

## Starting Our 30th Year

It does not seem possible that we are starting our 30<sup>th</sup> year of operation. Our first eight years were based in Beardstown, since then it has been in Windsor, Illinois. Time passes so quickly. The most rewarding part of our business, several of our first customers are still farming and still using Pro-Ag services.

### Business Has Changed

Larger farmers and new technologies have changed the way we service our customers. We started our business taking samples on 3.3 acre grids and for the most part, we still do today. Soil tests performed in our lab are very similar to what we started with, but the information collection and the use of that information has changed drastically.

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### Our First Maps

Our first maps were hand drawn on graph paper and then colored by hand. Our first computer was a RadioShack® TSR80. Not too good!

### New Technology

Global Positioning System (GPS) has forever changed the way we conduct our business. Information collected and recorded while we sample the fields are now used in drawing maps, creating spread files, producing yield maps and variable rate maps for planting of the crops.

All of the data collected can now be analyzed and evaluated in many different ways. Product selection, field planning and cost control are just a few.

### 2008 – A Record Year

Weather created a problem for everyone in agriculture and we were certainly affected as well. Our number of acres and samples tested were up 15% over 2007. Our 2008 total acres tested was up more than 50% over 2003. This coming year looks very promising as well.

### New Employees

New employees have been added to help handle the added volume and work load. We now have a cumulative total of nearly 200 years service with the company.

### Thank You for Your Business

We are very grateful for your business and support. For the many new customers of Pro-Ag, if we can be of service in any way, please let us know. To our many repeat customers, if you have suggestions on how we can improve our service for you, please let us know.



## 2008 Jim Koester Memorial Scholarship Winner

Pro-Ag has awarded \$26,000 in scholarships. Darrell Newell of Lawrenceville, Illinois is our Jim Koester Memorial Scholarship winner for 2008. Darrell has won \$2,000.00 for use in his college education.

He is a 2008 graduate of Red Hill High School in Lawrenceville and is enrolled at Wabash Valley College in Mt. Carmel, Illinois. He is majoring in Ag Business and will graduate in 2010 then on to Southern Illinois University and hopes to graduate in 2012.

Darrell was very active during his high school years participating in Fellowship of Christian Athletics, Yearbook, FFA (President for two years), Crop & Livestock Judging, Ag Safety Day and a member of the National Honor Society.

After graduation, he plans to work on the family farm and work for an agricultural related marketing firm. When asked what he planned to do in 10 years, "I want to work on the family farm and start raising my family." Darrell's Ag instructor said, "As opportunities to farm become rarer, so do the real 'farm boys.' Darrell is a real 'farm boy.' He has driven tractors and worked land far after sunset. His loyalty to his family and their farming operation has always been his first priority, as it should be."

## Corn May be Short of Sulfur

### Free Airborne Supplies Have Dwindled

The EPS crackdown on Sulfur Dioxide emissions by heavy industry and motor vehicles is a mixed bag for crop farmers. Good for your health but bad for your wallet.

For many years, free airborne Sulfur filled much of our crops needs. In 1972, University of Illinois field tests showed only 3 of 55 sights responded with increased corn yields when Sulfur was added. The three positive responses were recorded on sandy soils.

### Sulfur Decline

From 1988 to 1997, Sulfur emissions declined 12%. Since then, air quality standards have been tightened further.

Sulfur deficiencies occur most in sandy soils and low organic matter soils. Compaction can prevent roots from reaching Sulfur in the soil, heavy rains and irrigation wash Sulfur below the root zone.

We used to apply fertilizers that had high content of Sulfur, but today's high analysis products have little or no sulfur. High yields have reduced Sulfur reserves in the soil. Corn, alfalfa and wheat have high requirements for Sulfur.

### Customer Meetings

We have just completed our winter meetings and attendance was larger than ever before. A lot of new faces were in attendance and we really appreciate you joining the Pro-Ag family. Our customer list continues to grow because of you and your excellent recommendations of our program and we sincerely thank-you!

### Signs of Sulfur Deficiency

The signs in corn are stunted growth and yellow tinged younger leaves. The symptoms are similar to Nitrogen except Sulfur deficiency will occur on the upper younger leaves while Nitrogen deficiencies will show on the lower older leaves.

### Tissue Test More Accurate than Soil Test

Tissue tests are more accurate for diagnosing Sulfur deficiencies. In corn the Sulfur content of leaves should be .15% or greater. If Sulfur is needed, the usual application rate is 15/25 #'s/Acre.

Sandy soils and heavy producing fields (170 Bu Corn or better) will most always show an increase of 8-10 Bu/Acre. Sulfur usually costs \$.25-\$.35/pound which will give you a good economical return on your investment.

If you have questions, please contact your Regional Agronomist.

## Meet the Owners

Five current employees are buying Pro-Ag Consulting, LLC from Don and Carolyn Hackerson – Founders of Pro-Ag Consulting, LLC.

