Grain and Rain

The average price of soft white and club wheat at Portland from March was $12.00 per bushels but that average was for only one day’s worth of quoted bids. Barley averaged $234 per ton, but again on very limited bidding. This happens when there is nobody here seeking to buy grain or there is only one bidder and to protect confidential information, bids are listed as “not available.”

Precipitation at the Sherman Experiment Station was reported as .68 inches for March, .38 inches below the long term average. Crop year moisture is at 7.07 or 1.36 inches below the average for March.

Winter Grain Mite Alert!

The dry, mild winter this year and particularly the very dry and warm February may be the key reason why the Winter Grain Mite has become a concern in this year’s winter wheat crop. The mite is a pest of small grains and grasses throughout the temperate regions of the world. In Oregon it is a familiar pest of wheat, and Kentucky bluegrass fields in Central Oregon and the Grand Rhonde Valley. It has most likely been in the Mid-Columbia for sometime at very low levels, but has emerged this year.

Heavily infested fields take on a grayish or silvery cast in response to injured plant cells caused when mites feed. Leaf tips may turn brown and plants can die when populations are largest. These mites cause delayed spring growth and increased susceptibility to leaf diseases. They contribute to moisture stress of crops particularly under dryland conditions. This mite seems to be more of a problem in no-till fields and particularly where there are heavy post-harvest residues and chaff piles on the soil surface. Winter grain mites are small, but larger (1 mm long) than most other mites. The body is dark blue to black; the 4 pairs of legs are a conspicuous reddish-orange. Their front legs are slightly longer than the other three pair. Two tarsal claws occur on the end of each leg.

Winter Grain Mites generally have two to three generations per year. The first begins in October as weather conditions become favorable for the over-summering eggs to hatch. Populations reach a peak in December or January. The second generation develops from eggs laid by the first generation and generally reaches its maximum density in March or April. Populations then decrease as temperatures exceed the mite’s range of tolerance. Females of the second generation lay over-summering eggs. When the eggs hatch, 6 legged larvae begin to feed on the leaf sheaths and tender shoots near the ground. Larvae molt once to produce eight legged nymphs. These stages, as well as the adults that they molt into, feed higher up on the plants—particularly at night and on cloudy or cool days.
Winter Grain Mite Alert!...continued

As the sun rises, the mites descend the plants and seek protection on the moist soil surface under foliage during the warmer part of the day. If the soil is dry and there is little foliage cover, mites will crawl into the soil in search of moisture and cooler temperatures. Temperature and moisture are the most important factors influencing mite development and abundance. Cool, rather than warm temperatures favor their development. Activity of these mites is the greatest between 40º and 70ºF. Eggs do not hatch in the fall until rains provide adequate moisture. On warm, dry days it may be necessary to dig into the soil to a depth of 4 or 5 inches to find the mites. The mites do not seem to be harmed by high humidity, rainfall, or snow cover, or by ground frozen to a depth of several inches. However, heavy spring rains can be catastrophic to mite populations and mites may not be detectable in a few days!

Fields with loose, sandy or loamy soils are more at risk than those with hard, clay soils. Because fall populations develop from eggs laid the previous spring, problems are worse in continuous wheat. Crop rotation is helpful in reducing problems, although field borders may be affected when mites migrate from wild grasses. Control may be necessary if large portions of a field show symptoms and mites appear abundant in relation to the amount of plant growth.

The best time to scout for winter grain mite is at night, very early in the morning or late at night or during cool, cloudy weather when this mite is most likely to be visible. Check for mites under the crust and clods on the surface of moist soil under wheat plants. Under warm, dry conditions, scout several inches under the soil. Infestations should exceed several mites per plant with leaf symptoms becoming apparent before chemical treatment is considered.

Many insecticides labeled for use on cereals as well as pasture and seed grasses will control winter grain mite. Crop rotation with non-host crops can be an important control measure in regions where mite pressure is great. Contact either your local chemical dealer or the OSU Wasco County Extension Office for more information.

NRCS Opportunities

NRCS is constantly seeking out new ideas or technologies to conserve our resources and make farming more efficient. You are invited to come to the NRCS office to discuss ideas on how to perfect our Conservation Program here in Sherman County. Whether it be a rotation to increase the available forage for your livestock, more efficient irrigation systems, technologies to decrease on farm inputs or some sort of stream protection; we can possibly assist you financially through one of our conservation programs or we can give you technical advice at the very least.

If you are interested in doing a demonstration on some acres to explore new opportunities for livestock forage, please contact Kristie Coelsch at 565-3551 ext.102 before May 15th, 2008.
Be a Weather Spotter

Even with technological advancement with devices like Doppler (it always leaves a hole across southern Wasco County as the signal is interrupted by Mt Hood), weathermen need a good set of eyes on the ground to confirm or report what is actually happening on the ground and to note those weather anomalies. Better firsthand knowledge can help them increase the accuracies of their predictions.

