February 13, 2002

TO:    Sussex County Farmers
From :  Derby Walker  -  Extension Agent, Agriculture
Subject: February Ag Notes

Meetings- The 8th Annual Governor’s Conference on Delaware Agriculture – February 22, 2002 – Modern Maturity Center, Dover. The theme is “Farming in a Changing World: Bio-Security, Bio-Terrorism and the Livable Delaware Initiative.” Registration begins 7:00 am. You need to register in advance by downloading a faxable form from the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources home page or calling Ms. Vicki Taylor at (302)-831-2512.

Need a pesticide license or a lot of credits. March 27 and 28 are the next training dates for Sussex at the REC. The pesticide test is given on the afternoon of March 28. If you just need credits, you can get 3 credits for each half-day session that you attend. These meetings start at 8:15 a.m. If you need to take the test, call the DDA pesticide section to order a test for the March 28. (1-800-282-8685).

Want to get your well water tested? Don’t drive to Georgetown to get the sample bottles because the Public Health Department stopped taking samples on Jan 25, 2002. That service was dropped because of the Governor’s 2 percent budget reduction. All samples must be sent to a private lab and there are none in Sussex. The nearest labs are Envirocorp in Harrington, McCall in Felton, and Atlantic Coast in Wilmington. There are three labs that have State approval to test bacteriological and chemical tests. It will cost you a lot more then $4.00 for the tests.

Mark VanGessel’s Corn Weed Control Guide and his Soybean Weed Control Guide are now available at our office. These are free publications and located in the publication rack in our hallway.

You can pick up a copy of the Delaware Agronomic Pest Control Guide for $12.00 or Delaware Vegetable Recommendation Guide for $8.00. If you order it by
mail, you also have to pay an additional $2.00 for each book to cover the mailing cost. We have a limited supply of both these books.

Spring is almost here and it is time to double check your planting and spraying equipment. Replace broken, worn and bent parts and make sure bearings are good and moving parts move as they are designed. Check for leaks and bad hoses. All of these jobs are easier to do this time of year, but with most equipment it doesn’t break down until you use it. Sprayers and planters are the two critical pieces of equipment, if they are operating properly you have a chance for a successful season.

I have looked at a lot of planter and sprayer created problems over last 30 years and most of them should been caught earlier. Spraying or planting 500 acres without checking the equipment is very costly. It does take some time to check the equipment, but it is more expensive to miss spraying 500 acres with one nozzle plugged or having only 5 out of 6 planter units operating.

Small grain weed control – Timing is everything - 2,4 –D and Banvel cannot be used on small grains after they have jointed, because of injury. Since small grains already have a lot growth because of the mild winter. Plants will joint at 8” tall (6 to 12”). To check for jointing, remove a tiller and split the stem. If it is starting to hollow it is jointing. Harmony products can be applied until flag leaf is visible. The problem is getting coverage of the weeds.

Are you having problems with bulbous oatgrass (a grass with stings of ”pearls” or bulb attached to the roots? Then use Maverick in the fall on your wheat crop. However, because soybeans maybe injured plant an STS variety. One year after the application of Maverick, other crops can be grown if they are successfully grown in a bioassay.

Read all label restrictions before changing chemical application setups and products. Products do have re-cropping restrictions and some may disrupt your normal cropping program. The worst issue that I was involved with concerned a new soybean herbicide that was widely used, but most growers did not know you could not plant vegetables for 2 or 3 years. This caused some problems for the vegetable growers. Some of salesmen did read the label before selling it and the growers did not read the label until it was already sprayed. It was too late then and the only option for vegetables was to go back to fields that were not sprayed with this product.

When you sit down to order your products, check on all of the restrictions. Plant back restrictions are not just for herbicides, there are re-cropping restrictions for fungicides and insecticides. Another point to check is worker protection, can your workers re-enter the fields to get the work done on a timely basis.

In March, watch for the 1st addition of Delaware’s 2002 Weekly Crop Update. You can it receive it by mail or fax, but you have to pay for it. The best deal is to signup for Tracy Wootten’s email notification list so you can download it free as a
printed copy or read it from the screen. You could also download it yourself on Friday from our website at the REC.

**911 addresses** – Keep sending or calling them as you get them, if you want to stay on our mailing list. It saves me money (your tax dollars) and you still get my words of wisdom.

Corn plant population should be matched to soil water holding capacity. On light soils, a final stand of 14,500 to 16,000 is enough to grow 125 to 140 bushels of corn, if we have timely rains. Plant a variety that has ear flex, plant it early, no-till it and apply 100 to 125 lbs of nitrogen. Apply 25 to 30 lbs of nitrogen at planting and the rest side dress. Rainfall is the yield limiting factor, not the plant population and not fertilizer. You do need to control weeds and early plant feeding insects like cutworms, grubs and wireworms.