

# SFG Update

Smith Fertilizer & Grain  
May/June Edition

## Max Smith General Manager



We are really seeing change this spring. The weather has went from one extreme to the other. I said the drought was over and here we are back into it again. It looks like rain outside my window and I hope it really happens this time. This Spring is about as open as I can remember. Congratulations to all who did conservation work! Tree lines, terraces, tile and waterways really look good along the country side. Crops planted early look good in most places, but we do need

rain badly. I am irrigating my sweet corn. Gotta have this crop!

We really appreciate all the business you have brought to SFG this spring. Our agronomy staff has worked very hard. They really enjoy their work. Ashley Kuntz has been busy selling creep feed. We have the best feed business we have had for a long time. She has been working in the Albia office while we train new staff. Now that the crop is in she will be back out in the country more in the weeks to come.

The past few weeks we have been painting and refurbishing creep feeders to put them in top condition. We have started our summer sandblasting to paint fertilizer and truck equipment and are doing this at the Knoxville location this time. (I just heard it Thunder. Have not heard that noise for a long time). We started maintenance preparation for the 12/13 season. Each year we try to start a little quicker so

our equipment is put away, ready for the next fall and spring work as we finish this spring season. Tool bars and seed tenders are first. This summer there are several new Nh3 regulations that require us to test and replace all the excess flow valves to meet current safety regulations. We empty all our tanks and water test everything we have for wagons. This will take a while but it will make it that much safer for all of us next fall.

In July we will build a new 3,000 ton Super Grow storage tank at Knoxville. The next big thing at home is to rebuild our parking lot. This has not taken priority for a while. We will fix it up to drain water off and keep our equipment out of the mud. We are rocking the Albia driveway this week and have built drains in the rock to better disperse the water. Looks much better!! We will build a new load out for fertilizer at

Knoxville to better accommodate semi loads of product. We built the old load out for small trucks and it needs updated.

The grain markets have been weaker as the crop looks so good in most places. Big news in grain is the new trading hours. Mark White will address this in a blog article. This is a big deal. Some is good and some not so good. More later.

Keep in weekly contact with your agronomist and your expectations from them. They cover a lot of acres. I want to make sure everyone is communicating on both sides. We appreciate all the business and look forward to enjoying summer more this year than we have for several years. Just heard more Thunder. Better go check this out.

Thanks for your support.

Max Smith  
General Manager

## Mark White Knoxville Location Manager



On May 13<sup>th</sup>, the CME, which owns the Chicago Board of Trade extended the electronic grain trade to 22 hours a day. This trade begins at 5:00 pm and closes at 2:00 pm the following day. Therefore it's week starts on Sunday at 5:00

pm and closes the week out at 2:00 pm Friday. In the past this was known as the overnight trade as it ran from 6:00 pm to 7:00 am. The trades are done by computers as there is no "live bodies" involved such as the commodity pits. The electronic trade has grown immensely in volume as traders like imputing the trades and the computers take it from there. In the past, this session was used primarily by foreign traders, hedgers, and speculators. Now with the extended hours this trade will be used by terminals and companies like SFG to give producers more opportunities to price their grain. The live pit and the electronic bids run close most days, however the electronic responds faster and settlements

are quicker. Currently the live trade is still running from 9:30 to 1:15 on market days. However a proposal is pending to extend this to 2:00 pm to match the electronic close. This would help eliminate most of the confusion that has happened in the first week with 2 closing times.

So what does all this mean to SFG and our grain customers? We will no longer have a morning spot bid like we have had in the past. We will now buy grain from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm on days the market is open using an instant bid. This means you will need to call us to get the current price and it will be a take or leave price as the market will be open and moving. This price will be de-

termined by the movement of the market compared to the previous days close. We will still have an afternoon spot price that we hope to post by 3:00pm and it will be good till 4:00pm. We must cut off the purchases at this time to allow us time to make our sales before the terminals start closing at 4:30pm. We realize that this new format will necessitate some changes on the way we handle the spot grain we receive during harvest. We will have more information for you in the coming months.

