

**TRIALS —**  
**YOU GOTTA HAVE SOME!**  
 Jonathan Rupert  
 Product Development Manager  
 Ampac Seed

Yes, another spring has quickly come upon us. It will be full of trials and tribulations, this much is promised. And this year, not unlike many years gone by, you walk through the pastures quietly asking yourself questions, such as:

"Is there something I can plant that will do a better job than what I've got?"

"Can I get a variety that will really 'up' my milk production?"

"Maybe I should plant some of those new clovers. I wonder if they will survive here?"

"Will the cows eat that festulolium stuff, or whatever it's called?"

"I wonder if those new endophyte-free tall fescues are more palatable? Would they help in the summers?"

"Are tetraploid ryegrasses better than diploid?"

"Nothing seems to grow on the hill-top — am I fertilizing too heavy? Too little?"

Staring down at your toes you notice that your pasture is a mix of grasses, weeds, clovers, and other miscellaneous plants. Some of it you planted, some of it was already there, and some of it must have come in that hay you bought from Maryland last summer — 'cause no one around has seen anything like that stuff. Too bad the cows won't eat it, since it sure grows good!

Up at the University, they've been trialing some interesting varieties, but they don't have the same kind of soil as you do. Besides, those are hay trials anyway; and you're a grazer. Then all those seed companies are promoting new varieties; some not even having local trial information. Some say seed is better from Holland, others better from New Zealand, others say it doesn't matter. What's a person to believe?

The questions you ponder are good questions, the type of questions farmers have asked hundreds of times before. My guess is if you're reading this article, you must have finally stopped staring at your boots and come inside. I wonder, what did you decide?

Did you come in excited or dismayed? How will you answer these questions?

Well, first of all, let me assure you, your questions deserve answers. Furthermore, many of the answers are at your fingertips.

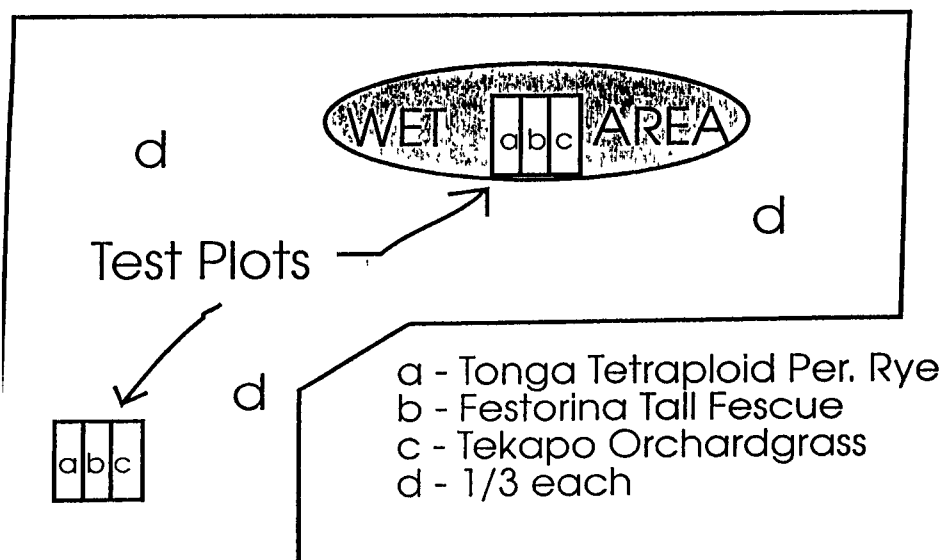
How, you ask?

The answer is simple. Conduct your own trials! Now, don't get me wrong, I am not encouraging you to doubt everything you hear and throw away all faith in others. Rather, I am suggesting that your own trials are just one way of helping you make wiser and more accurate decisions regarding the seeds you plant.

Think about how you make some other decisions. Have you ever bought a tractor without first test-driving it? Without seeing how it pulls some implements? What about a horse? Do you buy such things sight-un-seen?

Probably not. Fortunately, most of what we buy is clearly visible and functional — ready to look at, judge, and evaluate, *before* we open our wal-

**Diagram 1 - VanBeek Dairy**



lets.

Not so with seeds, They are morphological — like a caterpillar and a butterfly. What you plant becomes something else other than a seed — that is, grass, legume, or grain. Buying seed is better compared to acquiring something *invisible*, like advice. Much of the advice we get is free, and some we pay for, like a lawyer. But for my illustration, simply consider the similarities between *seed* and *advice*:

- Both are of little value if not used.
- Some seed and some advice are not altogether *bad*, but don't necessarily fit a particular situation.
- Bad advice, like bad seed, will produce a bad crop.
- But good advice, like good seed, will be unfruitful if improperly managed.
- It's rather foolish to keeping going back and getting advice that isn't helpful. So too with seed.
- Advice, albeit good, may seem rather strange and untried. Like seed, it should be applied cautiously and under a watchful eye.
- A wise person is one who is willing to receive advice, yet be able to only apply that which is deemed good. Likewise, a good farmer will consider new and different seeds, and *by application* learn what works best for his farm.

