

Don't Fertilize Too Soon

Every time planting season comes around I'm reminded of ole "Too-soon" McGoon. In days gone by, Too-soon was well known as a game bird hunter, a darned near-sighted one. Now unfortunately, his fame wasn't for the number of birds Too-soon would get, but rather for his style in getting any at all. Too-soon would go out into the thickets where he figured they'd be, then just start firing into the air outa his 2 barrel. For sure, this would scare some birds up into the air. And as if to compensate for his near-sightedness, Too-soon was quick at the reloading and quicker still at the unloading. Quick enough that the air would be so full of lead that a bird or two couldn't help but fly into some. Pleased, Too-soon would head home with his kill, but it sure cost him a heap of birdshot. "Ah, shot is cheaper than a store-bought chick'n" he'd say. But times are a-changing' and they're just not making shot as cheap as

they used to.

A short time back I ran into McGoon again. Lo and behold, he was wearing eyeglasses, or "high tech specs," as he called them. And that wasn't the only difference. He's not as quick these days, but McGoon claims he uses half the birdshot he used to, and even gets a couple more birds. It seems that the glasses were the reason for the difference. Because of them he could see better and didn't need to part as much air with lead, when he could count on parting more feathers. You know, nobody around here calls him Too-soon anymore, now they're more likely to talk about "High-noon" McGoon.

They tell me its a similar story with nitrogen fertilizer. Sure you can pile the nitrogen on the ground early, that's just what "Too-soon" would have done. But there won't be any corn plants hankering for it until late June or so, and nitrogen

moves almost as fast as birdshot.

Loss of incorporated nitrogen will occur in two ways, both of which are related to soil wetness. The nitrate form of nitrogen will leach out of reach of the plant roots when the soil has more water than it can hold against the force of gravity. Then water moves down through the soil and takes with it anything that isn't holding on. Nitrate, because it has a negative charge, as do the clay particles in soil, is not attracted to soil and will easily leach. And it's that leached nitrate that finds its way to ground water wells, yours maybe.

The other loss of nitrogen is denitrification, the conversion of nitrate to nitrogen gas in saturated soil. Saturation is likely to occur in any area of poor drainage where water tends to stand after a rain. Significant loss of nitrogen can result when the soil remains saturated at least two days.

Leaching of nitrate out of the

root zone and denitrification are processes that can not be directly controlled. However, the potential for their occurrence can be reduced by waiting to apply the nitrogen near to when the plants are able to take it up. Is there really that much of a chance of nitrogen being lost? Just think about how much rain interferes with getting that first cutting of hay off and dried.

That same rain may rob you of early applied nitrogen. Is it worth the extra work to delay application of the bulk of nitrogen? Are these times when you can afford to fill the air with birdshot and not have as many birds to show for it? McGoon was "Too-soon" because he was near-sighted, maybe it's time we had our management vision checked!

June Milk Set at \$14.01

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Middle Atlantic Order Market Administrator Joseph D. Shine announced a Class I milk price of \$14.01 per hundredweight for June 1986. This price is down 4 cents from May and is 39 cents below last June's Class I price. Effective with the May 1986 Class I price, the Order 4 Class I differential increased from \$2.78 to \$3.03 per hundredweight in accordance with the Food Security Act of 1985 and the subsequent order amendment.

Mr. Shine announced a Class II milk price of \$10.91 per hundredweight for April 1986 and a butterfat differential of 16.0 cents

for the month. The Class II price was down 8 cents from the previous month, while the butterfat differential increased two-tenths of a cent.

The June 1986 Class I price and the April 1986 Class II price are based on the April 1986 Minnesota-Wisconsin manufacturing milk price of \$10.98 per hundredweight at a 3.5 percent butterfat content.

The USDA reported that the wholesale price of Grade A butter at Chicago for April was \$1.3875 per pound and the nonfat dry milk price was \$.8057 per pound, f.o.b. plants in the Chicago area.



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