Grain and Rain

The average price of soft white wheat in Portland in April was $5.46 per bushel. Club wheat averaged $6.95. Barley prices were at $108.50 per ton for the month in Portland.

Precipitation varied quite a bit in the Mid-Columbia but at the Sherman Experiment Station it was .73 inches. Dave Duling reported 1.32” on Juniper Flats in Wasco Co.

Grain Marketing Plan

Many of you with absentee landlords have caught holy heck the last two seasons because your landlords typically sell their share amount of the crop at harvest. In 2007, the harvest price of wheat was sitting at $6.36, a great, historically high price. So they sold and were happy, right? Not when the price climbed to $16. So in 2008, the stinging lesson still fresh in their memory, they smiled at the harvest price of $7.93 and smiled sitting on their sales until the price shot up again. Some are still sitting on that pile of wheat, now at $5….

One common theme from our marketing meetings is that marketing in your rearview mirror is not a profitable marketing plan. So what kind of marketing plan can you suggest that would offer them up-side opportunity and downside protection?

I have sought permission to share the points for this simple grain marketing plan and it’s one you might suggest to your landlord as it takes away their fears and allows them to minimize their risks. It is simple and doesn’t involve the schemes a plan does that uses options, hedging selling, delayed pricing and many other tools in your marketing box. This simple plan is based on the familiar cash sales and forward selling to lock in prices.

The plan is simple:

**Rule 1**
Prior to harvest, if forward-pricing opportunities for any year are higher than the average price over the past five years, forward-contract (with a 20-cent ratchet) the amount allowed by “worst-case production scenario.” Forward contracting may include, but not extend beyond, the year of production, the year of summer fallow and the year after that. Grain not forward-marketed will be sold according to Rules 2, 3 and 4.

**Rule 2**
If grain has been harvested and the Portland price for August is within 15 cents of Portland price for January (i.e., no “carry”), sell all warehouse-stored grain immediately.
Grain Marketing Plan….continued

Rule 3)
If the market carry from August to January is more than 15 cents, put a 15-cent ratchet on the January price and sell all non-contracted grain for January.

Rule 4)
If Rule 2 is true (no carry in the market) at harvest, deliver all grain at harvest to the warehouse. Do not put any grain in home storage. (This rule could be altered with unusual circumstances such as no storage at warehouse, farmers may be offered incentive to use home storage, etc.)

That’s it. Four simple rules. It means they will need to know what the historical worst case scenario crop might be for that farm. It is based on the five year historical price average, but we frequently include that in at the end of the crop year through our newsletter and most co-ops carry that info readily. And if you ask your local grain marketing co-op, most will set up your marketing plan and notify you when your targets are reached, so it is the grain owner making the final call on the selling decision.

Share the plan and relieve the burden of recommending wrong choices for your landlords.

Swine Flu Facts You Need to Know

First you will hear the pork producers ask you not to refer to it as “Swine “ flu, but that cat’s already been out of the bag. The official title is Influenza A (H1N1).

Although it originated as a mutated flu common in swine, it is not transmitted in food. You cannot get it from eating pork products. Preparing pork products properly, cooking pork to an internal 160°, would kill any influenza virus present anyway.

The influenza is not passed from direct contacts with swine, although that is the suspected first case of transmission. In fact, there is no current swine health crisis. It is spread in people to people contact. It is new, so there is not a designated vaccine for this virus.

So how do you know if you’ve got it? Nobody wants the first clue to be the line on their autopsy report. The symptoms of swine flu in people include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people with swine flu also have reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include fast breathing or trouble breathing, bluish skin color, not drinking enough fluids, not waking up or not interacting, being so irritable that the child does not want to be held, fever with a rash.

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include: difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion, severe or persistent vomiting

Protect your family by following these basic steps of health hygiene:

1.) Avoid close contact. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

2.) Stay home when you are sick. If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

3.) Cover your mouth and nose. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and then throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
4.) Clean your hands. Washing your hands often with soap and water will help protect you from germs. Also wash hands after you cough or sneeze as that will help protect those around you. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.

5.) Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

6.) Practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.

There are some related concerns, even though we are not a huge pork producing area, and that is regarding the possible combined transmission of the avian, swine and human influenza. The mortality rate with the avian influenza is extremely high, however the transmission remains (at this time) as bird to human, whereas the Swine Flu has already moved to the human to human stage. Should these two influenzas ‘get together’ we may be in for an interesting ride. Therefore, the Veterinary school at Wisconsin-Madison is encouraging steps to minimize contact between pigs and both wild and domestic fowl. Do not raise pigs and domestic fowl on the same premises and keep pig feed in a closed container to prevent contamination with feces from over-flying waterfowl. Also, do not use untreated surface water as either drinking water for the hogs or for cleaning pens. Good advice for any commercial or 4H hog operation.

