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Chris Behl Marks 25 Years with Pro-Ag Consulting, LLC



Chris Behl started his Pro-Ag career in 1987 as a part time soil sampler while still in high school. That followed with him working weekends and summers while attending Eastern Illinois University. Graduating in 1994, he accepted a full time position working in the Bloomington area as a Regional Manager/Agronomist. Since that time he has expanded his area Northwest to Rock Island and Northeast to the Yorkville area. Chris, with his wife Kim and their two children Zachary and Reagan live in Bloomington, Illinois.

Chris has lead Pro-Ag more into the information technology era. He has been working with our clients collecting data and preparing yield maps, variable rate planting maps etc.

In 2002, Chris was one of the five employees who bought controlling interest in Pro-Ag Consulting. Seldom do you hear today of an employee who came out of college and stays in the same company for 25 years. Pro-Ag Consulting would like to thank Chris for doing his job so well.

Newsletter
September 2013

Pro-Ag Update

Pro-Ag Consulting, LLC



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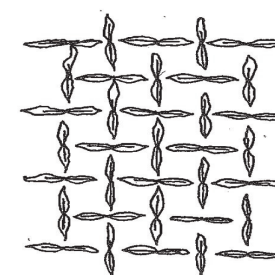
To do a Simple task
Exceedingly well
Spells Success

New Research Ideas on Corn Yields

A private research company is carrying out several research projects on increasing corn yields for future years. They believe the demand for corn will be greater than what we are currently producing.

The one that I found most interesting was a new approach to planting. They were wanting to increase population counts to 42 to 44K plants per acre. To do that and maximize leaf exposure to sunlight, rainfall and foliar fertilization require a new approach to planting.

Rows are 12 inches apart and a single corn seed is placed in the row. Each seed is also 12 inches apart. Leaf's direction on a corn plant is based on how the seed is placed in the row. After emergence, the individual plants will look like Fig.1 below:



In the last two years the results have been very good.

Another Midwest seed company has been trying a similar approach. Will we see a planter to handle the planting in the next year or two? Industry specialists say it takes 600 million dollars to research and develop a planter and put it into production.

New Lab Manager—Doug Baxter

When Gail Molock retired from Pro-Ag after 25yrs, Doug Baxter was hired to manage our soil lab in the Windsor office. Doug is a 2001 graduate of Eastern Illinois University with a degree in Biological Sciences. Doug, his wife, Melani and children Riley (9), Carson (5) and Layla (5mos.) reside in Montrose, IL. Doug has done a great job managing the lab and making sure our results are accurate.



2013 Business Ethics and Social Involvement Award Reward Recipient



Since 1993, ECIDC has partnered with Lake Land College and Eastern Illinois University to award the Business Ethics and Social Involvement Award which recognizes outstanding business firms and leaders in east central Illinois who pioneer enlighten business practices and display social leadership. The intent is to publicize creative, long-term –oriented and morally thoughtful efforts by business managers/owners that might serve as models or examples for aspiring managers/entrepreneurs, as well as for college of business students. This year the award was given to Don Hackerson of Windsor.

Don abandoned the security of a corporate job to start an agricultural consulting service called Pro-Ag Consulting LLC over 30 years ago. Since that time, Don has grown the company into a very successful small business that has experienced steady growth and

provided 21 full and part-time jobs for area residents. From its humble beginnings of five customers, Pro-Ag Consulting now serves over 2,500 customers representing 90 counties and eight states.

In the early 80's, Pro-Ag Consulting pioneered site-specific farming which has become a widely adopted practice today. Don focused his consulting from an independent agronomist perspective, giving unbiased and independent advice to its clients. This profoundly changed the way farmers look at fertilizer expenditures in their operations and thus providing better net profit revenues. Additionally, Pro-Ag's growth was based on customers' word of mouth, with more than 90% of their customers staying with the company year after year.

Don's management style has been to develop a close, family-oriented company that cares about its employees and the community. He has always looked locally for talent from the Windsor area to hire employees. His commitment to his staff to mentor them and provide career opportunities has been a model for area businesses. Chris Behl said of Hackerson, "I was the second employee for Don and he has led me from being a part-time summer soil testing technician to a regional manager to a co-owner." In 2010 Don sold the company to Ted Huber and four other employees after previously turning down an offer to sell Pro-Ag Consulting to a Michigan business. Huber remarked that every step of the way Don fostered a consistent guideline of career development and allowed all of his employees to grow. "Always there when we needed advice or help, but never an obstructionist," said Huber. In retirement, Don continues to impact Illinois Agriculture and he still advises a few clients.

