



First Cooperative Association

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MANAGER'S CORNER

By Jim Carlson

General Manager

jcarlson@firstcoop.com

Winters are historically challenging in our part of the state, but the winter of 2009-10 has probably been one of the most severe and challenging winters we've experienced in our lifetimes.

I'm sure there were times many of us wondered if winter would ever end, or if we would have to wait until May before the mountainous drifts of snow melted.

By whatever yardstick of measurement one cares to use, I know there's unanimous agreement that ***This Has Been A Very Long Winter!***

Nevertheless, here we are with over a week remaining in March as I write these words, and remarkably the bulk of the snow mountains have begun to disappear, there are numerous fields barren of snow, and there are even some subtle hints of green starting to show in places.

Spring Will Arrive After All!

We have a very busy spring season awaiting us, and I know everyone of you is as anxious and eager as are all of us here at FCA to get started on yet another season of putting a new crop in.

Over the winter months I know that many of you have been working closely with the FCA Agronomists on your spring plans and needs, since we have used this period to set the wheels in motion to get the very best head start.

In the weeks that will lead us into the start of spring work, I hope you will continue to keep in touch with them so they can keep the flow of products, equipment and services coordinated and mov-

Corn Is Going Out Of Conditions Ten Times Faster

CHECK YOUR BINS NOW

There have been numerous articles in major grain trade publications and frequent warnings have been voiced throughout the grain industry regarding the potential for massive damage and quality problems to strike 2009 crop corn in your grain bins.

Many have warned that corn is going out of condition and spoiling ten times faster than normal, and certainly the harsh winter and blowing snow have contributed to what was already a serious problem due to the overall lower quality of the 2009 corn crop when it was initially put into the bins.

When corn starts to spoil, and corn that is above 15% moisture quickly starts spoiling once temperatures reach 40 degrees, the spoiling process produces 2.5 pounds of water for every pound of corn that spoils, triggering a chain reaction of damage throughout the entire bin. It doesn't take much to set this chain reaction off. An area of spoiled corn the size of a basketball will damage an entire bin of corn.

Bins need to be checked at least weekly until you are able to move corn off the farm, and one of the easiest ways to detect problems is to check the exhaust from your bin fans when you first turn them on.

If you smell a musty odor, a problem is developing and you need to address it at once to prevent additional damage from getting established. If the odor is sour, then spoiling has begun already and you need to act immediately or suffer the consequences of very expensive losses.

The center core of grain in all bins should be pulled to remove the fines and foreign material that will block proper air flow through your grain. There was an excessive level of both materials in the 2009 crop due to lower test weights and additional handling as more corn was put through grain dryers.

ing efficiently to your farms and fields.

I know ***We Are Ready To Serve You*** and that, as always, the entire FCA Team will be pulling together to provide all of you with the most timely and efficient service as we work together on the tasks before us.

As the focus shifts to fieldwork and planting the crops, I want to take this opportunity to remind all of you that not only will this spring be a very hectic and busy season for everyone, as spring seasons always are, it will also be a very dangerous, risky and accident filled season, which unfortunately the farm accident and death statistics tragically prove.

Take time to sit down with your family to review all of the necessary precautions and procedures that need to be followed not only to prevent accidents and injuries from occurring, but also and of perhaps greater importance, what steps need to be taken (who to call, what to do) should an accident take place.

We have put together an information sheet with some very important safety

and transportation requirement reminders and it has been included as a separate insert in this issue of the newsletter.

I encourage you to take some time to review this information and to share it with the members of your family so everyone can be aware of these issues and doing everything possible to make this a safe spring.

SCHALLER PROJECT: I am pleased to report that over the course of this summer a major grain receiving, drying handling and storage projects will be underway at the FCA Schaller location, one we feel will provide a significant boost to our ability to serve the needs of the customers who deliver their crops there.

One of the main features of this project will be the installation of a 12,000 bushel per hour grain leg and a large dump pit that will be dedicated to handling corn as it arrives from your fields.

This will be linked to a new 100,000

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As I am sure most of you recall, last fall everyone gave a top priority to getting as much of their NH-3 down as possible before the winter season arrived in full force, and the result was that we had a remarkable and very successful fall NH-3 season.