My desire is for you to really know what works and what doesn't work on your farm. I'm not talking about plowing the farm up every time a new variety hits the streets, nor am I promoting skepticism. Rather, let's consider some real, practical, inexpensive ways to become our own evaluators. We will do this by considering three operations.

Join me for a little walk into three unique and very different pastures. We will be visiting a large dairy, a hobby dairy goat ranch, and a medium-size sheep grazing operation.

**VanBeek Dairy**

Martin VanBeek is a second generation dairyman in Belfountain, Ore. His family's confinement operation milks about 900+ head a day. In the 300 surrounding acres, Martin has been raising corn silage and cover cropping with annual ryegrass screenings he obtained free from a neighboring grass seed farmer. He has been doing this for years. Until this last fall, that is.

After a bit of number crunching,

discussions with his animal nutritionist, and talking to his local seed salesman, Martin believes he has found a better use for his 300 acres. He doesn't want to graze, but thinks that some of the new improved forages will give him better silage for his money and effort, rather than annually working his ground. It can be quite wet in some springs, and he is always fighting the weather.

Martin is also facing some water quality issues from the Department of Environmental Quality. He is under pressure to minimize effluent runoff. A permanent stand of grass may be the solution.

Martin elected to plant a simple three-component mix: 1/3 each tetraploid perennial ryegrass, grazing orchardgrass, and endophyte-free tall fescue. In addition, Martin chose two "plot areas" in which he seeded each of the varieties separately. Martin can get quite a bit of standing water in some of the lowlands, so one area is in the wettest spot. The other area is in a place that represents the majority of his land. Martin then seeded each of the plot areas with one replication of the individual varieties and seeded the remainder of the 300 acres with the full mixture (see Diagram 1).

In a very short time, Martin will be able to judge the performance of the mixture, and identify the following:

- What variety does best in the wet area?
- What variety does best in the dry area?
- Which one performs best for each cutting?
- How do these varieties compare in maturity?

His plots are also big enough (about 1/2 acre each) for him to easily judge relative tonnage, sample for feed value, and much more. Since information gathered about the mix as a whole can be compared to the individual varieties at any given time to determine an array of information. More than likely, many other facts will also come to light. Then Martin can take his information and act upon it.

Say, for instance, he finds his wet area is just too much for the orchardgrass, but the ryegrass is holding up great. Well, Martin can overseed some more ryegrass into the whole wet area.

(Turn to Page 20)

**SEE YOUR NEAREST**



**NEW HOLLAND**

**DEALER FOR DEPENDABLE EQUIPMENT & SERVICE**

**PENNSYLVANIA**

**Abbottstown, PA**

**Messick Equipment**  
 RD 1, Box 255A  
 717-259-6617

**Honey Grove, PA**

**Norman D. Clark & Son, Inc.**  
 Honey Grove, PA  
 717-734-3682  
 Loysville, PA  
 717-789-3117

**Annaville, PA**

**BHM Farm Equipment, Inc.**  
 RD 1, Rte. 934  
 717-867-2211

**New Holland, PA**

**A.B.C. Groff, Inc.**  
 110 South Railroad  
 717-354-4191

**Oley, PA**

**C.J. Wonsidler Bros.**  
 R.D. 2  
 610-987-6257

**Carlisle, PA**

**R&W Equipment Co.**  
 35 East Willow Street  
 717-243-2686

**Pitman, PA**

**Schreffler Equipment**  
 Pitman, PA  
 717-648-1120

**Elizabethtown, PA**

**Messick Farm Equipment, Inc.**  
 Rt. 283 - Rheem's Exit  
 717-367-1319

**Tamaqua, PA**

**Charles S. Snyder, Inc.**  
 R.D. 3  
 717-386-5945

**Greencastle, PA**

**Meyers Implements, Inc.**  
 400 North Antrim Way  
 717-597-2176

**West Grove, PA**

**S.G. Lewis & Son, Inc.**  
 352 N. Jennersville Rd.  
 610-869-2214  
 1-800-869-9029

**MARYLAND**

**Frederick, MD**

**Ceresville Ford New Holland, Inc.**  
 Rt. 26 East 301-662-4197  
 Outside MD, 800-331-9122

**Hagerstown, MD**

**Antietam Ford Tractor, Inc.**  
 2027 Leitersburg Pike  
 800-553-6731  
 301-791-1200

**Rising Sun, MD**

**Ag Industrial Equipment**  
 Route 1, 50 N. Greenmont Rd.  
 1-800-442-5043

**NEW JERSEY**

**Bridgeton, NJ**

**Leslie G. Fogg, Inc.**  
 Canton & Stow Creek Landing Rd.  
 609-451-2727  
 609-935-5145

**Washington, NJ**

**Smith Tractor & Equip., Inc.**  
 15 Hillcrest Ave.  
 908-689-7900

**Woodstown, NJ**

**Owen Supply Co.**  
 Broad Street & East Avenue  
 609-769-0308



**NEW HOLLAND Credit Company**