

High Potassium Boosts Alfalfa Profits

NORCROSS, Ga. — Quality forage is critical to success of the dairy enterprise and a quality forage program starts with variety selection and crop establishment, and ends with an intensive and timely cutting schedule.

But what makes it work and keeps it going are the soil fertility and pest management programs.

What makes the yield difference? Research in Ontario showed that intensively managed alfalfa produced 86 percent more yield (17.4 tons per acre) during a three-year period than the average production system (9.4 tons per acre). The intensive management system compared to the average system started with high soil potassium levels compared to low levels, and harvested five cuts compared to three cuts per year.

High soil potassium levels are the key to a high yield/high quality forage program. To produce best

yields, both production systems required the same amount of potash — about 325 pounds K₂O per acre in each of the three years. But, for the average system, starting the alfalfa on a low soil test jeopardized yield opportunity in each of the three production years even though potash was supplied in excess of what the crop removed. In terms of production potential, annual fertilizer applications to low fertility soils are not as effective as those applied in high fertility soils.

For the intensive management system, very high soil potassium levels provided the basis for high yields. During the major production year, more than 600 pounds of potash was removed by a yield of more than 8 tons per acre. As a result of the high production demand, there was a significant draw down — or mining — of soil potassium.

Interestingly, when both production systems received annual potash applications of 325 of K₂O per acre, the final soil potassium levels were similar. So what made the difference? Nutrient management systems made the difference — a big 86 percent more alfalfa difference.

Effective and efficient nutrient management does not simply consider the field, crop by crop. Rather, as one crop is being grown, it's done with the next crop in mind. Alfalfa can make big yields because its taproot aggressively explores subsoils to utilize stored moisture and nutrients. Research in Missouri documented this effect. Since alfalfa can deplete subsoil potash levels, it's doubly important to start with good fertility and maintain it for the next crop. In every sense of the word, maintaining high soil fertility levels is a sustainable farming practice.

The potash/harvesting/variety management combination results in top yields, quality, and profits. A five-year research study in Michigan indicates that alfalfa producers have some discretion in making the "quality vs. yield" decision. Certain varieties produced

more protein per acre while others provide higher dry matter yields. Select the variety to produce what you need. The key to growing either type of variety, according to this research, is high potash fertility and frequent harvesting.

Pa. Farmer Wins State NCGA Contest

DEKALB, Ill. — Matthew Maximuck, Doylestown, Pa., won a state first-place award in the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) yield contest, no-till non-irrigated division. Winners are selected from the highest yield entered in each category.

Maximuck won with Dekalb DK623 seed, which produced 203.92 bushels per acre. The crop was planted on May 11, 1993 in

30-inch rows at a population of 25,300 and harvested on Nov. 8.

He will be honored by Dekalb Plant Genetics at a reception during the NCGA Corn Classic in Denver, Colo. He also will receive special recognition from the NCGA.

Maximuck, who has been farming 20 years, grows 675 acres of corn, soybeans, and wheat.

Farm Show Potato Judges Garner Blue

NAZARETH (Northampton Co.) — Northampton County Potato judging teams did exceptionally well at the 1994 Pennsylvania Farm Show.

The A team consisting of Jamie Hower of Bethlehem, Heather Ford of Northampton, and Kevin Martin and Sarah Geiger both of Danielsville placed first in the state. The B-1 team consisting of Jennifer Hower of Bethlehem, William Ford and Michael Ford of Northampton, and Nathaniel Martin of Danielsville won first in the state also.

The B-2 team consisting of Joel Geiger of Danielsville, Nicole Kondziela of Bath, and James Ford of Northampton won sixth in the state. Of the top ten judges in the state, six were from Northampton County. Those placing in the top ten were William Ford, Jamie Hower, Heather Ford, Jennifer Hower, Joel Geiger, and Sarah Geiger. Thirteen teams competed from various counties.

With a great team effort, Northampton County placed first in the state for the first time in 1994. Much of this success is due to two very dedicated volunteers, Paul and Rachel Hower of Northampton. The Howers have been coaching Northampton County's potato judging teams for more than 20 years.

4-H is available to all youth ages 8-18. For information, call (610) 746-1970.



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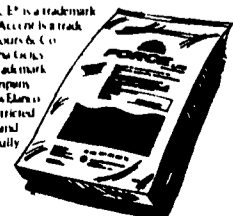
6.5 lbs. per acre on 40" rows	7.7 lbs. per acre on 34" rows
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