Should you have any questions about this or grain marketing in general, call me at the Knoxville office, 641-828-8500.

## Gary Sterling Albia Location Manager



Time sure seems to be flying by. The nice weather caused pastures to green up earlier than normal and planting started off with a bang. Some farms got a lot of rain and had to replant while others didn't get much and the crops are having a hard time getting started. I just baled my hay and had about 1/2 of what I usually get (must need fertilizer or more rain). I am in one of the areas that has not received an over abundance of rain. If we don't get rain soon the pastures will begin to brown out.

With the price of calves, now would be a good time to plan ahead and get creep feed and or tubs locked in for the summer and fall. If needed SFG has creep feeders available to rent by the day with a 30 day minimum. If you are planning to apply urea on your pasture make sure it is going to rain within 4 days so you do not lose part of the nitrogen. Another option is to have it treated with nutrisphere which will give you a two week window before rain is needed.

## Ashley Knust Feed Sales



I have seen several creep feeders being cleaned out and moved into pastures this month. As you decide whether or not to implement creep feeding in your cow calf operation this year, I want to give you a

few points to consider.: Creep feeding is the practice of providing supplemental nourishment to nursing calves. Creep feeding allows calves to grow at a rate closer to their genetic potential. Research shows that weaning weights are significantly increased when calves are creep fed. In addition, cows, on average, are 20 to 30 pounds heavier at weaning. With better body condition, cows will cycle earlier, have improved conception rates, and reduced stress. Calves will be better able to handle weaning and shipping stress, which can lead to a healthier start in the feedlot.

To have a successful creep feeding season, start by placing the feeders in an area the cows frequent (near loafing areas, water,

or mineral feeders). To entice the calves to the feeder, it can help to spread sweet feed in the trough initially. Set the feed flow adjustment so that creep is metered out evenly to prevent stale and moldy feed building up in the trough (3/4 to 1 inch). Monitor the feeder daily and never let the feeders go empty.

The following is a tool you can use to help determine the profitability of creep feeding on your operation. Call us for the current price on creep feed! Please visit our website at [www.sfgiowa.com](http://www.sfgiowa.com) for a worksheet on how to calculate creep feed advantages for your herd!

## Mark Young Agronomy Manager



Field monitoring, or scouting, is the backbone of all SFG pest management programs. Before appropriate pest control decisions can be made, a detailed assessment of pest populations must be obtained. Efficient pest scouting requires our agronomists to have a thorough knowledge of pest and crop biology, pest identification and habits, correct sampling methods, and economic thresholds (when available). We currently have **eight** agronomists and/or crop scouts monitoring your fields.

The goal of SFG scouting is to give a complete, accurate and unbiased assessment of pest populations. Our agronomist is the link between your crop and you. Scouting report forms are comprehensive enough so control decisions can be made directly from the report form. These forms not only serve as a record of current pest populations but are also saved by SFG as part of your field history records.

The frequency with which, SFG agronomists scout, must be made depends on the type of crop grown and pest present or expected. Fields visits are scheduled such that increases in pest populations are detected as soon as economic thresholds are reached. Crops are monitored at regular intervals throughout the growing season. Our agronomists, however, have flexible schedules to allow revisiting problem fields.

When monitoring crops a scout will carry the following equipment:

1. Reporting forms, pen or pencil
2. Knife, for splitting stalks
3. Magnifying glass or hand lens for accurate pest identification
4. Bags, plastic vials, for collecting plants and insect specimens for future identification
5. Measuring tape
6. Trowl, spade, for digging entire plant for proper pest identification
7. Reference materials

With all the investment that you have placed in your crops, it would be a shame to see anything happen to them. Talk to your SFG Agronomist about scouting your crops. We have highly qualified scouts with vast experience. Our agronomist will do the field scouting and monitoring all year long. As a farmer, you have enough to worry about, let SFG do the scouting for you and inform you of your options to enhance your investment.