Unfortunately, just as we were starting to wrap up the fall NH-3 work and turn our thoughts to getting some of the dry fertilizer spread, along came the first snow of the season that hit in late November.

I know I don't need to remind anyone that what followed was a record-breaking winter season that was highlighted by frequent snow storms, mountainous drifts, extended snow cover and as a result not a wheel was able to turn.

Thus unlike most winters, we were unable to get any dry products spread in open fields, since there just weren't any of those to be found.

That means whatever dry P & K spreading we're normally able to get handed in the fall and winter periods will be added to the volume of acres that we always do in the spring, and the stage has obviously been set for you and us to be facing one very busy spring season with a lot of dry fertilizer chores in front of us.

The guys in the shop have worked many hours over the winter months to get all of the equipment field-ready to roll into your fields just as soon as we can get into them.

And the FCA Agronomists have also been very busy talking to customers about their crop nutrient needs and making recommendations.

Now we come to the most important ingredients in the mix, the ones that will determine just how all of the preparations, discussions and decisions that we've been making will translate into action.

Those ingredients are **The Weather** we get from **Mother Nature**, along with the **Cooperation, Communication & Planning** we are able to receive from all of **You**.

And since none of us has any say or control in the first, we had best do everything we possibly can to maximize our advantages with the latter, and that is, as always, where all of you come in.

Fortunately, many of the things we're going to be needing the most are the same things we need every spring, and since we've all been through this before I think only a few words on each should serve as timely reminders of what those things are.

Field Maps, of course, will come at the top of the list.

We need to have a current field map for all acres where the FCA Team will be providing any custom application services to you this season, and that includes spreading, spraying and perhaps even aerial work if it comes to that down the road.

When I say current, I mean a map that has all of the information about field borders or any special field characteristics clearly marked, along with any changes that you might have made in a particular field or fields.

And of course it also means we need maps for any new ground you'll be farming this season.

Getting the map to your FCA Agronomist and then verifying that the two of you have all the correct information about the crop to be planted, the products to be spread or sprayed, and the services to be performed will save time, prevent errors and assure the most timely, efficient and accurate services for all.

With the pace we're likely to be operating at this season, we need to avoid delays trying to track people down to verify details and information about any field that should have been included on the field maps before we ever got started.

Having arrangements made for **Seed Delivery/Pickup** is another item that needs to be taken care of

right away. We want/need to use the time before work gets underway to separate the specific seed products you've ordered and get them loaded for delivery, or stacked if you're going to be picking them up. We have had a very good seed order season leading up to this spring, the inventories are filling out nicely, and we anticipate having a good selection of in-season seed products available if you run short.

Thank You for your seed business. Another item to be absolutely sure we have taken care of in advance is to bring your **2010 Private Pesticide Applicator Certification** information into us so we can have a copy of your number on file.

This is one of those simple but also easy to forget details which can cause significant delays in-season, since we simply can not allow any **EPA Restricted Use Pesticides** off the premises to any customer that does not have a 2010 certification. In the final analysis, these are just a few of the simple basics that will help us all to make the most of each day Mother Nature allows us into the fields, and we certainly need to make the most of every hour and every day to keep pace with the clock and the calendar this spring.

The more of these preliminaries we can cover and put behind us as being done before everyone gets all tied up with their **Big Jobs** on the farm and in the fields, the smoother things will progress, and the more timely we can be in getting products, equipment, people and services coordinated and to you when you need them the most.

And of course, I want to take this opportunity to both remind and encourage all of our customers to use extra care and caution in all of their spring work so we can have this be a **Safe Season For All!**

**Start Your Spring "Things To Do" List Now
So You'll Be All Set For Spring To Arrive**

Item	Check When Done
Pesticide Applicator License Renewed	<input type="checkbox"/>
License Number On File At FCA	<input type="checkbox"/>
Current FSA Maps Delivered To FCA	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maps Updated For All Spring Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
All Custom P & K - NH-3 - Spraying Orders Finalized	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acres/Fields & Services Scheduled	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seed Pick Up Or Delivery Lined Up	<input type="checkbox"/>
NH-3 Equipment Needs Arranged	<input type="checkbox"/>



ATTENTION

All First Cooperative Agronomy Customers

Please Review The Following

Spring Season Safety and Transportation Regulations

It is spring-time and now is the time to think about safety and regulations in connection with your farming operation. Many of our patrons have applied their anhydrous ammonia last fall but for those who will be putting it on this spring need to keep in mind certain areas that apply.

