Grain and Rain

The average price of soft white wheat in Portland for May was $8.15 per bushel. Barley averaged $199.00 per ton. Very few bids were offered for either, so it was hard to determine a good average price.

Precipitation at the Sherman Station was at .72 inches, which is only .05 inches below the long term average. Crop year precipitation continues at 1.87 below the average.

Rain Observations

Precipitation totals varied quite a bit around the Mid Columbia this past month, a normal occurrence in the spring. Reports of more active spring rains in the southern parts of Sherman and Wasco Counties were common.

While precipitation is an important measurement, it can be misleading. We all know that timing can play a critical part as can intensity. (See July of 1995 for a reminder).

Former ARS researcher Bob Ramig (Bob passed away last fall) provided the information I frequently quote about the Million Dollar Rains… that an inch of rain in May adds about 7 bushels and an inch in June produces an extra 11 bushels… but Ramig also used to talk about “Effective Precipitation.” His theory was that the total didn’t mean near so much as did how much precip one received in increments of .20 or more. His estimation was that showers less than that, evaporated before they had time to do much good… although he was a firm believer that cheat grass benefited from showers of .10 inch.

There’s a lot to be said for timing and intensity. In 2004-05, the Sherman Station reported 7.88 inches of precipitation for the crop year, but the Sherman County wheat average that year was 54 bushels per acre. The following year, the crop year started nicely with fall precipitation and continued all year, ending at nearly 18 inches. But the crop average was only 52 bushels per acre, despite the high hopes for a yield boost.

Both years received significant rains in May and early June. But timing was still critical. In 2005, May was a cool month and we avoided the normal 3-4 days of high temperatures (above 90° F). In 2006, we had those few days of high temperatures, basically shutting down plant development. The rains in 2006 came after the heat spell, a pattern we saw repeated in 2007.
Rain Observations...continued

This year we all wondered when spring arrive. This late arrival slowed plant development down enough that I do not believe the heat hurt us nearly so much as it has in year’s past. But like the advertisers have to say, “Results may vary.”

So now let’s go back to Ramig’s “effective precipitation.” In fact, let’s apply a bit of adjustment and give credit to your crop management skills and assume that our crop needs at least .15 inches to benefit. Looking back at this crop year (starting in September) let’s see how many days we have had where we received at least .15 inches of precipitation.

At the Sherman Station, the records list 16 days with precipitation of .15 or more for a total of 4.78 (59%) of the 8.14 inches of crop year precipitation received to date. By contrast, I also checked my home (NE of Wasco) records which show 28 days with .15 or more, totaling 8.07 inches or 72% out of 11.12 inches I’ve received. Location, location…

If it takes 4 inches of moisture just to support the plant’s growth (leaves stems and roots) before it produces, one can see how generalizations do apply to specific situations.

Despite the variability between sites, you can impact the amount you manage to save, but that’s an article for a future newsletter.

Wheat Growers Propose Key Changes

A joint task force involving the Oregon Wheat Growers League (OWGL) and the Oregon Wheat Commission (OWC), has made serious recommendations that mean changes to the system as we know it. These will affect you. The Commission is charged with conducting marketing, education and research and is currently funded by the 3 cent wheat assessment on each bushel sold in the state. The Wheat League is a membership organization, doing education and lobbying on behalf of producers. It is funded by membership dues and grants from the Commission.

Key parts of the proposal include:
• Merging the OWC and OWGL under a common manager, housing the two groups back together under one roof as they were several years ago. At present, the task force proposes maintaining that office in Pendleton rather than Portland or another site.

• The League and the Commission would continue with separate board structures.

• Provision should be made to include the Oregon Grains Commission, should it choose.

• The Commission would be expanded to add two new members from local elevator operators, exporters, transporters, grain buyers or others with a marketing background.

• The Commission is urged to begin basing the assessment as a percent of gross sales of the grain as opposed to the number of bushels. It further includes provisions for full refundability.

These are the key provisions, but there are some minor related ones that allow change to the structure in the 2009 legislature. The Commission would like to implement the new assessment proposal beginning July 1, 2008, before the new crop harvest begins. At present the recommendation is ¾ of 1% of the gross (Portland Price) value.

The budgets for both will be adopted June 30, so your input beforehand is welcomed and encouraged. There will be discussions offered at both Experiment Station Field Days in Pendleton (about 3 pm) and Moro (about 1 pm at the High School). Be sure to attend and make your voice heard. Time is short.
Experiment Station Field Days

The Field Day at the Pendleton Experiment Station is Tuesday, June 10. Registration begins at 7:45 a.m. and tours begin at 8:30 a.m. The tours feature 12 presentations by staff scientists. Some topics to be covered include carbon sequestration in soil, camelina a new oil seed crop, new OSU and ARS wheat varieties, Fusarium Crown Rot in wheat, herbicide evaluations on wheat, and use of green seeker technology for nitrogen application. The wheat industry meeting follows at 3 pm.

