

Alfalfa specialist offers selection tips

CAMP HILL - Nearly 100 seed and forage specialists and salesmen met here last month during the annual Seed Symposium, sponsored by the Beechley-Hardy Seed Company of Shiremanstown. In progress for two full days, the event covered more than a dozen tours and field trips to numerous test plots, some

of which were located at the Milton Hershey School Farms, Hershey, and Penn State University's Research Farm near Landisville.

Taking part in the program were such well-known agronomists as Dr. John Baylor of Penn State, Dr. W.C. Templeton of the U.S. Regional Pasture

Research Laboratory at University Park, Dr. Joe Graham from the Waterman-Loomis Company, among others.

The following is from literature made available during the symposium. It was written by James L. Force, agronomist for the Waterman-Loomis Company.

Alfalfa is grown widely over the United States and Canada. Introductions from around the world have been used to adapt the crop to a wide array of growing environments. Each location of alfalfa production requires that specific prerequisites be met for productive growth in these areas.

In earlier years of alfalfa production in the United States, there were only a limited amount of alfalfa varieties to choose from. These were mainly "commons" named for the state in which they evolved. In the late 1930's and early 1940's, Ranger and other pioneering varieties came onto the United States market. Since that time, the number of varieties has grown into the hundreds.

The presence of such vast numbers of varieties has created the problem of



Alfalfa selection and management were among many topics of discussion at the recent Beechley-Hardy Seed Symposium. Taking part in the meetings were, left to right, Robert Thedinger, president of Research Seeds, St. Joseph, Mo.; Dr. John Kugler, Waterman-Loomis Company; and Ken Beechley, president of Beechley-Hardy Seeds, Shiremanstown.

choosing the most profitable variety for your area. In choosing an alfalfa variety for a specific area, you must take into consideration Winter hardiness, insect and disease resistance, and the cultural practices utilized within that area.

The first item in selecting a variety is Winter hardiness. Winter hardiness has also been referred to as cold resistance or the ability of alfalfa to survive overwintering conditions. The greater the plant's hardiness or cold resistance, the less chance of winter kill and loss of stand. The selection of the proper varietal hardiness for

any area is very important. The improper selection of an alfalfa variety may result in a lost crop.

The next consideration is that of insect and disease resistance that the prospective variety contains. Multiple pest resistance is having several different resistances built into a single variety to strengthen that variety to insure stand longevity.

Major insects that should be considered are the spotted alfalfa aphid, blue alfalfa aphid and the pea aphid.

The spotted alfalfa spind (*Therioaphis maculata*

(Buckton)) was first found in 1954 in New Mexico and is now in 38 states. Damage has occurred from Nebraska, south to Texas and west to the Pacific Ocean. The aphid is pale yellow with 6 or more rows of black dots along the back. Nymphs as well as adults suck the juices from the leaves and stems and are most numerous in the lower part of the plant and the underside of the leaves. It causes stunting and yellowing of alfalfa plants and eventually defoliation and death. In the southwestern U.S. there are 20 to 40 generations per year.

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