These five individuals have a combined 63 years of service with Pro-Ag Consulting, LLC. On January 1, 2010, controlling interest will pass to these individuals and they will own 90%.

Don will keep 10% interest.

### Chuck Campbell



Chuck is starting his sixth year with Pro-Ag as Assistant Manager and Controller. Chuck, his wife Tammi and three children live in Neoga, Illinois. Chuck has a degree in Accounting from Eastern Illinois University and is involved in farming with his father.

Chris started working part-time for Pro-Ag Consulting, LLC during the summer of 1988. Upon graduating from Eastern Illinois in 1994, Chris became a full-time Manager and was assigned to our Northern Illinois Territory. Chris and his wife Kim, and children Zackary and Reagan live in Bloomington, Illinois.

### Chris Behl



### Jason Boerngen



Jason, his wife Jennifer and children Katlyn and Justin reside in Montrose, Illinois. Jason started with Pro-Ag Consulting working in the summers while in college and when college was complete, came to work as a full-time Manager. Jason works Southeast Illinois and Western Indiana.

### Ted Huber



Ted and his wife Donna reside in Oakland, Illinois. Their son Cole teaches school and their daughter, Kara is majoring in Music at the University of Cincinnati. Ted joined Pro-Ag Consulting in the fall of 1995. His area of responsibility is in Central Illinois and Western Indiana. Ted graduated from Southern Illinois University and has an extensive background in extension work and fertilizer sales.

### Matt Schilling



Matt joined Pro-Ag part-time in the summer of 1998 while attending Southern Illinois University. When he graduated in December of 1999, Matt joined Pro-Ag Consulting, LLC full-time as Manager for Southern Illinois and Southern Missouri. Matt also farms with his father Larry. Matt, his wife Marva, and children live near McLeansboro, Illinois.

## When is the Best Time to Sample???

We are often asked “When is the best time to sample my fields?” The simplest answer is the same time of the year each year.

When we close out our business year for tax purposes, we select a “year-end” date. At Pro-Ag we have used the calendar year-end December 31st for our tax purposes.

When using your Inventory method of soil sampling, we suggest you pick the time of year that best suits your needs and operation. Many of our clients prefer summer sampling. There are several advantages in sampling in the warm summer months. The soil is warm and soil nutrients are readily available. When soil tests are performed they represent what nutrients are there for the growing crop.

Summer sampling also allows growers time to purchase plant food that is to be spread for next year’s crop. Particularly helpful to those wanting to spread in the fall.

Many field tests have been preformed to measure nutrient availability each month of the year. It has been found that Phosphorus varies very little during the year. The highest levels occur in late spring. Stover has been decayed and nutrients have returned the soil lattices plus the soil has released water soluble P1 Phosphorus for the plant to use. When root systems of the growing crop start to develop, Phosphorus is taken into the plant and is not in the soil to test. The remainder of the year Phosphorus remains steady.

Potash is also the highest usually late spring. During the

growing season, plants use Potassium and therefore the amount in the soil is reduced and reaches it’s lowest level in late August early September. As the plants mature, Potassium is returned to soil and when decaying of the stover is complete, Potassium returns to it’s highest levels by early spring.

Most importantly, setting up a soil sampling program needs to be completed as close to the same time of year each year. Soil tests completed in late August one year and then compared to early spring the next year, probably will not compare very favorably.

If you have specific questions concerning your Pro-Ag soil sampling program, please consult with your Pro-Ag Regional Manager.



## Purple Corn Problems

With the environmental stresses experienced during the early part of the spring growing season, we can expect to receive several calls about purple corn. Some fields show much more purpling than others because they contain a combination of genes that allows them to show the purple pigment.

However, in Illinois fields, the purpling is the result of restricted root growth. As plants go from depending on the seed as

their main food source to roots furnishing the nutrients, they often hit a slow period of root development. If purpling is not uniform across the field, you can expect to find something other than cool temperatures as the cause.

### Dig a Few Plants

Dig a few plants and look at the roots. When we have periods of warm days with bright sunshine and cold wet night, the upper leaves out grow the root system.

### Other causes may be:

- Insect Feeding - white grub and grape colaysis are two of the more common root pruning insects. They eat the hair roots of the root system.
- Soil Compaction - heavy beating rains or standing water can cause compaction.
- Saturated Soil - roots need oxygen, if soils are too wet, root growth will be restricted.

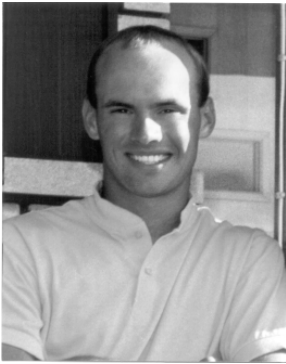
A true Phosphorus deficiency is shown by a purpling on the very outer edge of the corn leaf. This is a very rare case seldom seen in today’s corn fields. If roots appear normal, the purpling soon disappears after 4-5 days of warm weather.

