



Manitoba Corn Growers Association, Inc

NEWSLETTER

August 2016

From the Office

Summer seems to be flying by again this year as June and July have been very busy.

The month began with meetings in Ottawa to discuss social license at the Public Trust Summit where the Canadian Center for Food Integrity was launched. This organization hopes to provide support to the whole social license/public trust issue which as you can see from more and more controversial ads and discussions, is really ramping up in Canada. To learn more about this you can check out: www.farmfoodcare.org/canada/canadian-centre-for-food-integrity/

This was followed up with a busy week at the Amazing Ag Adventure which is sponsored by Agriculture in the Classroom MB and is a great opportunity to bring the ag message to students.

Thanks AITC-MB for a job well done!!



The collaborative work between our five commodity groups continues with monthly conference calls with all the Executive Directors. In June a meeting was arranged with Minister Eichler where we updated him on our collaborative efforts and discussed issues in common, such as smooth transitioning to GF3, research capacity and strengthening relationships with some of the Boards that govern the activities of commodity groups and farmers. This was a short but productive meeting with assurances by the Minister that he is very interested in learning more about all the different commodity groups and their specific needs.

Further to the collaboration discussion, MCGA has developed some shared positions with Manitoba Wheat and Barley Growers (MWBGA). Lori-Ann Kaminski, Research Manager with MWBGA is taking on the oversight of any of our research projects that have outside funding attached to them. This fills the void left when Karin Rose moved on to other endeavours. Tammy Cote and Jackie Martin from our office are now

providing administrative support to MWBGA. This is proving to be a good situation for both of our Associations. It is our hope to continue to work collaboratively with MWBGA and perhaps even explore more joint positions in the future.

Provincial Policy: MCGA participated in the luncheon consultation that Minister Eichler held in order to get feedback from commodity groups prior to attending the Fed/Prov/Territorial AgMinisters' meetings in Calgary in July. Most groups were in agreement that one of the topics that really needs to be discussed is the fact that the Agri-Stability program does not work for farmers and this is borne out by the fact that participation rates were down to 36% in 2013 already and we know they are continuing to decline. Further to this MCGA encouraged the Minister to support crop insurance at the highest level possible to be sure that we do not fall behind other provinces. At this meeting MCGA also reminded the Minister that it was very important to be sure that the transition to Growing Forward 3 is seamless so that research projects do not lose a year due to delays in approvals.

On July 12 MCGA attended the Manitoba Agriculture Industry Consultation, entitled Growing the Agriculture Sector Together. This meeting was hosted by Minister Eichler and the Manitoba Department of Agriculture (MDA) staff. Participants included most of the ag industry including researchers, finance, transportation, national farm groups, provincial farm groups, representatives from the grains industry, consumer groups, processors, agencies such as Ducks Unlimited, 4-H Canada, Ag in the Classroom and many more. The agenda included the following topics: 'selling into the global market', 'building on innovation', 'maintaining public trust' and closed with 'Advise to the Minister—how do we work together'. As you can see it was an intense day with lots of opportunity for discussion as well. The most encouraging thing for me was the fact that Minister Eichler participated in the session himself and stayed for the whole

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day. He and his staff were really engaged and moved from table to table to ensure that they heard from as many people as possible. It was a great meeting and if this is a sign of the future openness and willingness to learn with this department, I am hopeful that together we can move the ag industry forward in ways that we haven't even thought of yet. Kudos to Minister Eichler and his staff!

National Policy: July 13 was travel day for director Dennis Thiessen and myself as we flew east to attend the Grain Growers of Canada (GGC) summer meeting. This was also a very good meeting where we had the honour of having the federal AgMinister in attendance. Minister MacAulay was the luncheon speaker on day one and then the GGC Safety Net Committee had a smaller meeting with Minister MacAulay and staff.



Dennis is the chair of the GGC Safety Net Committee and I am the staff support person. We have been working with other groups including the Grain Farmers of Ontario to decide how to best approach the new federal AgMinister to get the mes-

sage out that we need to have more conversations about the Safety Net Programs. We as producers need to have a conduit to be able to discuss the programs with the Minister and his staff regularly so that problems can be sorted out before they become big problems and work can be started on the next round of programming with GF3. The Committee decided that to begin with we would ask Minister MacAuley to reinstate a representative National Safety Net Committee that would work with AAFC to review and develop programming. Years ago there was such a group and there were some very capable farmers representing respected groups that sat on the committee. With the previous government that committee was disbanded and replaced with a handpicked committee that did not represent anyone, and though they may be very capable, because they must sign a confidentiality agreement they may not share anything so there is no conduit for feeding up information and no mechanism for testing or suggesting change.