An Excellent Internet Video that is put out by the Illinois Fertilizer & Chemical Association gives an excellent overview on towing and safety associated with applying anhydrous ammonia (NH-3). It can be found at www.ifca.com. It is only 11 minutes long and is great.

Some of the regulations that apply are that when towing the NH-3 nurse tank the chains must be hooked to the towing vehicle and the maximum towing speed limit is 35 mph.

Suitable hitchpins, adequate for the load, must be used. **BEFORE LEAVING THE CO-OP YARD.**

Also, make sure the 5 gallon water tank is filled. If an operator is exposed to a release, water (lots of it) is the most important factor in minimizing the injury. As an added precaution you should carry a squeeze bottle of water with in your jacket and/or in the vehicle cab.

Also when towing the nurse tank on any roadway please be aware that **IT IS THE LAW** that you must come to a full stop at any railroad tracks.

Another important factor to be aware of when stopping is that the weight of the nurse tank can push you through an intersection or when you attempt to stop. **SLOW DOWN** well before any intersection or area that you must stop. Also be aware that Iowa law does not allow NH-3 nurse tanks to be on the road at dusk or dark unless there is a flashing light on the rear most tank.

The person doing the field applying **MUST WEAR** black neoprene gloves, non-vented goggles and long sleeve shirt **ANY TIME** that you could come in contact with NH-3.

Any time includes whenever you are connecting or disconnecting hose lines, or basically anytime you are not in the tractor. If a line breaks and a vapor cloud comes toward you, run away from the cloud at right angles to get out of the path.

Other regulations that apply to our patrons are that you must have a Private Pesticide License to purchase restricted use chemicals.

When hauling chemicals, the load must be properly secured to comply with federal DOT rules. This is to make sure that chemicals will not be accidentally dropped out of a vehicle during transportation.

You will want to carry tie-downs of some type in your pickup so that the chemicals can be properly secured. This applies to package chemicals and mini-bulks.

Non-chemical items also need to be secured, especially if they extend above the pickup box. This would include seed, feed or other items that extend above the box.

One last area that we would like to cover is that the NH-3 nurse tank or any chemicals that you may be hauling are **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY**. In the event of a chemical spill or release (this applies to fuels also) there are reporting requirements to the Iowa DNR that must be made within 6 hours of an incident.

If the release meets a certain minimum (depends on what is spilled/released) then a call must be made to the National Emergency Response Center within **FIFTEEN MINUTES**. If you miss this deadline it can cost thousands to tens of thousands of dollars.

The phone number for Iowa DNR is 515-281-8694 and the National Emergency Response Center is 800-424-8802. For our patrons, our compliance firm will assist in making these calls if you specifically request their help. Please contact your location agronomy manager and/or location manager and they will try to help direct you during the time of need.

Remember, many of the regulations listed above are for your safety. NH-3 and chemicals can be dangerous, so good safety practices are necessary to keep you and your farm help safe.

HAVE A SAFE SPRING!



**FEED
&
LIVESTOCK
NEWS**
By
Dwayne Naab
dnaab@firstcoop.com

BEEF NOTES: It's been a very challenging winter season for the cows, and with a lot of calves already hitting the ground, and the remainder of the spring calf crop likely to be joining them soon, you will definitely want to be sure you have proper nutritional supplements ready to go at your place.

As we have done here at FCA for many spring seasons, we will once again have **Special Prices On Minerals** featured during the month of April to enable our cow-calf producers to line up their seasonal needs at a very attractive cost.

This would be the ideal time to lock in all of your upcoming mineral needs, including specialty minerals fortified with magnesium to prevent grass tetany.

