



## Office Introductions

We have a few new faces at the Orangeville location. Debbie Thompson has joined us full-time looking after accounts payable. We have some young faces you may interact with this summer. Emily Jolicoeur is at our customer service desk, Griffin Bailey is looking after the seed warehouse, Cindy Ammerlaan has returned in our crop protection warehouse, and Laura Shaw has joined us blending fertilizer and will be scouting when summer rolls around.

## COVID Update

With the early start to spring we have had a good opportunity to get our returning and new seasonal staff in and trained, on our COVID-19 policies and procedures. We strive to make this spring run as smooth as possible for our customers under these unique circumstances. Please notify us in advance of shipment if you have any specific requests on how you would like Holmes Agro to handle interactions with you or your staff please let us know when ordering.

## Key Strategies to Establish High Yielding Alfalfa

The first consideration in the development of an alfalfa stand is the achievement of a clean field. Alfalfa typically follows cereals, and thus a fall burn down is required to ensure that the field is weed free. Dandelions, sow thistle, Canada thistle and milkweed are known to challenge the success of a new alfalfa stand. The next consideration is seed bed prep. Shallow cultivation is suggested, with the goal of maintaining a relatively shallow and firm seed bed. You might follow the guideline of no more than 3/8" of 'foot sink'. Suggested planting depths for alfalfa are 1/4" to 1/2" for clay or loam soils and 1/2" - 3/4" on sandy soils. Seed to soil contact is essential to support strong even germination.

The recommended seeding rate is 15-18 lbs. but growers must remember that seed coating has an effect on seeding rate. The greater percentage of seed coating, the higher the seeding rate needs to be. Check your seed lot and consider this factor before planting. A good starting point is to seed 80-90 seeds per square foot.

- e.g. An Alfalfa variety with a 9% seed coat, seeding rate = 18 lbs./acre
- An alfalfa variety with a 33% seed coat, seeding rate = 24 lbs./acre

**Planting Date** -Alfalfa germinates at a much lower temperature than corn or soys - 2 degrees vs. 8 degrees for corn and 13 degrees C for soybeans. This allows producers to plant alfalfa earlier in the spring than many other crops. For summer seeded alfalfa, the goal is to have the crop in the ground by August 5th at the absolute latest. Alfalfa seedlings need a minimum of 6 weeks of growth prior to a killing frost allowing enough time to development root reserves to survive the winter and thrive in the spring.

## Scouting Winter Wheat and Making Plans

This season so far has shown us a lot of promise in wheat fields. Lots of wheat went in early, and to good conditions last fall. The Winter was relatively easy on the wheat fields, and very few areas saw high incidences of winter kill. As we start to walk these fields and make some management decisions, there are some important things to keep in mind. Make sure to take population counts, as well as counting the number of tillers per plant. There is a significant portion of wheat acres that came through the winter with high populations, but have a lower number of tillers. These cases are typically some of the later planted wheat, and are fields that can use some nitrogen as soon as possible this spring to encourage growth and tillering. On the other end of the spectrum, there are some fields which came through the winter and have 8 or more tillers. These are fields to monitor for an early application of fungicide, and in some cases using a growth regulator should be considered to prevent lodging. We are also seeing some winter annuals starting to appear, and weed populations should be monitored over the coming weeks to determine the best timing for herbicide application, and product choice. With the current market conditions, and the potential in the fields, this is a year to keep a close eye on your wheat, and look for ways to push the envelope!

## Calendar 2021

It's never too early to start sending in pictures for the 2021 calendar. We are proud to be able to provide a calendar full of grower pictures year after year – all thanks to your great submissions! Please email your photos to [nicole@holmesagro.com](mailto:nicole@holmesagro.com)



## Minimizing Soil Compaction in the Spring

There will be temptation to get on the field before soil conditions are fit. Wheel traffic in wet soils is a major cause of compaction. Research shows that surface compaction can impact yield up to five years, and subsoil compaction can impact yield for 10 years. To test soil water content, do a ball test. Sample soil at 3- to 6-inch depth, mold into a ball and drop on a hard surface. If it doesn't break or crack upon impact, it's too wet for field operations. Management strategies to reduce soil compaction include:

- 1) staying off wet fields,
- 2) controlling wheel traffic, reducing axle loads and adjusting tire pressure,
- 3) reducing tillage,
- 4) building soil organic matter (long term strategy),
- 5) rotating with perennial crops.

## Managing your Nitrogen on ALL CROPS for best results – Considerations

Although there are many factors involved in fertilizer planning, decision making and logistics, the following are some considerations as a reminder that managing your N is important. Just applying higher rates of Urea or UAN than years previous, isn't a best management decision.

- Understand the physical properties of different nitrogen products. N is volatile and can be easily lost to the atmosphere. Protect your investment with stabilizers, split apply your N needs or include ESN.
- Manage and monitor your soil health as part of your everyday stewardship as water and nutrient holding capacity are correlated to soil structure, soil fitness and organic matter.
- Match your N rates to your yield goals – ROI happens when a 1\$ investment returns greater than 1\$ in yield response. Matching your nitrogen rates with proper ratio of sulphur inclusion is becoming standard practice and is good agronomy. A 7:1 ratio of N:S is a good starting point. Sulphate S helps stabilize N for a longer period and provides crops with the sulphur component required to maximize yield opportunity.

Continue to have discussions about N management strategies with you Holmes Agro crop advisor

## Using Satellite Imagery

As planters start rolling across the province, it's time to start thinking about how we are going to do the best job of managing those crops. One way of doing this is through using satellite imagery. These images, delivered multiple times per week can be very helpful in tracking the development of a crop. When poor areas of the field develop or grow, you can use the images to find the exact spot in the field where there is a potential issue, identifying it early and correcting it if possible, for example, finding a white mould issue in a soybean field, and spot spraying the surrounding area of the field. On top of the benefits for targeted scouting, imagery can be used to generate in season prescriptions for many fertilizer and crop protection products. This can include second pass nitrogen or fungicides on wheat and corn acres. Once the crop is harvested, the images can also be used to derive high and low production zones within a field, which can be soil sampled separately to determine why some areas did better, and others poorer, allowing you to set the field up better for the following years crop through variable rate fertilizer or potentially lime applications

## Clean Farms- Empty Container and Bag Collection Postponed

This year's collection of empty agricultural container and bag collection has been postponed until July 1, in accordance with current indications from public health officials and to allow agricultural retailers to focus on providing other essential services to growers. CleanFARMS has requested that growers store their empty containers and bags on the farm, and can get empty CleanFARMS bags from Holmes Agro or other ag retailers free of charge. Please continue triple rinsing/pressure rinsing containers and removing caps/booklets, and ensure that the bags are kept closed and sheltered from weather and pests. Thank you for your understanding and co-operation!

## Lawn and Garden Needs

Now is the time to work on your dream lawn and garden! With the extra time we have on our hands, it's a great opportunity to start thinking about fertilizing and overseeding your lawn. We offer seasonal fertilizer blends that are favorable to the lawn for that time of year, as well as a wide selection of seed to suit your lawn conditions. We currently have our Spring Lawn Fertilizer in stock. The blend 25-5-10 with 50% slow release nitrogen

With the current events we have moved our products to an ONLINE shop! You can purchase all your favorite Holmes Agro lawn and garden needs by going to: [holmes-agro.myshopify.com](https://holmes-agro.myshopify.com). Add the products you wish to buy to your cart and then select your Holmes location for pickup. Once the order has been placed, visit the Holmes Agro pick-up window at the office location selected on your order. Provide your order number and our staff will direct you to our self-serve stations