

Field Diagnostic Clinic To Address Variety Of Grower Concerns

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ROCKSPRING (Centre Co.) —

This year's series of one-day Penn State Agronomic Field Diagnostic Clinics is scheduled Wednesday, July 22 and Thursday, July 23 from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. here at the Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center.

The clinics, sponsored by Penn State, offer a variety of topics, according to Dwight D. Lingenfelter, assistant extension agronomist. Participants can attend the full program, offered either of the two days.

The concerns and concepts to be addressed at the clinics include various aspects of agronomy. They include finding out when a field of alfalfa should be rotated to another crop, how to evaluate corn quality, the use of Bt corn in managing European corn borer, the use of herbicide-resistant crops, using sludge or waste materials on fields, and precision agriculture in Pennsylvania.

"These one-day field clinics are designed to improve the agronomic management skills of industry personnel," said Lingenfelter, program coordinator. "Specialists from Penn State and the agricultur-

al community will provide hands-on diagnosis training in crop production, pest management, soil fertility, and soil and water conservation."

Participants choose from a variety of topics and have ample opportunity to diagnose, solve, and discuss crop management problems and situations.

"We try to make it as hands-on as possible," said Lingenfelter of the clinic program, in its 6th year. "We try to generate different scenarios and plots."

Of the six events scheduled, participants can choose five. Each event lasts about an hour. The events are conducted concurrently, according to Lingenfelter. Participants can attend whichever sessions they choose.

The sessions will be coordinated by an extension professional. Some may have industry participation.

"We try to keep it as open and flexible as possible," said Lingenfelter.

In addition to gaining practical ag knowledge, certified crop adviser (CCA) and pesticide applicator license credits can be obtained.

Lingenfelter noted this year's

clinic will be similar to past programs. It will focus on various topics related to crop and soil management. "As in the past," he said, "there will be time for discussion and hands-on participation."

Last year, there were about 225 participants in the program, said Lingenfelter. They included crop management consultants, extension agents, producers, marketing professionals, and other agri-industry representatives.

The program includes:

- Alfalfa management, knowing when and how to diagnose trouble. Questions arise: what went wrong with this alfalfa seeding? Is the new seeding worth keeping? How can a poor seeding be improved? When is alfalfa ready to cut? Is a 3-year-old stand worth keeping? Learn how to assess the situation and provide answers to these commonly asked questions. This field session will expose participants to problem situations that might arise in a newly seeded alfalfa field, an established stand, and determining when to give up on an older stand. CCA continuing education units (CEUs): 1.0 crop production (CP).

- Corn grain quality. Corn grain quality is a key issue in Pennsylvania. This session will provide participants with hands-on experience at measuring the key factors that are used to evaluate corn grain quality, such as moisture, test weight, broken corn, and foreign material. Other physical and nutritional aspects of corn that impact corn feed quality and price will also be reviewed. Basic management practices that impact grain quality in the agronomic area as well as in the grain drying, handling, and marketing areas will be covered. After completing this session, participants will have a basic understanding of how to measure corn grain quality and how to manage a corn crop to produce quality grain. CCA CEUs: 1.0 CP.

- Responsible use of Bt corn technology. Bt corn use is on the increase in Pennsylvania for control of the European corn borer. As the percentage of acres planted to Bt corn increases, so does the risk of the pest becoming resistant to the Bt toxin. This station is designed as a hands-on experience to help identify which corn fields may benefit most from the technology and how to assess the potential loss in yield caused by the pest. Identification of the pest and its injury will be included. CCA CEUs: 1.0 pest management (PM).

- Weed management. Total postemergence weed control in soybean and corn. Several opportunities exist for managing weeds postemergence in soybean and corn. How important is application timing, row spacing, residual herbicides, and weed species? This demonstration will highlight management considerations for effectively using total post strategies in soybean and corn. Another topic will be herbicide injury symptoms in corn and soybean. With most herbicide products, there is some risk for injury. What are the injury symptoms on corn or soybeans? This event will demonstrate injury symptoms from several herbicide classes, concentrating on some of the newer products. CCA CEUs: 1.0 PM.

- Use of by-product materials as soil amendments: benefits and risks. There is a growing interest among industries and municipalities to land-apply their residual or waste materials because it is a lower-cost alternative to landfill disposal. These materials are being promoted as beneficial soil amendments for ag soils. The residuals may be provided at low- or no-cost, or the farmer may be paid to accept the material. Are these materials a boon or a bane to your client? In this session, Penn State

experts will look at several residuals (see, touch, and smell), and discuss their possible benefits (liming, organic matter, nutrients, and cash flow), management problems (consistency, supply, handling, and odor), and health and environmental risks (salts, pathogens, trace elements, and pollutants). The session will also review the regulatory requirements for using these materials. Materials to be considered will include food processing residuals, construction, and demolition wastes (wall-board), coal combustion by-products, spent lime residuals, spent mushroom compost, other composts, and sewage sludge. CCA CEUs: 1.0 soil and water (SW).

