



HAY NEWS

February 2009

President's Letter

We all hoped that the hay boom in 2008 would continue for another year, but reality is upon us now. I am thankful for last year and making adjustments fast for the upcoming season. I am going to get creative with my fertilizer program, try and control my costs in every aspect of the hay operations, and continue to produce the highest quality product possible under the circumstances I am dealt with.

One area that concerns me about this past season is "contract renegotiations". In my personal opinion, I do not agree with a buyer asking for the seller to lower his price because of market changes or maybe a buyer over speculating. That is a risk the buyer makes and he should either be rewarded or penalized for his risk. On the other hand, a seller needs to have a contract that protects him as well. A contract needs to work for both partners, not just the seller or the buyer. It may be wise to talk to a lawyer to see where you stand with your contract and maybe it's time to make a new one for the upcoming season. A key point is to have a final pay date, no matter what the final haul date is. With the uncertainty in the dairy and export industries, it may be wise to see what protection you have against bankruptcy in your contract. Can you re-take ownership of your hay if a buyer defaults on his contract?

We need a level playing field in the market place, buyers who honor their contracts are having a tougher time marketing their product and taking a bigger loss, even though they are doing the honorable thing. I am now hearing about non-disclosure statements being signed. This in my opinion is pitting the farmers against each other to see who will give in the most. Hay farmers are not tied directly to commodity markets that rise and fall on futures and speculation. We need to keep an open communication in the market to establish our hay prices. Please keep all this in mind when it is time to choose your buyer for your product in 2009.

On a positive note, fuel and fertilizer are both down in price by at least a third as compared to last year. Also, the USDA reports that Washington hay production for 2007-2008 was down 21.7% and new planting for that same period was down 16.7%. California is still talking about drought so maybe we can get some of our market share back in 2009. Keep producing clean green Washington hay and I hope everyone the best in their 2009 season.

Shawn Clausen, President WSHGA

Mid Columbia Hay Association/WSU Annual Hay Meeting

Wednesday, **February 18, 2009** - ATEC Building, BBCC, Moses Lake

For more information contact: Phil Petersen at (509) 754-2011

The agenda is available online at www.wa-hay.org

Membership Renewal and Directory Update Forms Have Been Mailed

WSHGA Annual Conference and Trade Show—**January 13-14, 2010**

Three Rivers Convention Center

Washington State Hay Growers Association, 100 N. Fruitland, Ste B, Kennewick, WA 99336

(509) 585-5460 • www.wa-hay.org • snolan@agmgt.com

Thank You! 2009 WSHGA Conference Participants

The WSHGA Board of Directors would like to thank the Sponsors, Exhibitors, Speakers and Attendees at the 2009 Annual Conference and Trade Show. This meeting was one of the largest ever put on by the Association – and we greatly appreciate the time that was spent by all in making this such a successful meeting.

The proceedings from the 2009 WSHGA Conference and Trade Show have been posted to the WSHGA website at www.wa-hay.org and then click on Convention Proceedings in the menu box to be taken to the proceedings page.

WSDA Seed Program announces new Quality Timothy Seed Program

A new program that will serve the Timothy hay growers of Washington took effect in December 2008. The Quality Timothy Seed Program was a cooperative effort of the Organization of Kittitas County Timothy Hay Growers & Suppliers, regional seed suppliers and producers, WSU Extension and the WSDA Seed Program. The goal of this program is to provide a mechanism for Timothy seed growers and distributors to identify higher quality Timothy seed lots and move them into the Timothy hay production regions. The program also provides a valuable tool for Timothy hay growers. They will be able to choose the cream of the crop for seeding their fields.

Timothy seed lots tested under this program will be subjected to a 50 gram examination where all contaminating seeds are identified. This is in comparison to the standard 10 gram examination where only noxious weed seeds are identified. Only lots that are certified, and officially sampled can be accepted into this program. Seed lots that are free from crop and weed seeds that are detrimental to Timothy hay production are then declared Quality Timothy Seed. In addition, a germination test is required to verify that the germination potential of the seed lot remains high. Seed distributors and Timothy hay producers can use the laboratory report of analysis issued by the Seed Program as a measure of quality of a seed lot. Additionally, seed lots that meet the standards will be tagged with an orange Quality Timothy Seed tag. If you are a Timothy hay grower looking for quality seed, look for the Orange tag. If you have any questions about this program contact your seed supplier or call the Seed Program at (509) 249-6950.

Organic Alfalfa Bulletin – Available Soon

E. Patrick Fuerst, Washington State University, Pullman

The idea for this bulletin started from two sources. One, the organic dairy producers in central and western Washington were extremely short of hay and feed for their herds about two years ago. They got the word out on that. Second, WSU had been doing organic farming research in the Pullman area and rediscovered the merits of alfalfa as a good crop for organic systems in our area. Alfalfa has the benefits of (1) adding nitrogen to the soil, (2) conserving soil, since it is a perennial crop, (3) suppressing weeds, since it is cut once or twice a year, and (4) income - it was the most profitable organic transition system in our research. For all these reasons it is a very promising crop to include in any organic cropping system, dryland or irrigated, and hence we covered both types of production in our bulletin.

John Kugler's (WSU Grant County-now retired) produced a bulletin on conventional (non-organic) alfalfa production under irrigation, and a little bit of information on dryland production. So the blank parts were filled in about how organic practices would differ from conventional. Also added was parts that actually apply to both organic and conventional, especially relating to dryland where information was hard to come by. Contents include organic transition with alfalfa, organic certification issues, establishment, nutrient management, weeds and pests, economics, and online resources.

Authors: E. Patrick Fuerst, Richard Koenig, John Kugler, Kathleen Painter, Mark Stannard, and Jessica Goldberger.

Limited copies of this publication will be available in approximately 3 weeks at the Association office – please e-mail snolan@agmgt.com or call (509) 585-5460. *Funding for this work was provided by the Washington State Hay Growers Association, and by a small grant from extension, Pete Jacoby.*

Correction - Variety Trial Data in Proceedings

It has come to our attention that the WSHGA/WSU Variety Trial information included in the 2009 Proceedings books contained some incorrect information. This data has been corrected and is now available at www.wa-hay.org.