During our smaller meeting with the Minister we pointed out that farmers across the country need a good safety net program for poor years and they are willing to pay a reasonable premium if it is a predictable, bankable program. We reminded him that participation rates in Ag-Stab are falling to alarming numbers and that if something isn't done there is a real risk of the need for ad hoc programming. Currently, Canadian agriculture is being supported by the exchange rate, but should that turn around we will see increased hurt across the country.

Therefore, we requested that the Minister set up a National Safety Net Advisory Committee and that the mem-

bers be representatives from commodity groups across the nation so that there is an opportunity for a good exchange of ideas and an ability to work together to improve programs. Minister MacAulay did seem somewhat receptive to the idea so we will see what happens at and after the Fed/Prov/Territorial meetings as there would have to be support for this from the provincial AgMinisters as well. It would likely be even better if there were provincial groups that would then feed up to the National groups to get a good cross-section of farmers and commodities involved.

The meeting with Minister MacAulay was the anchor of the GGC Summer Meeting but there were many other topics discussed. We had three excellent speaker panels, on Trade & Marketing, Balancing Social License and Right to Farm and Transportation. All very interesting with well qualified speakers.



We also spent a bit more time on governance and planning for the future. All in all a good meeting, with lots of information, education, networking, food and fun.

Latest Report on Bee Overwintering: We have included in this Newsletter a guest commentary from Ted Menzies, President and CEO of CropLife Canada, reprinted, with permission from their online blog. The full report is available at: <http://www.capabees.com/shared/2015/07/2016-CAPA-Statement-on-Colony-Losses-July-19.pdf>

Cosmetic Use of Pesticides: The new Manitoba Government has announced that they are reviewing, and asking for feedback on the Cosmetic Use of Pesticide Regulations. Please find the announcement elsewhere in this Newsletter and we would encourage all of you to take a few moments to fill out the survey. It is only five questions long and the results could have a large impact if they choose to soften the regulations as a result of these consultations. The government needs to be reminded that these pesticides are regulated and approved, and when used according to package instructions are completely safe. It is also good to mention that the alternative, weed infested public areas have a great cost to the province economically, aesthetically, and environmentally. There is a cost attached to weed infestation, loss of tourism, injuries incurred because of the poor maintenance of sports fields, and the reduced usage of public areas. The replacement of sports field surfaces with artificial turf is not an environmentally friendly option at all.

Enjoy the rest of your summer and stay cool and safe!!

Guest Commentary on the Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturists Report of Bee Overwintering

It was a successful winter for honey bees across Canada according to the latest report from the Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturists (CAPA), with overwinter losses nationally just below 17 per cent. Couple this with the fact that honey bee numbers in Canada are at an all-time high and there's a great story to tell around bee health, though you wouldn't know it from the alarmist claims and charged rhetoric being thrown around by certain groups.

In Ontario specifically, overwintering losses this year were just below 18 per cent. This is a significant drop from last year where losses were just under 40 per cent. As we've seen in recent years, and indeed through the course of history, overwintering losses fluctuate significantly from year to year based on various factors, chief among them, weather.

The last five years in Ontario serve as a perfect case study. The 2011/12 winter was particularly mild in Ontario and overwintering losses that year were around 12 per cent. Losses climbed up to the 30 and 50 per cent range in subsequent years when the winters were particularly harsh. And this year the numbers dropped again to below 20 per cent with a moderate winter, highlighting that a combination of factors including weather, nutrition and colony strength all factor into overwintering losses.

These fluctuations all happened while farmers' use of neonicotinoid-treated seeds remained relatively consistent. So while certain politically motivated groups point to neonics as the primary cause of bee health issues in Ontario, the facts simply don't support it.

CAPA specifically asked beekeepers across the country what they thought the primary causes of overwintering losses were this year. They identified poor queens, varroa mites, weak colonies and weather as the top four issues. Pesticides in general, and neonicotinoids specifically, did not make the list.

There's clearly a disconnect between the beekeepers themselves and some of the provincial beekeeping organizations that claim to represent their interests. In recent years the Ontario Beekeeping Association (OBA) has spent the bulk of its time lobbying to have neonics banned. Their members would be much better served by having them focus on the real issues of concern to beekeepers in the province.

Unfortunately, the Ontario government bowed to pressure from activist groups and introduced regulations to severely limit farmers' use of neonic-treated seeds. The government's stated goal with these regulations was to get overwintering losses down to 15 per cent. The numbers in Ontario this year are close to that level even before the new regulations took effect. The question then is why are farmers being handicapped with these restrictions when there is no apparent impact on honey bee overwintering success?

