) that have developed resistance. Uniqueness and effectiveness are priced accordingly. Learn to manage your pesticide rotations.

* The National Goatgrass Research Center has moved from Nebraska to WSU. Joe Yennish (WSU) and Dan Ball (OSU) will be the new Goatgrass Gurus for the nation.

* A new barley will be released soon to replace Hoody. It is a cross of Hoody, Strider and a numbered variety

* Baker County was declared a drought disaster with reductions in range production between 50-75%. Beef producers there will reduce herds unless they find lots of winter pasture. (Hint, hint.)

* As perennial ryegrass cares reduce in the Willamette Valley, expect a large increase in soft white wheat production, maybe 50-60,000 acres. Adding to that change are the high grain prices and yield trials that show Goetze out yielding Madsen in the Valley by 20 bushels per acre.

* Goetze is even more facultative (has more spring grain-like development requirements) than Stephens, so it could be a good choice for reseeding. Beware it is also more winter sensitive than Stephens. Keep that in the back of your mind for future reference as requests for Goetze seed wheat was already 140% of the year's production of this new release.

* OSU is testing a new variety (10085) with improved winter hardiness and resistance to crown rot, *cepheosporium* stripe and stripe rust. It also reports better milling and baking than industry standard Stephens. It is included in the 2008 variety strip trials by local growers.

* OR920 is a new wheat with Supersoft qualities (and much improved wind shatter resistance) that is now in the Foundation level. It is expected to replace the current Supersoft 1757.

* In the on-going battle against Cereal Leaf Beetles (CLB), it was announced that the predator numbers are building in those areas hardest hit. Lady bugs were found to eat about 40% of the CLB eggs and those CLB that survived had rates of 80-90% parasitism. In one county where 11,000 acres were sprayed a couple years ago, only 500 were treated this spring.

* Construction of ethanol plants continue with capacity of 4,750 million gallons per year to be completed by March of 2008. This will require 50 million acres of corn to feed the beast.

* Dried distillers grains can be used, with roughage, at rates of 10-20% of the ration. At a 10% level it satisfies the protein requirements and anything added above that helps meet energy needs.

* Camelina, the latest hope for bio-diesel production in the dryland regions, was selling seed at about \$1 per pound. One advantage is that the Camelina showed no attacks from flea beetle or aphids that are commonly found impacting mustard and canola, even when planted between infected strips of the two.

* Camelina trials at the Sherman Experiment Station significantly out-yielded the ones at Pendleton. It seems to do very well in dry soil, about 2300 pounds per acre. Trials continue.

STATEWIDE MARKETING SEMINARS

Mark Thursday October 11 for the next statewide marketing session offered though the magic of technology. The class starts at 7 am at the local Extension Office and is free. The last session had about 40 participating from 8 locations around the state and featured a lively discussion about why the grains prices are where they are. This is different from the bi-weekly grain marketing sessions held locally, even though it features some of the same contributors.

The October class will be offered at the Sherman County Extension Office, but not in Wasco County.

LAST DAY TO REGISTER

Tuesday October 16 is the last day to register to be eligible to vote in the statewide November 6th election. You need to inform the County Clerk's office if you have moved or otherwise changed address. It's also an important date if you have a family member away at school or in the military. If they want to vote they should request an absentee ballot from the Clerk's office. The Post Office can not forward a ballot.

There are several key issues. Vote but vote informed.

PURS WORKSHOP OCTOBER 31

Remember, you are required to report all your pesticide use in the 2007 year and it must be submitted electronically. The reporting process has been drastically simplified but you may want to attend the workshop offered at 6 pm at Building One, Room 1.334 at Columbia Gorge Community College in The Dalles. The doors will be open for three hours in this repeat of the class offered earlier this spring, but you can come or go as you please. Most found it helpful to understanding how to fill in the report.

Yes, it is Halloween. The treat is that you are prepared for doing your reports, the trick is that there are no pesticide credits for attending.

SHERMAN WHEAT GROWERS MEETING NOVEMBER 16

The annual meeting of the Sherman County Wheat Growers is Friday November 16 at the Senior Center in Moro. The morning begins with a brief marketing meeting and breakfast at 7 am and is followed by the Growers session. The Sherman Co Farm Bureau will also conduct their annual business that morning. Speakers will be announced.

SAIF WORKSHOP NOVEMBER 27

A little earlier this year but the popular Safety Seminars sponsored by SAIF returns to the Discovery Center November 27 from 9:30 am to 2 pm. You get 4 hours of safety “get out of random OSHA inspection” credit in the principles of risk management and pesticide safety among other short topics, a couple hours of pesticides recertification and a free lunch.

The class repeats again February 12 and is followed February 13 by a repeat in Spanish. You need to pre-register either on-line at www.saif.com or call them at 1-800-285-8525.

PNW GRAINS CONFERENCE

The 2007 PNW Grains Conference will be November 28-30 in Spokane, Washington. This replaces the old OWGL annual meeting with a synergistic advantage of allowing more farmers to hear high powered speakers from across the nation. Each state still reserves time to conduct their business.

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Farmers Newsletter