Your FCA Feed Rep will be more than happy to assist you with the specific mineral products that are the best fit to your operation, along with helping you to calculate the right quantities to order to carry you through the season

April is the time of year we've offered our producers the opportunity to **Lock In The Price Of The Calf Creeps** they will be needing as weaning time approaches.

Again, your FCA Feed Rep will be more than happy to assist you with planning and ordering your creep feed needs so you can get in on the many benefits and advantages that creep feeding brings for both the calves and the cows.

As you're planning these orders with the FCA Team, don't forget to ask us about the protein supplement products and programs we handle to serve you, including the **QLF Liquid Protein** which works great in lick tanks as well.

PORK NOTES: As pork producers everywhere know all too well, this has been one of the longer down cycles to hit the pork sector in a long time, so it's been good to see a little light starting to shine at the end of what has been a too long tunnel of depressed markets.

Having input costs comedown to more normal and manageable levels has brought some much needed relief to the pork industry, and I encourage our current pork producer customers, as well as those of you who may be interested in investigating opportunities in pork production, to contact and work with **FCA Pork Consultant Doug Davis**.

You can reach Doug directly at **712-229-2037**, or you can contact any FCA Location Manager to get word to Doug to contact you.



**THE
PETROLEUM
REPORT**
By
Jim Bieber
jbieber@firstcoop.com

LP NOTES: At long last it appears we're emerging from one of the longest, most challenging winter seasons in a long time, and it's nice to be able to see what the ground looks like without the blanket of snow/ice that's been here for the better part of four full months.

Before going any further in this article, I want to express the **Thanks & Appreciation of the FCA LP Team to all of the customers who worked hard to keep an open and safe access from the drives to the tanks this winter**.

There was a huge amount of snow pushed and piled by a lot of customers to help our delivery people get through.

If you have ever hauled one of

those heavy hoses from the truck to a tank in knee-to-waist deep snow, over ice, and in bitterly cold weather, you not only know how hard the drivers worked to keep customers well supplied, you also know how much they appreciated all you did to make life a little easier on them to complete those deliveries.

Again, **Many Thanks!**

As you'll see in the notice elsewhere, we're getting an early head start on the **2010-11 LP Season** by coming out with our **Special Savings & Special Programs** beginning in April.

With prices starting to drift back to their historic seasonal lows already, this will give you an excellent opportunity to fill up earlier and take advantage of the **Special Discounts & Special Savings**.

DIESEL NOTES: We are also getting a head start on **FCA's Pre-Spring Fuel Savings**, and in this case the price of diesel appears to be edging up from the narrow trading range it has been hovering in while crude shifted back and forth between \$78.00 and \$83.00 per barrel.

Crude has pushed into the \$82.00 plus range as spring season appears on the horizon, and as we know from past experiences, peak demand typically translates into steadily increasing prices and steadily shrinking inventories.

We want to get the earliest possible start on moving diesel into the country, hopefully to take advantage of any firm country road and farm drive conditions before the arrival of heavy spring rains, since some roads could be embargoed, so let's try to get in ahead of those if possible.

**Lock In Big Savings On Energy Now
With FCA's Money-Saving Programs & Discounts
LP SUMMER FILL SPECIALS**

10 Cents/Gal. Discount * 7 Cents/Gal. Discount * 5 Cents/Gal. Discount
April-May-June Fills July Summer Fills August Summer Fills

*Receive Additional 10 Cents/Gallon Discount When Paid Within 5 Days Of Delivery
Or Have Summer Fill Billing Deferred To August & Payment Due September 20th*

LP CONTRACTING FOR THE 2010-11 SEASON

Program 1: 100% Pre-Paid Contract

Program 2: Maximum Price Contract

Program 3: Firm Booking (20 Cents/Gallon Down Payment Required)

FCA Also Offers A Budget Billing Program For Residential Customers

As in the past, we will continue to offer a 2 cent per gallon discount for LP contracting customers who sign up to be included on one of the Keep Full Routes.