Ontario's regulations are burdensome and costly for farmers. They serve only to remove a useful tool from the toolbox that has allowed growers to farm in increasingly more sustainable ways. Forcing farmers to revert to using older production methods is not good for them, it's not good for the environment, and it's not good for Ontarians and Canadians as a whole. I hope that these latest overwintering loss numbers and the expert commentary from Canada's preeminent bee experts lead both the Ontario government and OBA to recognize the error in their ways. And I hope they serve as a cautionary tale for others, like Quebec, who are considering implementing similar restrictions that will hurt the agriculture industry and do little to help protect bees.

Many stakeholders are working productively together to address the primary challenges identified by beekeepers through venues such as the Bee Health Roundtable. Let's drop the finger pointing and politics and work together towards meaningful solutions to ensure the continued success of this vital industry.

Ted Menzies

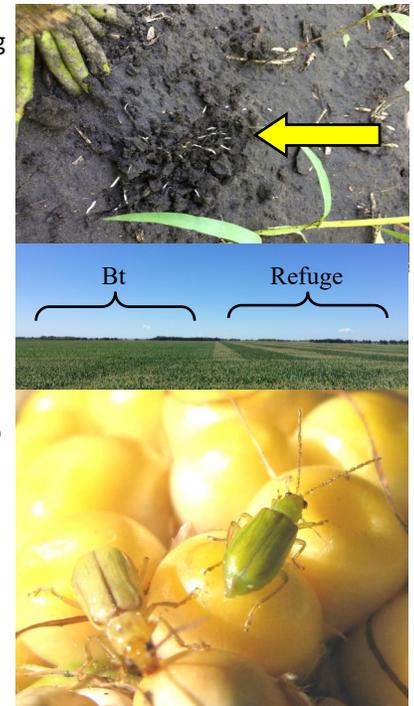
President and CEO, CropLife Canada



From the Field

As August arrives, producers are going to be more concerned about harvesting their small grain crops, rather than what is happening in the corn. On that note, I want to give you a few quick reminders that will make your corn scouting sessions more efficient at this time of year, so you can get back in the swather or combine.

- **Green Snap**—this isn't stage-specific, and it is not preventable, unfortunately. The strong winds that have been ripping through the province lately have had an impact on the corn crop, but it was just poor timing if you did notice green snap in your corn. The plant was likely in a heavy vegetative growth phase and the lignin production was slower than internode elongation. Lignin is what provides the stalk structure and strength, so in the short period that it lagged behind, the heavy winds were able to snap those weaker corn stalks. If the stalk breakage occurred above the developing ear, yield will not be affected drastically, but the silks will depend on pollination from neighbouring plants. If the green snap occurred below the ear, the plant will not be able to make the yield up elsewhere and it will be a loss.
- **Shallow Roots**—the very wet weather has discouraged deep rooting because everything the plant needs can be found near the surface. Luckily, we have had good weather leading up to this, so there should be a great root system already developed. If you are seeing roots near the soil surface, give the plant a push and if it falls over quite easily, that plant is lacking proper roots to anchor it.
- **European Corn Borer**—July is prime time to be scouting for ECB egg masses, but it can also lead into August, depending on the adult moths and their life cycle. Refuge In the Bag is very commonplace and easily available now, but there is still the option to plant two hybrids—one Bt and one refuge. Here is a great picture displaying one of the appropriate ways to plant refuge in a field.
- **Corn Rootworm**—it's no secret that corn rootworm was found in Manitoba last year, so we are recommending continuous corn growers to be out scouting for adult beetles on silks over the next week or two (the sooner, the better). CRW will likely only be occurring on fields that have been in corn for 2 or more consecutive years, unless you have a neighbor that does and beetles flew across the road from his crop. Check the silks for these beetles, which will clip the silks and interfere with pollination. They're quick, so move slowly if you spot them, and try to gauge how many you are finding per plant.



If you have questions related to any of the issues stated above, or otherwise, please contact me and we can work through what is happening on your farm.

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Manitoba 

NewsRelease

July 18, 2016

PROVINCE TO CONSULT MANITOBANS ON THE COSMETIC USE OF PESTICIDES

Manitoba is entering the second year of implementation of the Non-Essential Use of Pesticides Regulation and the province wants to hear from Manitobans about their experiences with this legislation, Sustainable Development Minister Cathy Cox announced today.

“The purpose of the legislation is to reduce the exposure of people and pets to herbicides used in lawn care for non-essential or cosmetic purposes.” Cox said. “We are committed to finding the right balance between protecting the environment, minimizing the impact, and providing usable, aesthetic green spaces in our communities.”

Manitobans can email submissions to pesticide.review.2016@gov.mb.ca or respond through an online survey at: http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/envprograms/initiatives/cosmetic_pesticides/ until Sept. 12.