

In Balance

A Newsletter for the Whatcom County Livestock Industry



Comparison of No-Till Technology to Conventional Till Practices on Reseeding a Grass Field

Have you ever considered or would you consider using No-Till technology to reseed grass fields? In 2004 WSU had the opportunity to conduct a comparative study of no-till and conventional till technology at Harry Faber's dairy in Everson, WA. This research was funded by Western



A May 12th Field Day will review a comparative study of conventional till and no-till technology.

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Whatcom
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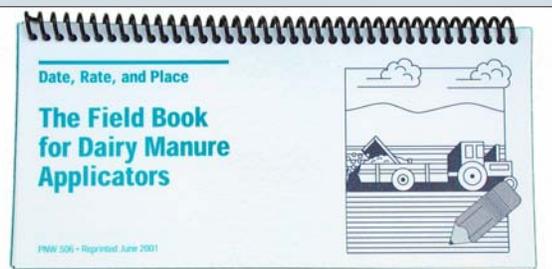
George Boggs, Chris Clark,
Chuck Timblin

Don't Throw Away Your Nutrient Management Records: They may be the Ticket to Extra \$\$\$!

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, otherwise known as the 2002 Farm Bill, brought increased funding and important new programs, including the Conservation Security

"CSP payments can range from \$20,000 per year for five years for those producers meeting basic conservation needs on their farm, up to \$45,000 per year for 10 years".

Program (CSP). CSP is a voluntary conservation program that supports ongoing stewardship of private agricultural lands by providing payments and technical assistance for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. CSP identifies and rewards those producers who are meeting the highest standards of conservation and environmental management on their operations as they address resource concerns.

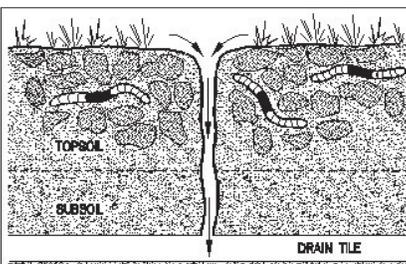


In order to be eligible for CSP payments in 2006, producers in the Nooksack Watershed will need to have nutrient management records for two of the last three years.

Significant environmental benefits can be achieved from conservation treatment that improves soil and water quality. Soil quality improvement practices include crop rotations, cover crops, tillage practices, prescribed

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MACROPORE FLOW Safeguard Against Discharging Manure To Tile Lines



Macropores may allow manure to flow into subsurface drain tiles.

(Macropore graphic courtesy of BCMAFF)

Liquid manure can find a way of entering surface water even when generous buffers are established between manure application areas and surface water and when there is insufficient precipitation to cause surface run-off. Surface water contamination from liquid manure can occur if

liquid manure passes through holes running between the soil surface and subsurface drain tiles. Such holes are called macropores and they are created by worms, mice or moles. The following practices will help eliminate this problem:

- Do not spread manure on grass or bare fields when fields are wet and tile drains are running.
- Cultivate bare fields to break up macropores shortly before spreading manure (preferably within 24 hours).
- Check outflow from tile lines on fields that manure was applied to. Immediately plug tile lines if they discharge contaminated outflow.

GRASS NITROGEN UPTAKE: "Err On the Side of Early" to Get More From Manure

It's not a coincidence that baseball season and the grass growing season are about the same length (7 months) and occur at the same time (April through October). After all, baseball is a game played on grass, and if temperatures are too cold for grass to grow, it's also too cold to play baseball. There's one significant difference, however, between these two parallel seasons. Baseball games are scheduled to occur at an even pace (6 games a week, more or less) over the course of baseball season, while grass grows at a much faster rate early in the season. By the end of June, only three months into the grass growing season, 60% (or more if irrigation isn't feasible) of growth has already occurred. One key reason grass grows more rapidly early in the season is day length (photoperiod). The year's longest days promote rapid growth of grass, but once day

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Whatcom
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
6975 Hannegan Road
Lynden, WA 98264

Phone: (360) 354-2035 ext. 3
Fax: (360) 354-4678
Email: wcd@whatcomcd.org

**Field Day
Don't Miss It!**

**May 12, 2005
1pm - 3pm**

**Harry Faber's Dairy
1908 VanDyk Rd
in Everson**

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Sustainable Agriculture Resource and Education (SARE) Ag Professional and Producer Grant (website: <http://wsare.usu.edu>). There were three main reasons for collecting the data:

1. To determine if no-till technology would reduce the nitrate concentration in new seeding grass silage.
2. Determine yield and quality differences in grass harvested using the two different tillage practices.
3. Determine the economic impacts of using no-till technology versus conventional till practices.



The Faber Dairy near Everson is situated on Barnhardt gravelly loam and Pangborn muck soil types.

Harry was interested in no-till technology because on his farm he has both rocky soil and peat soil. From a labor standpoint, it was to Harry's advantage to reduce tillage on these soils in order to minimize the amount of rocks and trees that were brought to the surface during conventional tilling. In addition to the research data collected at Harry's, there will be other information about nitrate concentrations in grass shared during the field day. If this research is of interest to you, **please join us on May 12, 2005 from 1pm-3pm at Harry Faber's Dairy 1908 VanDyk Rd in Everson. The event is free.** Questions or Comments? Contact Lynn VanWieringen at phone number 253-906-9627 or email address: vanwieringen@wsu.edu.

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grazing, and providing adequate wind barriers. Water quality improvement practices include conservation tillage, filter strips, terraces, grassed waterways, managed access to water courses, nutrient and pesticide management, prescribed grazing, and irrigation water management.

The CSP is administered by NRCS and is being phased in on a watershed basis. Producers in the Nooksack watershed are in line for CSP in 2006. A basic eligibility requirement is that producers have a recent soil test ("recent" is a test no older than five years) and that producers can prove that they have been applying nutrients based on the soil test and realistic yields. If a producer cannot show in their records that they have been practicing nutrient management for two out of the last three years, then they are not eligible for CSP. If manure is used to meet the crop fertilizer needs then manure test records are also required.

CSP payments can range from \$20,000 per year for five years for those producers meeting basic conservation needs on their farm up to \$45,000 per year for 10 years for producers who are treating all resources, including riparian areas to standards in the NRCS field office technical guide. For more information go to <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/> or call NRCS at 360-354-2035.

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length begins to shorten in late June, grass's rate of growth slows.

Timing is everything: Producers wishing to maximize their harvests need to work with grass's front loaded growth cycle by applying manure both in advance of and during the first part of the growing season. If the year's heaviest nutrient applications are delayed until mid-season and later, subsequent harvests can not compensate for what could have been reaped from adequately fed early season cuttings, and nutrients also will be wasted. It's better to err on the side of being a little too early than too late when applying nutrients (assuming field conditions are appropriate). If you apply nitrogen in May or June at a somewhat higher rate than the next cutting will be able to remove, chances are the excess will be around to feed later season cuttings. If you apply nitrogen during July through October in excess of requirement, more harm (such as elevated soil, water and forage nitrate levels) than good will likely come from it.