CONTACT YOUR FCA LP TEAM FOR ADDITIONAL DETAILS

Marathon Area Routes Aurelia Area Routes Cleghorn Area Routes
1-800-356-2667 1-800-432-2297 1-800-594-9424



HEDGERS' HOTLINE

By
Randy
Dunn

rdunn@firstcoop.com



First Cooperative Association
5057 Highway 3
Cherokee, Iowa 51012

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Our corn and soybean markets continue to struggle along in a narrow range after the precipitous drop they experienced following the January crop report.

If you remember, corn dropped 60 cents per bushel and soybeans dropped \$1.00 per bushel during the last two weeks of January following release of the USDA's final crop production numbers for the 2009 harvest.

As of this writing, local cash corn prices have been trading in a \$3.30 to \$3.50 range, and soybean prices have ranged from \$8.75 to \$9.20 for most of the last two months.

Strangely enough, corn is currently at the low end of the range and soybeans are toward the high end of the range, and there are a couple of factors which make this situation seem unusual.

On one hand, South America is finishing up a record soybean harvest, which we would normally assume would pressure bean prices.

On the other hand, a lot of traders keep talking about U.S. farmers not planting enough corn acres this spring, which we would normally think would help corn prices.

Whatever the reason for prices being where they are today, history tells us that grain prices usually get better during April and May, and I am sure everyone hopes that trend repeats itself.

At the present time, the large hedge fund and/or speculator crowd is curiously absent from the corn and soybean markets, whereas in the past as we are going into the planting season they have normally been buyers of large amounts of both commodities.

I think any threat of inflation and/or higher oil prices probably gets the hedge funds back in action and buying corn and beans.

Of course the biggest reason prices go higher in the spring is the uncertainty about planting and growing season weather, and we saw that happening during the early days of March.

At that time, when we were buried under what seemed like at least 6 feet of snow, there was a lot of talk about potential planting delays.

But the way the drifts have been

disappearing lately, and with a fairly dry forecast for the foreseeable future, those issues don't seem to be too big of a deal right now.

I haven't heard much from the weather people about their long term forecasts for summer, but then again I don't think those are worth the small amount of time it takes to read them.

I did hear an interesting theory about the volcano recently erupting in Iceland. Someone was comparing this to the 1992 eruption of Mt. Pinatubo that some think cooled the earth's temperature, leading to a record corn crop that year.

Regardless of what theory you follow, April and May are good months to sell new and old crop grain, and I would highly suggest you use one of our averaging contracts to sell some new and old crop corn and soybeans.

The averaging contracts are very flexible, and they take the stress out of trying to pick a day to sell.

If you would rather set up target prices, let us know what you want and we will set them up to use both the night trading session in addition to the normal daytime bids.

A lot of people focus mainly on what's happening in the market during the daytime, but we have had many instances when orders have been filled at night that would not have been possible to fill during the day session.

Please do not hesitate to call me or get in touch with any of our locations for more information on these and other grain marketing tools we offer.

Finally this month, be sure you take a few moments to review the information elsewhere about grain quality.

Everyone should be aware that the 2009 crop has not been keeping well in storage, and that damage and quality deterioration are major concerns for

all farm stored grain.

That could prove very expensive if you do not take the proper measures to protect and preserve grain quality and value.

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bushel bin that will hold high moisture corn until it can be moved into the new Brock tower style grain dryer, which will dry 4,000 bushels per hour.

Additional grain conveyors will also be installed to link these newest grain assets to the existing Schaller grain storage complex.

GRAIN QUALITY; Another very important issue and thus an additional reminder I want to include to bring this article to a close is to urge all of you to be aware of and taking precautions for the quality of the grain you have stored in your farm bins.

Among the many articles that have addressed this issue was one in the March issue of Wallace's Farmer entitled **Trouble Brewing Inside Corn Bins.**

If you have not seen it, please obtain a copy so you can be aware of the problems and how to avoid them

Among their recommendations, some of the most important for you to take care of at once are to be sure you know the moisture, test weight and temperature of the grain in each and every farm bin you have.

If you don't know this information, or even if you're not sure, take time now to find out.

We had a 13 billion bushel corn crop this past year, and end-users will therefore not be lax or lenient about damaged, low quality, out of condition corn.

They will be strict and particular about the corn they accept, and they will heavily discount corn that is of substandard quality.