



### Agronomist of the Year Award – Greg Hodgins

On February 12<sup>th</sup> in Saskatoon, Greg was awarded the Canadian Agronomist of the Year. The award ceremony took place at the Canadian Agri Retail Association annual convention. We are all proud of Greg and the recognition is well deserved. Greg has been a Certified Crop Advisor for over 10 years. He has been committed to the success of his growers and continues to have the passion to do more in crop production. Greg's agronomy knowledge when it comes not only to field crops but huge assortment of vegetable crops has been overwhelming value to our growers. He has been a great part of the success of who Holmes Agro is today. Congratulations GREG!

### Part 3: Precision Agriculture & Imagery

Continuing with our series on precision technologies, the next tool to explore is the use of imagery to monitor crops. We can use NDVI, or "normalized difference vegetation index" to compare the general health of a crop within a field. This helps identify areas of the field where there could be an issue, and areas of the field that are growing very well. Information like this is helpful in many scenarios. By ground checking areas of the fields that are showing below average health, we can find disease or insect outbreaks and control them before they spread through the entire field, or neighborhood. We can also use this information to build variable rate prescriptions. This can be a cost saver in fungicide applications, as product is only applied in the areas that are most at risk for an infection. It has also been used to determine what areas need more or less fertilizer in top-dress applications. Areas of the field that appear to have a high yield potential can be "pushed" by spreading at higher rates, and areas of the field that have low yield potential can receive lower rates, or none at all. By monitoring crops with imagery, we are able to effectively find and manage in season crop variability.

### Red Clover/ N Management on Wheat

Red clover underseeded into winter wheat offers an incredible opportunity to fix nitrogen for the succeeding crop, to capture sunlight energy after the wheat crop is harvested, and create organic matter which greatly improves soil health. Additional benefits include erosion protection, weed suppression, and insectary crop qualities. The root systems of the plants are immense and run through the top 6 inches of the soil, with a taproot that can penetrate several feet. When that above and below ground plant material decay, they leave the soil in great condition with more organic matter. The nitrogen release period of red clover to the subsequent crop matches the nitrogen demand curve of corn, helping to maximize nitrogen nutrition during the rapid vegetative and reproductive growth phases.

There are several different ways to get Red Clover on your field. The most common way is to frost seed red clover by broadcasting with a fourwheeler. Another option is to blend with urea and apply with an Airflow unit once field conditions allow. Typical seeding rates for red clover range from 4-7lbs/ac depending on application equipment and stand of wheat.

### Spreader Safety Reminder

With the spring rush, hopefully just around the corner, please keep in mind some important points when using fertilizer spreaders.

- Complete a circle check – tires, safety chains, in/out of gear, monitor tightness of drive belts.
- Check High/Low speed.
- Cleanliness – Ensure that spinner blades and flow divider are clean and not damaged.
- Check gate height, density and rate.
- Run at optimum tractor PTO speed (most tractors should be run around 2200 RPM), at a 40 or 50-foot interval, depending on the spreader. Avoid turning sharply as damage to the PTO shaft may occur.
- Slow your ground speed as rates increase, for optimal pattern.
- Ensure that while parked, the jack is secure.
- Do not exceed 30 mph when towing a spreader on the road, and make sure that the spreader is out of gear.
- Loads should not exceed 1.0mt when being towed behind a pickup truck.

Please contact Holmes Agro as soon as you are finished with your spreader - your neighbour may be waiting for it!

## Using the Power of Your Soil to Optimize Crop Production – Joel Williams

Had the opportunity to listen to Dr Joel Williams on this topic as warm up to the Innovative Farmers of Ontario annual conference. It was a day full of information on how we can grow our most precious resource, SOIL. We all strive to build healthy soils more resilient to adverse conditions. Understanding soil biology and how we can positively impact it to Improve Aggregation, Water Infiltration/Storing & Compaction Mitigation is critical. An interesting take away is roots are 5 times more important than shoots/top growth in building soil structure. As well, root exudates play a critical in feeding both bacterial and fungi in the soil. Interesting quote that “all shoots and top growth need to go through an animal before it is useful to the soil, whether that is livestock or earth worms”.

## Soil Health and Sustainable Ag

A&L Laboratories and A&L Biologicals have developing a Soil Health test which is a chemical analysis measuring your soils fertility levels. These levels directly impact the plant's ability to provide the necessary nutrients required to attract and build an effective soil microbiome community in the root zone. A few key items that have been discovered through extensive research:



- Organic matter is not the driver for microbial activity. You can have a sandy soil and have a higher level of activity than a loam
- Potassium is involved in much of the signals the plant has with the rhizosphere (area around root hairs)
- Boron is needed to have optimal microbial activity (helps the plant attract and positively identify rhizobia)
- A no-till field can be worked a single year to decrease stratification, compaction and allow for application of soil amendments, without significantly damaging microbes

The requirement of a healthy plant to produce the right carbon sources to support the beneficial endophytes at the roots is key – poor nutrition and there is too much competition for the right group to dominate.

## Seed Deliveries 2020

The first day of Spring is less than a month away! Stefani will be calling to schedule deliveries this month with your seed orders. Please let us know if you are able to take an early delivery. Delivery will be free of charge up to April 3rd, 2020 for all completed deliveries. Happy planting!

## Holmes Agro Credit Policy

Our credit terms are net 20th day of the following month for eligible charge accounts, as per our credit application and agreement. On-Line payments are available at the following financial institutions: Bank of Montreal, CIBC, Meridian Credit Union, National Bank, RBC Royal Bank, Scotiabank and TD Canada Trust.

Third Party Loan Due Dates:

- All eligible crop input purchases between Sep 01 /18 and Aug 31 /19 have a repay date by Friday, March 13, 2020 for FCC Crop Input financing. Scotiabank Yield More purchases up to Aug 31 /19 were due last month.
- There is no penalty if you pay early, and funds become available once again.
- If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

## Going Paperless

Going Paperless conserves valuable resources and is more efficient than regular postal mail. Sign up for any of the following options available for Holmes Agro customers:



- **Invoices and Statements:** Contact our office staff to set up your account for paperless billing: micheller@holmesagro.com
- **Payments:** Setting up online or telephone banking is simple. Select Holmes Agro as the payee and use your 5-digit account number, which is listed next to your account name on invoices and statements.
- **Newsletters:** Please email Nicole to sign up for electronic newsletters: nicole@holmesagro.com

## Upcoming Events

March 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> – London Farm Show, Western Fair District  
March 24<sup>th</sup> – Grain Farmers of Ontario March Classic, London  
March 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> – Drayton Farm Show, Drayton  
March 27<sup>th</sup> – Mobile MyFarm Training, Orangeville  
April 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> – Canadian Dairy XPO, Stratford