You can become a certified Weather Spotter for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) National Weather Service. This two hour training will teach you what to look for to be prepared to answer questions that may arise from your report. This does not make a Storm Chaser, like one sees in the disaster movies or Dangerous Jobs on the Discovery Channel. You are trained on what to watch for, what information is worthwhile and then use your phone and a toll free number, the internet or Ham radio to enter your report.

Two training opportunities are offered in the area. The first is Wednesday, April 9, at The Dalles Fire and Rescue Hall. The second is at the Moro Fire Station on Wednesday, April 16. Both sessions begin at 7 pm and conclude by 9.

Important Field Day May 13

Mark your calendars now and plan to attend the Long Term Experiment Field Day at the Sherman Experiment Station in Moro, on Tuesday, May 13. This special event is in addition to the regular field day at the station, which will be Wednesday, June 11.

Hear how different tillage choices have impacted soil moisture and nutrients; learn which rotations of crops or practices are returning the most dollars; evaluate the differences in the rooting zones yourself that steel tillage versus chemical tillage have and more. No matter how sure you are of what you are doing and why you do it, you will have your thinking challenged by the details presented.

Pesticide credits and CCA hours have been requested and should be available. Watch for more details and remember to attend the May 13 event.

Oregon Primary Planning

Oregon voters will have the chance to voice their opinions in the Oregon primary on May 20. If you need to register or change your registration for the primary you need to do so by April 29, 2008.

You must update your registration information if your residence address has changed, your mailing address has changed, you name has changed, your signature has changed, you wish to change your political party affiliation or you have not voted for 5 years or more.

If you have a child who has turned 18 since the last election, you will want to encourage them to register as well.

So if any of these criteria fit you, rush to your local post office or public library to obtain a new registration card or go online at: www.sos.state.or.us/elections/votreg/sel500.pdf (that’s s-e letter “I”, 500).

Make your vote count and vote, but vote informed.
Upcoming Hazardous Waste Events

Spring cleaning means your household will have plenty of items that need proper disposal due to their designation as household hazardous wastes. The following dates are available to any Oregonian in the Mid-Columbia region.

- April 26 at Maupin 10am to 2 pm
- May 3 in The Dalles 9 am to 3 pm
- May 17 in Moro, 10 am to noon for ag and CEG wastes, 1 pm to 3 pm for household materials
- May 24 in Dufur 9 am to 2 pm
- June 14 in Tygh Valley from 10 am to 2 pm

The events in Dufur, The Dalles and Moro all coincide with the Community Clean-ups in those areas. The Sherman County event also includes an ag waste collection, but for the materials, this is not a place to dump empty containers. It will also accept wastes from CEG (commercially exempt generators… businesses that generate a small amount of hazardous waste each year). Ag and CEG wastes must be pre-registered and scheduled. You can do this by calling the chemical handler at 1-800-882-9785.

Latex paint is not considered a hazardous waste so you do not need to bring that item to the events.

News and Notes…

- Tips to save gas: Lock your gas pumps and fill in the morning when the temperature is cool. Keeping the tank full helps by reducing the room for vapors. Purchasing gas in the afternoon or evening allows the fuel to expand so a gallon is really less than a full gallon. Pump your gas at the slowest speed on the handle, minimizing the vapors created. Paint above ground tanks a silver or white color to reduce vapor loss.

- Biofuel potential diminishes if you expect to convert cornstalks to biofuel. With today’s technology, you would need 100 acres stacked 25 feet high with cornstalks to make a commercial amount of biofuel… and would probably use more fuel hauling the cornstalks than the stalks would produce.

- Switchgrass continues to be studied and in the Mid West, they find that their average cost per acre per ton of switchgrass is $60. Based on a conversion efficiency of 80-90 gallons per ton, the farm gate ethanol production value is about 60 cents per gallon.

- Assuming we ever get a new Farm Bill, you might expect a shift away from traditional farm commodity programs to more funds for non-farm programs such as food stamps. The reason being that more than half of the House of Representatives in DC have fewer than 1,500 farmers in their districts and that’s even with the current government definition of a farm as having $1,000 in gross sales.

- If you are selected for a CAFO (confined animal feeding) inspection, you are allowed to have an independent observer on hand. It is strongly recommended that you take advantage of the allowance.

- The wolves that weren’t supposed to migrate into Oregon have. Though still few in known number, ranchers are not allowed to shoot them even if they are caught in the act of attacking livestock. You are allowed to make a loud noise including shooting into the air, but only if you report the incident to ODFW within 48 hours.