The Sherman Station Field day is Wednesday, June 11, in Moro. Participants should meet at 7:30 a.m., at Sherman County High School in Moro, OR. The group will depart for field tours to the Sherman Station at 8:10 a.m. The field day features tours of 8 research trials. Topics to be covered include new wheat varieties, planting date effects on wheat performance, camelina production, rotation crops, waxy barley production, control of cereal rye in wheat, and Fusarium Crown rot in wheat. The Field Day ends about noon and returns to the High School for a hosted lunch and the wheat industry reorganization discussion.

Earn one hour of pesticide credits each day for Oregon and Washington applicators. CCA credits are available for those needing those professional credits.

These field days are excellent at keeping you updated on factors that can add to your management decisions.

Sherman Station, Field Day, Moro, Oregon, Wednesday, June 11, 2008

7:30 a.m. Meet at Sherman County High School, Moro (refreshments)
8:00 a.m. Welcome & Introduction
8:10 a.m. Travel to Sherman Station by Bus
8:30 a.m. Tour of Experimental Plots
           (20 minute presentation with additional 5 minutes for travel to the next stop)
8:30 a.m. Wheat Varieties for Early or Late Seeding
           Dr. Mike Flowers, OSU Extension Cereal Specialist
8:55 a.m. Camelina Production in Oregon
           Dr. Don Wysocki, Extension Soil Scientist and Nick Sirovatka, OSU Research Assistant
9:20 a.m. Feral Rye Management in Clearfield Wheat
           Dr. Dan Ball, OSU Weed Scientist
9:45 a.m. Developing Resistance and Tolerance to Fusarium Crown Rot in Winter Wheat
           Grant Poole, WSU Graduate Student and Richard Smiley, OSU Plant Pathologist
10:10 a.m. Break
10:30 a.m. The Importance of Molecular Diagnosis in Wheat Disease Management – Local examples
           Dr. Guiping Yan, OSU Research Associate and Dr. Richard Smiley, OSU Plant Pathologist
10:55 a.m. Hulled and Hulless Food Barley – A Potential New Crop.
           Dr. Steve Petrie, OSU Superintendent
11:20 a.m. Alternative Crops Update
           Brian Tuck, OSU Extension Agent and Dr. Stephen Machado, OSU Agronomist
11:45 a.m. Wheat Variety and Breeding Update
           Dr. Jim Peterson, OSU Wheat Breeder, Dr. Kim Campbel, USDA-ARS Wheat Breeder and Jeron Chatelain, OSU
12:15 p.m. Hosted Lunch (Sherman County High School)
And Something for the Stockman…

Coming at the Oregon Cattlemen’s Mid Year Conference and Trade Show is this unique educational seminar, offered on Thursday, June 19.

*Increasing Calf Value with Age and Source Verification* Age and Source Verification (ASV) is a phrase we hear frequently. As foreign markets continue to reopen, there has been an increasing demand for ASV cattle. Learn how these cattle play an important role for US beef exports and how they may play a role as Country of Origin Labeling is implemented. This program will address the premiums offered to cow-calf operators and the basic requirements of ASV to help you decide if ASV is right for your ranch. The program is presented by Oregon State University Extension. Breakfast at 6:30 am, program beginning at 7:00 am.

*For more information contact Barbi Riggs, 541-447-6228 or barbi.riggs@oregonstate.edu.*

Recycle Pesticide Containers

There’s an easy and legal way to dispose of your plastic chemical containers and it all begins on the farm. The containers have to be properly treated because employees don’t want some unknown material leaking on them or their work site, and some items don’t recycle well.

Recycling starts at mixing and loading. Multiple rinse the containers and pour the rinsate into the spray tank as you fill. At today’s chemical costs, one cannot afford to not use every ounce they bought.

Next remove the cap and toss into a regular disposal container. The plastics in the caps are a different mix of plastic and not compatible with the recycling project.

Remove the labels if is it a booklet or slip-on sleeve, but leave it on if it is gummed onto the container.

Thirty to fifty gallon barrels should be cut in half length-wise. Five gallon pails need to have the wire bail removed. It’s good to poke a hole in them so they are not used as a water container.

In addition to the multiple rinsing, be sure that the area around the pour spout is cleaned and free of foreign debris. Again this is a worker safety concern.

Smaller jugs (2.5 gallon or less) should be tied together by running twine through their handles. This makes them easier to handle and less likely to blow away from the delivery site.

Properly prepared containers can then be delivered to Chamberlain Distributing Company in The Dalles at 3026 East Second Street, just east of Big Jims Drive-In. Chamberlain is teamed with Agri-Plas of Brooks, Oregon to offer this service. A large pile of containers, when chipped, can be packed into a small box for shipping to another site where they are melted and re-molded into more pesticide containers.

There is no charge for the recycling. Chamberlain is open 6 days a week, from 7 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday, and until noon on Saturday.