



Spring Newsletter 2019 Operations update

Alistair Ewan SQC Executive Director

SQC Farm Standards

The new look electronic Farm Standards were launched autumn 2018 with an aim of assisting Scheme Members. I appreciate not all Farmers enjoy the electronic format; however the links to key websites are aimed to assist. All future Standards and newsletter will be electronic unless a paper copy is requested.

Farm Fed Digestate Scheme

A new SQC Green Feedstock digestate scheme is close to launch, which will potentially allow all SQC approved Digestate Scheme members to gain digestate passports. This digestate can be applied onto their own land and other grower's farms.

Currently Distillers and maltsters are unlikely to accept any cereals that have had Digestate applied to land, therefore creating significant industry concerns. This SQC scheme, which has support of the Scotch Whisky Association and SEPA will potentially alleviate this area but as always will be subject to individual maltsters and distillers contracts.

It is anticipated this Scheme will launch in the late spring.

SEPA Consultation

SQC were invited to respond to the SEPA Consultation Document. This has been undertaken, demonstrating the extensive activities already undertaken by SQC Scheme Members to attain SQC Farm Certification.



Review of Certification Contract

A full review of the SQC contracted body to deliver our SQC Farm Certification was recently undertaken. Following this review a new contract has been awarded to Lloyds Register (previously Acoura).

Highland Show

SQC will not be having a formal stand at this year's Highland Show. The overall cost of this event for SQC is no longer acceptable. However the SQC directors are willing to discuss any relevant points with Scheme Members as required.

Scheme Manager Update

We are now well into the Harvest 2019 assessing year, and just over 1/3rd of the way through the farm assessments.

Some growers will have noticed a change in time of year for their assessments. This is mainly in the hope of being able to get passports out to some growers in May, so please be mindful of this when assessors are trying to book their appointments, with over 3000 farms to see in less than 10 months, we require all farmers to be co-operative where possible.

With assessments well underway, there are some common none compliances beginning to show trends. Please ensure that you have completed your Integrated Pest Management plan, a link to which can be found within the standards or request a paper copy from the SQC office prior to your assessment.

Another common fail point has been the lack of a biodiversity plan being completed. SQC have worked hard to ensure that a simple and easy to use template is available to its members. Please take some time prior to your assessment to ensure that you have filled this in.

Lastly, can I thank all the SQC members who have been a pleasure to deal with over the last couple of years as I depart with Lloyds Register (formally Acoura) and move onto pastures new. I leave you in the capable hands of the Crops team, Andrew Baird and Fergus Davies.

All the best for harvest 2019.

**Kind Regards,
Judith Hogg**

Spring N Planning

Andrew Moir, SQC Chairman



Writing this on the 22nd of February and the mercury rising to the mid-teens it is difficult not to worry that there is quite a lot of winter still to come as the famous "Beast from the East" happened on the 24th February to the 4th of March last year.

However with a large spring workload my thoughts have turned to Spring Nitrogen (N) and Sulphur applications as we now have passed the date that N applications are precluded by the NVZ (nitrate vulnerable zone) rules.

My plans for the applications have been made – a relatively simple process for me now compared to when the rules came out in January 2003 as my farm recording program has my proposed cropping plan and is able to tell me my N Max figure at the touch of a button and helps keep me within the rules.

The past few years I have been applying Nitrogen variably and have found that we definitely have an evening out effect over the field.

In our case satellite imagery is taken of the farm and I can access the biomass data from my laptop to allow me to send preprogrammed information to my mini iPad on where and how much Nitrogen is to be applied. The iPad then speaks to the fertiliser spreader in my tractor where it variably applies the product as the GPS system knows exactly where I am in the field and adjusts according to the recorded biomass.

The initial application will give less N to the higher biomass areas helping reduce lodging and more to the lower biomass areas therefore evening out the crop by encouraging tillering, in this case winter barley (see picture).

Towards the end of the application of N season the more N will be applied to higher biomass areas but we will not step over the maximum application allowed by the NVZ rules on a field by field basis.