*“A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after awhile he knows something.”*

*Wilson Migner*



## The Jim Koester Memorial Scholarship



Jim Koester

To date, Pro-Ag Consulting, LLC has awarded over \$26,000 in scholarship money. Applications need to be in our office by May 15, 2009

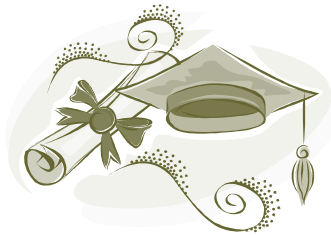
In 1995, Pro-Ag Consulting, LLC established a

scholarship program for family members of its client base. The scholarship program is meant to help an interested student develop his or her learning skills so they too can enjoy the benefits of a career in agriculture.

The details of the program are as follows:

Pro-Ag Consulting, LLC will award a \$2,000 agricultural scholarship in memory of Jim Koester of Watseka, IL.

This scholarship will be awarded to a college bound high school senior whose parents or immediate family is a client of Pro-Ag. This scholarship will pay \$500 each year for 4 years to the college or university the recipient chooses to attend.



## What is CEC?

CEC is the Cation Exchange Capacity of the soil where the sample was taken. The test represents the holding capacity of positive charged ions. Examples are Potassium, Magnesium, Calcium, Hydrogen and Sodium. Usually, the higher CEC reading, the better the soil type.

Generally speaking, we have a group of soils with CEC's below 10 and a group above 10. The Sandy and Silt Loam soils are rated with a CEC below 10. Most of those soils are the older soils in Southern Illinois. The loam soils, clay loam soils and our clay soils are those giving readings of 10 or above.

What does this reading really mean? If your CEC is below 10, it would be wise to apply lesser amounts of plant foods but more often. The higher CEC's can hold larger amounts of plant food, so we can apply more nutrients at one time.

Typical CEC's—Sandy Soils have readings of 1-5. Silt Loam is 2-10, loam is 5-15, clay loam is 15-25 and clay is 25 and up.

Summary, CEC test scores are more a reading indicating what type of soil you have. Some seed companies are prone to use the CEC in seed selection.

## Don's Comments:

After **40** plus years in the Agricultural field, I have learned a few things I would like to share with you.

I have learned...

- "It takes years to build up trust and only seconds to destroy it."
- "You can get by on charm for about fifteen minutes. After that, you'd better know something."
- "You should always leave loved ones with loving words. It may be the last time you see them."
- "You can do something in an instant that will give you heartache for life."
- "Money is a lousy way of keeping score."

## Zinc Needed?

If you have fields averaging more than 70# of Phosphate per acre, you may benefit by adding 2qts of Zinc per acre broadcast or 1qt per acre if put in the row.

When Phosphate levels are high, Phosphate ties up Zinc and the corn plant is unable to use it. Corn needs Zinc the first 45 days of growth to produce a growth regulator that determines the ear and stalk size. Severe Zinc deficiency can reduce yields up to 30%. Any questions, give us a call.

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Visit us on the Web!

@

[www.proagconsulting.com](http://www.proagconsulting.com)

## New Pro-Ag Employees

### Bryant Tingley



Bryant joined Pro-Ag in March 2008 as a S.O.E. Student from Lakeland College. Upon completing his eight week training program for Lakeland, Pro-Ag offered him a full-time position as a Soil Technician.

Bryant completed his Associated Degree from Lakeland last spring. He will be working with our Regional

Managers sampling and flagging fields. Bryant currently lives in Mattoon, Illinois.

### Candy Waggoner



Candy joined Pro-Ag in February 2009 and will assist with all functions of our mapping and accounting departments. She has previous work experience in grain elevator and grain trucking industry. Candy also helps her husband Randy with the family farm.

These past positions should help her adapt well in her new work environment.

Candy and Randy reside in rural Windsor with their two children Ashley and Seth. Please help us make her feel comfortable in her new position.

## An Employee Owned Company

With over 183 Years of Experience

Don Hackerson	Owner	24 Years
Gary Frye	Regional Manager	27 Years
Jim Molock	Shop Manager	21 Years
Chris Behl	Regional Manager/Co-Owner	20 Years
Gail Molock	Lab Manager	19 Years
Ted Huber	Regional Manager/Co-Owner	14 Years
Jason Boerngen	Regional Manager/Co-Owner	12 Years
Matt Schilling	Regional Manager/Co-Owner	11 Years
Marilyn Nelson	Lab Assistant	10 Years
Charlotte Newman	Lab Assistant	9 Years
Kurt Storm	Soil Technician	7 Years
Charles Campbell	Controller/Co-Owner	6 Years
Tish Behl	Mapping Manager	5 Years
Ryan Parker	Soil Technician	3 Years
Beth Kull	Mapping Assistant	2 Years
Cindy Fallert	Lab Assistant	2 Years
Bryant Tingley	Soil Technician	1 Year