Don has been a valued Windsor community leader, always willing to help others. A great example is when Don arranged a special trip to St. Louis for a local seven year old girl (now 13) suffering from tumors of the nerves (NF1). Also inviting several of her friends, the girls' day of fun and adventure included a trip to the zoo and private expedition of Grant's farm. Pro-Ag Consulting employees have followed Don's model in their community-giving spirit. Each year, the employees support the towns of Windsor and Gays Jr. Women's Club in its Christmas "Giving Tree". Additionally, Pro-Ag has awarded over \$33,000 in scholarship funds to high school students planning to study in the field of agriculture through the Jim Koester Memorial Scholarship.

Don is a member of Independent Crop Consultants, American Quarter Horse Association, National Barrel Horse Association, and Past President of the Indiana-Illinois-Kentucky Quarter Horse Association. In addition to his love for horses, he has also been an active member of a dog rescue program for 15 years.

Starter Fertilizer—Does it help my Yield?

As many of you know, this was another of those cold wet springs, causing a lot of stress on early planted corn. Those of you who used starter in the row, whether it be an analysis such as 9-18-9 or just plain Liquid N saw a considerable difference versus the check plots in the same field.

Our yield at harvest will be the proof of economic return, but just watching the crops grow we were very impressed with the looks of the growing crops.

In row fertilization is so helpful getting the corn plant started off right. It provides readily available nutrients to keep the plant from being stressed. As we see in many fields this year, when plants are stressed early, plants are stunted and many never recover.

Darrell Hall of Moweaqua, IL has always kept his Phosphate levels at 40#s/A or higher and his Potash levels at 350#s/A. His soil types are Drummer, Flanigan and Ipava. He started using a starter fertilizer several years ago. Yield increases average 11-15 bu/A higher and when he added sulfur yields were even higher. Part of the yield increase was due to the added nutrients but a big part came from reducing the stress on the corn plant early in the growing season.

When the soils are cold as we had this year, much of the available soil nitrogen can be tied up by bacteria that is decomposing previous year's crop residue. By adding 5-7 gal of Liquid N in the row allows the plant to get a good start. We have always referred to early nitrogen application as the "landlord pleaser."

Need Fall Testing Done?

If you haven't tested some of your fields for the last 3-4 years, you should consider doing so. We have seen fertility levels change considerably this year. Early Spring rains with heavy run off not only reduced nitrogen levels but also washed away top soil that contained high levels of Phosphate and some Potash.

Planning next year's crops on some out dated soil tests can cost you yield losses at harvest time. A good current soil test can eliminate that problem.

Reviewing with our managers, we have a very heavy soil testing schedule for fall. If you need sampling done, please call early.

Do You Remember When?

A news article appearing in the Effingham Daily News in 1973 talked about aerial seeding of the fields because of the very wet Spring. Pro Ag's Chuck Campbell's grandfather was one of those using the airplane.

DIETERICH – Some Effingham area farmers are beating the continued rain and soggy fields by hiring airplanes to spread fertilizer and sow clover seed on their acres this week.

A concentrated effort to get fields seeded and fertilized in the Dieterich area was underway Tuesday, through the sponsorship of Medord Shoemaker of Shoemaker Soil Service.

Some 300 acres were seeded and given dusting fertilizer from the air and a plane operated by Padgett Flying Service of Casey kept seed and fertilizer trucks on the run most of the day as it made constant swipes over fields to be seeded.

For a landing strip, the planes used a country road where fertilizer and seed trucks kept the plane's supplies replenished, until state authorities in Springfield ordered them to stop. Then they shifted to Effingham county memorial airport.

Where are they Now???

**Travis Michl,
Newton IL**

The 1998 Jim Koester Scholarship winner was Travis Michl of Newton, IL. After completing his college work, Travis returned home and now farms with his father, Bill. Together, they farm approximately 3,700 acres of corn and beans. Travis is also involved in many farm related activities. One of which is trying to get a soybean/diesel fuel processing plant located in his area.

Travis and his wife Lyssa have four children, Wyatt (8), Sienna (3), Halle (2), William (2)