Hopefully by the time you read this spring sowing will be in full swing and your sprayer has been fully serviced and ready for the busy season ahead.



“Training” – Imperative or an unnecessary cost?

Peter Wood, Training Manager, Ringlink Services



Ringlink Services have been delivering training for over twenty years and it is interesting to note how the Health and Safety and training environment has changed over the years.

It is often argued that Health & Safety is “something of a nuisance”, “it slows the operation down” or it is simply “an unnecessary expense”. In reality Health & Safety is crucial to the fundamental operation of a business, not only is there a legal obligation to comply with Health & Safety but, and possibly more importantly, there is a moral obligation to ensure the Health & Safety of employees, contractors and indeed anyone who might be exposed to your business operations.

The legal obligations are borne out of a number of regulations including the 1998 Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) which place duties on people and companies who own, operate or have control over work equipment. The regulations are designed to ensure that equipment is fit for purpose, safe to use and importantly only operated by people who have received adequate information, instruction and training.

Adequate training is a programme of learning delivered by someone who has relevant subject knowledge, they must also have formal recognition as an instructor and are therefore qualified to deliver training, additionally, appropriate course outlines and content must be followed and appropriate records maintained.

Having considered the legal obligations, it is equally as important to consider the value of training from both a moral and practical perspective.

Failure to provide training places operators and other personnel at risk and statistics clearly identify that there is a greater chance of injury or death where adequate training has not been delivered. Morally, nobody should be placed in this position.

Practically, training provides employees with the skills to operate both safely and effectively, this can reduce the costs associated with damage and repairs. Training actively encourages a positive culture of Health & Safety where poor operating standards are not tolerated. Investing in staff has a positive impact on them and their outlook.

Refresher Training

It has become increasingly noticeable that there is now a greater appetite for refresher training. A clear example of this is the Sprayer Operator Course. Annually, this provides an ideal forum to highlight the changes within the industry, including new products available and those being withdrawn and also the new technology that is so important for the future of the industry

Refresher training is also crucial for many other activities including forklift, chainsaw, plant and first aid together with a wide range of other activities and increasingly this is becoming a requirement to satisfy insurance companies. It is a worrying statistic that nearly 40% of fatal injuries in 2017/18 were to workers aged 60 and over, a cohort that would often be deemed to have the most experience and therefore less likely to have an accident.....clearly not the case.

In summary, training is not an option, it is a fundamental requirement that must be met. It should be included within your business plans and carried out periodically to meet the needs of the business and the employees.

Ringlink Services are here to help you and we can offer the advice that you need to ensure that you remain compliant.

For further information please call Ringlink Services LTD on 01561 376000



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Pest Control on Farms

Ross Graham, Managing Director, Graham Pest Control



The layout, design and construction of farm buildings is critical to food safety, and therefore as soon as you start to accumulate large amounts of food in one place, pests will always become a problem. 25 years ago when I first started doing this job, a farmer said to me when I arrived on his site after harvest - "I hope you know what you're doing, I'm storing 2000 tonnes of rat food on this farm!!" this has stuck with me over the years!

Pest controllers who 'take on' farms are very different to pest controllers who do your day-to-day rat and mouse work in houses and offices. They have to really know the target species they are trying to control (usually Brown Rats and House Mice) and with so many food alternatives to rodenticide you have to think like a rat to win the rodent war.



Proofing - As always, excluding pests from the grain, potato and other food stores is the first line of defence. A good professional pest controller won't just rodenticide up around the farm but they will also do some 'proofing' work to keep farm stores pest proof. This might be as simple as sticking a bit of wire wool in a gap, applying some mouse-proof mastic or for larger proofing works, bristle strips, cement or strip curtain doors will all help to prevent access for rodents, birds and flying insects. Some people might think this a big task but making a little improvement on every visit, you soon end up with much improved rodent-free premises.