- New technologies for precision agriculture. The training will present the use of aerial photography (near-infrared and black and white) for crop assessment, weed and pest scouting, and water stress. Samples of film-based and scanned digital photography for use in computers will be discussed. The use of global positioning system (GPS) technologies and geographic information system (GIS) technologies will be covered in the training. Principles of building a farm GIS using mapping principles and incorporating various data layers — soil types, sampling, field boundaries, and prescription maps for precision application — will be covered. Precision application sprayer technology will also be presented. CCA CEUs: 1.0 CP.

Registration fee of \$40 covers lunch, refreshments, and support materials. Additional program details and registration information can be obtained from Lisa Crytser, Penn State Department of Agronomy, at (814) 865-2543. Registration deadline is July 10. For program information, contact Dwight Lingenfelter at (814) 865-2242.

1998 Penn State Agronomic Field Diagnostic Clinic

Please return this registration form by July 10 to:

Field Diagnostic Clinic
Attn.: Lisa Crytser
Dept. of Agronomy
The Pennsylvania State University
116 ASI Building
University Park, PA 16802

Please register me for the 1998 Field Diagnostic Clinic
You are invited to attend one of the following programs:

Wednesday, July 22 _____

OR

Thursday, July 23 _____

Of the six events being offered, please choose the five (5) events you would be most interested in attending (if registering as a group indicate the number attending each event).

- _____ Alfalfa Management
_____ Corn Grain Quality
_____ Weed Management
_____ Responsible Use of Bt-corn Technology
_____ Use of By-product Materials as Soil Amndmts.
_____ New Technologies for Precision Agriculture

Number attending _____

Amount enclosed (\$40.00 per person) _____
(make check payable to The Pennsylvania State University)

Name, company, address, and phone number of primary registrant:

Name _____

Company _____

Address _____

Phone _____

(please clip and return this registration form before July 10)

Hafer Declares TAP 'Dividend'

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — State Treasurer Barbara Hafer recently announced that more than 17,000 families saving for college through the Pennsylvania Tuition Account Program will get an additional \$4.3 million in their accounts.

Hafer said the unprecedented action was prompted by "the continuing outstanding performance of the TAP Fund" and will correct for "excess conservatism" in the early years of the fund, when participants were charged high fees. Money that families had paid in "premium" fees will now be credited to their accounts as payments toward future tuition, she said.

The fund was under no legal obligation to make the adjustment, but, Hafer said, "It's the right thing to do. We're not here to see how big a surplus we can amass. We're here to help Pennsylvania families send their kids to college. Every additional dollar we credit to an account will help a family meet its college savings goals."

When the program began in 1993, it charged premium fees that often exceeded 15 percent. The actuarially determined fees were thought necessary to ensure the solvency of the fund.

"In retrospect, we can see that the premiums were not needed," said Hafer. "Thanks to a strong stock market and moderating tuition inflation, the TAP fund is solidly in the black, even without premium charges.

"Converting the premium payments to tuition credits also responds to the valid complaints of the many, many TAP participants who have told us that when they joined, they had no idea they were being charged these high fees," Hafer added.

As auditor general, Hafer had criticized the then-treasurer for failing to disclose the premium fees. Upon taking office as treasurer, Hafer cut the premiums sharply — eliminating them in some cases — and rewrote TAP literature to fully disclose the fees where they still existed.

"Today, we're taking the final step: retroactively abolishing all premiums and crediting the money to individual accounts," said Hafer.

Any premium amount ever paid by the holder of an active TAP account automatically will be credited to the account as a tuition payment, Hafer said. "Some accounts will grow by as much as \$7,500. More than 7,000 accounts will get at least a \$100 boost. And a thousand families will get \$1,000 or more."

TAP is a state-sponsored tuition pre-purchase plan. If, for instance, a participant buys from TAP a semester of Penn State tuition at the current price, TAP guarantees that it will pay for a semester's tuition at Penn State in the future — no matter when, and no matter how much tuition goes up by then.

Premiums were a charge in addition to the school's actual price at the time the purchase was made. Premiums varied based on actuarial assumptions.

Hafer said the program's actuary, Ernst & Young, has now determined that abolishing premiums will not affect the actuarial soundness of the fund.

While the biggest beneficiaries of this change are the families who will be getting \$4.3 million in additional tuition credits, this also means new participants will be able to join TAP without ever paying premiums," Hafer said.

"That's just one more reason for Pennsylvanians to consider joining TAP. No other program allows our families to buy guaranteed future tuition at the actual price schools charge today — and get important tax breaks, too."

TAP account earnings are state and local tax-free. Federal tax is deferred until the account is used, then charged at the student's rate — even though the purchaser remains in full control of the account.

Anyone can open a TAP account and TAP Credits can be used to pay tuition at any accredited college, university, trade or technical school, anywhere in the country.

Additional information on TAP is available by calling 1-800-440-4000 or by visiting the program's web site, www.patap.org.