## Jerry Don Johnson Agronomy Sales



For a growing season to have started so well we are sure having our share of prob-

lems now. Over the past couple of weeks I have spent a lot of time in the field scouting. I have encountered everything from Pythium to Cutworm feeding.

Another problem I am seeing is Rootles Corn Syndrome. This condition is usually observed in plants from about the three to eight leaf stage of development. I have observed plants that have either lodged and are lying on the ground or are leaning and about to lodge.

This can be caused by hot dry soil conditions during early root development and by

shallow planting depths, compacted soils, and loose or cloddy soil conditions. It can also occur when the seed furrow opens up as it has in a lot of the sun baked fields I have been in.

According to Roger Elmore from ISU, corn can recover from this condition. Cultivation can help by putting soil around the base to support the plant. With enough rainfall nodal root development will occur and many plants will recover. What we need most now is a rain to get the roots growing.

## Corey Garrington Agronomy Sales



While out scouting fields throughout my territory, there seems to be one common

theme in the fields, uneven emergence. The most common cause of uneven emergence in corn is dry soils. If the soil is too dry at or shortly after planting, seedlings will emerge at different times. The emergence time may vary between parts of fields, from one row to the next, or even from one plant to the next. Soil moisture can differ from within a field because of different soil types or topography. Other reasons may be uneven distribution of moist and dry soils by secondary tillage. This results in some seeds absorbing enough moisture to germinate while others remain dry. In many cases, seeds placed in dry soil do not ger-

minate and emerge until after rainfall. This produces a mixture of larger and smaller plants, with the size difference depending on the time of planting to rainfall.

It has been well documented that uneven emergence affects crop performance because competition from larger early emerging plants decrease the yield from smaller, late emerging plants. Many factors affect whether it is beneficial to re-plant or fill in where the stands are poor. Contact your local SFG salesman with any questions you may have.

## Brad Kaufman Agronomy Sales



Progressing through spring we have faced many challenges. First it was cutworms, which are still working on some later planted corn. Next, we came across Pythium affecting corn stands, in most cases bad enough to replant. Now we need a rain in a bad way. However, with all these challenges, to date things are looking pretty good. As I have been out scouting fields I noticed this corn is starting to look a little yellow. Most of us would associate

the yellow color with nitrogen deficiency, but if you look closely at the plants they are not showing any signs of lacking nitrogen, to date. The corn is yellowing between the veins, which is a very common nutrient deficiency sign. Which micro nutrient? It is hard to say because many of the micro nutrients have the same characteristics, yellowing between the mid veins. My guess is that it is a Sulfur or Zinc deficiency. I have sent in plant tissue samples to have a Nutriscription test ran on them, so I will have this answer in about a week.

Nutriscription is a handy tool for us to utilize. We take random plant samples in the field and send them off to be analyzed. We get a nice "snapshot" of how the corn plant is doing or if it is lacking anything. I ran several of these tests last year and it was surprising how similar each test came back, lacking Zinc and in most cases Sulfur. Zinc is important in the plant because it aids in utilizing the phosphorus we put on the fields to help the plant with root development and other things. Sulfur helps the

plant utilize Nitrogen more efficiently. A Nutriscription test runs about \$50 per sample, which one per farm is enough. Last year on all the tests I ran using the recommendations that came back it was anywhere from 5-15 per acre bushel increase over where we did nothing!

We treated most fields with a product called Task Force 2, which gives the plant some N, P, and K and all your micro nutrients for the plant. Plants can take up nutrients so much better through their leaves than through the soil. Last year in about five days you could go look at the field and think you were standing in a different field completely, it greened up that fast. Task Force 2 is looking like a product we use on beans, Awaken; it needs to be put in every sprayer tank on the second pass chemical. For about \$6 to get a 5-10 bushel increase is well worth the investment.

Nutriscription along with Task Force 2 are two very useful tools to help make your farming operation more profitable.

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