Hygiene, Housekeeping and Stacking are also critical to help ensure pest free conditions on farms. Having a daily/ weekly cleaning schedule helps to limit the food sources available to rodents and pest birds and responsible stacking of potato boxes, farm machinery and pallets ensuring pest control operatives can safely access all areas of farm

buildings also helps to ensure pest infestations don't lie undetected and allow breeding over several weeks and months. Farm workers can all play their part in assisting to clean up spillages, not creating harbourages for rodents and also to report any pest sightings as soon as they are spotted as this will assist controlling the pests before they become established.

Site visits - then there is the question of visit frequency, where different companies follow different procedures. Some still follow the traditional agricultural pest calendar: eight visits in the year, clustering around the cold months and you won't see them much in the summer.

This is a little archaic now. In 2011, The Environment Agency successfully argued in the law courts that this 'traditional' schedule of visits is environmentally irresponsible.

Some will visit every six weeks and throw in extra visits if there is a problem, but even this is becoming dated.

Responsible use of rodent poison - The new Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU) rules stipulate that if the rodenticide is put down, then it should only be in response to a live infestation. If you have to resort to rodenticide, then a proper site environmental assessments needs to be done to help prevent secondary poisoning.

Rodenticides should never be used for monitoring purposes as this could cause undue risk of harm to the surrounding

environment. Naturally, this pushes us towards monthly visits as a minimum and a heavy focus on proofing and habitat management.

After the introduction of the Biocides Products Regulation (BPR) in Europe, rodenticides were one of the first groups of chemicals to be analysed for safety. The result was clear. Rodenticides do harm the environment when misused, and we are only allowed to hang onto them because there is no viable alternative.

But levels of rodenticide residue in the wild food chain are being closely monitored and it won't take much to change the minds of the regulators who within the last few years have removed products such as Cymag, strychnine, tracking powder and liquid concentrate baits from a pest controllers armoury.

How to hire a professional pest controller for your farm - It is up to each farmer and land owner to ensure pest control is being carried out professionally on our farms and that includes hiring audited professionals trained to a high standard. All pest controllers belonging to the British Pest Control Association (BPCA) and National Pest Technicians Association are audited to the British Standard EN 16636 and only employ technicians with the recognised industry qualifications.

The world is changing around us, and with SQC, LEAF, Red Tractor, CRRU and BPR all pulling in the same direction, being environmental responsibility is key in the modern landscape.



Spring Sprayer Action Plan



Agrii™



With spring approaching, thoughts are turning to work on the land. There was no shortage of spray days in the dry spring/summer of 2018 but, as we know, in a more 'normal' Scottish growing season, spray opportunities can be limited. As always, making sure machinery is in good working order will be important ahead of the season to avoid any problems or downtime, along with perhaps being a good chance to review the spraying operation. The Agrii Sprayer Operators have certainly been busy with their winter maintenance programme on the fleet of Contract Sprayers; stripping down the units and building-up again ahead of annual testing.

To maximise efficacy of sprays and to reduce off-target drift, sprayer operators should focus on optimising spraying technique. Maintaining correct boom height

is an important way of preventing drift – 50cm above the target is ideal yet doubling this boom height results in a 10x increase in drift. Tyre pressure is also important for boom stability so well worth checking.

Nozzle choice can further help optimise application, so worth consideration ahead of the season. Flat fan nozzles can be drifty (particularly if the boom is too high!) but still have a place in good conditions where maximum coverage is required (e.g. on small weeds). Angled nozzles can be particularly good for coverage in broadleaved crops (OSR or potatoes). Air induction nozzles are now widely used and can significantly reduce drift by producing coarser droplets, although with coarser droplets it is worth checking water volumes are sufficient to deliver good coverage.

Spray Buffer Zones are becoming quite complex and often product specific; watercourses should be mapped so that the Sprayer Operator is fully informed and is able to check product label specifications against the farm map. Finally, with burning of chemical containers no longer permitted, all Sprayer Operators will need to make arrangements for collection/disposal. It may also be useful to review the Mixing Site, to allow temporary storage of the clean, dry containers before collection. Always something new to think about! Best wishes for the season ahead from all at Agrii!