Spraying or Swine Flu?

Looking closely at the descriptions of symptoms, they appear very similar to what one may find when one has been exposed to pesticides. And at this time of year when many are spraying, should you get to feeling any of these symptoms, you need to exercise caution. Is it a pesticide exposure, is it swine flu or is it a regular flu? How would you know for sure?

If you’ve been spraying and haven’t been around people much, you might suspect that. Only your doctor can tell you for sure, so get it checked out. One can recover from any of the three options, but treatments vary, so having the expert diagnosis is very important.

I used to know a coach who exclaimed that if you are not healthy, you are not in the game. But, your health is not a game.

Jointed Goat Grass Surveyors Coming

Last summer, we found fields of ORCF 101 wheat that were treated with the proper herbicide that had escapes of both wheat and goatgrass crosses and of straight jointed goatgrass. In samples tested, it was found that 100% of the hybrids sampled had Clearfield gene conferring resistance to imaxamox (Beyond™). At this time none of the goatgrass had the resistance.

Now, despite the resistance in the hybrid plants, only 3% of the seeds on the hybrids were fertile, but they had a high rate of germination at 70%.

So what happens if these hybrids back cross back to the goatgrass? Will that produce an herbicide resistant jointed goatgrass? That’s what researchers at OSU are seeking to learn.

Later this spring, there will teams traversing the area in fields with ORCF 101 or 102 growing, or in fields where the varieties were produced last year. They will be looking for goatgrass to tissue sample to see if resistance has defected to the enemy. If so, it could have severe impacts on our industry.

When these teams come calling, please allow them access to your fields.
Range and Riparian Workshop, May 13… RSVP Requested

A Range and Riparian Workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, May 13, at the old Rebecca Hall in Grass Valley (directly behind the Grass Valley Market). The workshop starts with registration and rolls at 9:30, followed by the program at 10 am. Our two speakers will address the proper function and condition of riparian areas, an overview of riparian grazing management and a short review of cattle on creeks.

After lunch the group will head to the field to discuss these issues with living examples. There is no fee to attend and the lunch for this program is hosted, BUT we need to know how many plan to attend so we can let the cook know how much to prepare.

If you have cattle and if your cattle ever access water, this workshop is one that you won’t want to miss. Please RSVP to the Sherman County Extension Office (541-565-3230) by Friday, May 8, to be sure we have a lunch for you at the workshop Wednesday May, 13.

Wasco County Livestock Tour, May 14

A Livestock Tour is set for Thursday, May 14, in Wasco County. This tour begins at the Auction Yard in The Dalles at 7:30 am, and caravans out to two stops, returning by 1:30 pm. The stops include pasture renovation using compost tea, livestock water quality and health issues, general water quality, livestock pond aeration and installation, and USDA programs to assist producers with planning and installing these measures.

For more information contact the Wasco County Extension (541-296-5494) or the SWCD (541-298-8559 X 3).

Wasco County Crop Tour, May 19

This year’s Wasco County Crop Tour starts at the Auction Yard at 7:30 am on Tuesday, May 19, and concludes at 1 pm. Caravan to three stops to discuss ORCF 101/102 and Beyond herbicide resistance in jointed goatgrass, a field equipment demonstration including the machine for mapping the Electro-Conductivity on your fields, what that all means and how to use it, Camelina production and weed control in camelina, the use of raptors and owls to control Rodents, and some Farm Program updates.

This tour has been blessed with three hours of pesticide recertification credit hours for both Oregon and Washington applicators.

Small Business Lenders Conference, May 22

You’ve got that great idea for a small business but don’t know how to finance it. You will want to attend the Small Business Lenders Conference from 10:30 to noon on Friday, May 22, at the Columbia Gorge Community College building #2 on the third floor.

New OSU Ag Dean

Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy has been hired as the new Dean of the College of Ag Sciences at Oregon State. Ramaswamy replaces retired Thayne Dutson, who retired in 2008 after 21 years in the saddle.

Ramaswamy has been at Purdue and brings a broad wealth of experience to the role. He is an entomologist by training, but has been involved in many administrative positions at several schools. He officially hangs his new shingle in Corvallis on August 1.

Winter Grain Mites

Winter grain mites have been observed in the Mid-Columbia this year. There is a new publication available on-line that discusses winter grain mite management and can be found at the following website:
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pdf/em/em8976-e.pdf

Experiment Station Field Days

June 9  Pendleton
June 10 Sherman Station, Moro