



Louisiana Agricultural Consultants Association TURNROW TALK

Volume 6, Winter Issue

December, 2006

President's Column

Arrowheads, Marbles, and Bears: The Bear Facts

Over the past twenty-eight years, I have walked over numerous acres in Northeast Louisiana, inspecting the condition of my client's crops. I am always looking for potential pests that can alter crop performance. During my inspection, other things have also caught my eye. It might be a deer, a snake, an old bottle, an arrowhead, a marble, or even a bear. Yes, I said a bear. I have encountered them in cotton, corn, soybean, and rice fields, some of which are in close proximity to the Tensas National Wildlife Refuge. Bear sightings have increased as the years pass and the population grows. This increase is attributed to the bear reintroduction and protection efforts by the state and federal wildlife programs. The Wildlife Reserve and Conservation Reserve Programs also contribute to the population increase. The bear's wildlife habitat is expanding as more acres are developed into favorable ecosystems. This year a tagged bear from Concordia Parish was captured across the state in Bossier City, thus demonstrating their range of movement.

Three years ago, I had a surprise encounter with a bear while I was scouting corn. I was glad he took the quick initiative to depart in the opposite direction of my departure. I don't know who was more afraid that day, me or the bear. To tell the truth, it had to have been me. The bear sightings are great as long as they don't become too up close and personal.



As I inspect fields after a rain, I often encounter other surprises in the form of artifacts, such as arrowheads. It causes me to think about the Indian civilizations that existed here before the European invasion. The natives of Northeast Louisiana were once a vast people group as demonstrated by the archeological

Calendar of Events

NCC's Beltwide Cotton Conference—Jan. 9-12, 2007
Marriott & Sheraton Hotels
Canal Street, New Orleans, LA

SWSS Annual Meeting—Jan. 22-24, 2007
Opryland Hotel
Nashville, TN

**Louisiana Agricultural Technology & Management
Conference—Feb. 7-9, 2007**
Best Western Conference Center
MacArthur Drive, Alexandria, LA

NAICC/ASFMRA/ASAC Annual Meeting—Feb. 14-17, 2007
Hyatt Regency
Atlanta, GA

excavations such as those at Poverty Point. Sometimes these very same fields also contain old house spots. Now on these spots the only thing you might find, besides the crops, are an old shattered bottle, rusty nails, or marbles. I can imagine the time where children might have played marbles is this very spot. Areas that were Indian once planted by early farmers are now destined to revert back to forest because of tree planting programs.

This process of reverting back to the native forest is not only a great concern for me, but also for my clients. This issue should be a concern for everyone. I have serious questions concerning the diversion of row crop, and land reverting back to nature through tree plantings. The program has benefited many people in the short term, but it takes dollars invested in row crop production out of circulation. Estimates indicate that each dollar allocated for crop production expenditures turns over seven to eight times in the local economy. The local tax revenues in turn may be reduced. The dollars lost in financially challenged areas of Louisiana will hurt in the long run. Even today some of my clients are experiencing ramifications from this loss of acreage. From this shift, farmers are already scrambling to find replacement rental acres. They have to pay more for newly secured acres as well as those retained rental lands. However, the availability of rental property is quickly being reduced as a result of competition with this program. Recent increases in fuel prices have many people thinking of ethanol and soy diesel production. The future is looking promising for grain production to meet this need. Already there have been studies indicating we need more land for this endeavor while we maintain current food and fiber production levels. Land prices have already started to show an increasingly upward trend. Some individuals have even suggested that acres for this use come from the

Conservation and Wildlife Reserve programs.

One personal example of a program that looked promising but ended with unfavorable results that affected my grandfather who farmed cotton in South Mississippi. In 1960, he chose to “rent his land to the government” which means he chose government payments for not producing the cotton crop. Reduction in the cotton acreage collapsed the local cotton industry and the area ginning operations for lack of a crop to process.

The point of the article is this: We as agricultural professionals must evaluate all possible consequences of new technology tools and programs. If we don’t adequately assess these programs and all new innovations, we will leave a very poor legacy behind. Farmers could become forgotten artifacts like Indian arrowheads because we lost our marbles and let precious farmland grow up in trees and bears.

by Bryant Williams, 2006 LACA President

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Experiences and Interactions with LACA Consultants

by Boris A. Castro, Ph.D.

Former LSU AgCenter Extension Entomologist

It is well-known that independent crop consultants provide a wide range of valuable services vital to the success of agricultural enterprises. The larger size of today’s farms brings upon increasingly diversified farming activities. The role of independent consultants taking care of the day to day farming operations and crop decisions allow farmers more time to focus on other farming and economic concerns. Crop consultants have strong professional relationships with seed companies, chemical manufacturers, product applicators and retailers which are essential for sustained field operations. Additionally, one of the most important qualities of independent crop consultants in Louisiana is their established relationship with the LSU AgCenter. The unbiased, research-based information and technologies produced and locally tested by the LSU AgCenter are priceless tools that add value and bring profits to farms. The strategic alliance between the independent crop consultants and the LSU AgCenter contributes to the professional reputation and work ethics essential for crop consulting firms. In turn, independent crop consultants become an important venue for information delivery, strong collaborative efforts and quick technology adoption.

During my four years as extension entomologist for the LSU AgCenter, I was charged with developing extension and educational programs on insect pest management with valuable, meaningful content for farmers. Soon I realized the most respected LSU AgCenter specialists and county extension agents with strong research and educational programs also had a common feature. They all shared a solid networking relationship with independent crop consultants. Thanks to the advice of my LSU AgCenter mentors, I made it a priority from my early days with the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service to plug into

those networking alliances with common goals between the LSU AgCenter and crop consultants. It was on this relationship based on professionalism and respect, on friendship and camaraderie that I started building the foundations of my extension and educational programs. I was responsible for developing programs of quality content and value. However, the real impact of any good program and research-based technology can only be realized when adopted by our clientele. This relationship was instrumental for my brand-new programs. It facilitated the delivery of useful information and technology adoption where needed and extended my educational effort to a much larger clientele. Working hand in hand with local county agents and independent crop consultants helped unveil local concerns and researchable problems in crop production. It facilitated farmer’s collaboration and also secured access to land resources for locally evaluating new technology. I considered it an optimal win-win situation.

The value and quality services provided by independent crop consultants cannot be overemphasized. Independent crop consultants and the LSU AgCenter share the same commitment to farming success and environmental stewardship. This alliance is key for the present and future of agriculture in the state. It positions Louisiana farmers in a privileged position to make educated decisions in view of new challenges. Independent crop consultants in Louisiana understand the high value of new technology and research-based information that is unbiased in nature. It ensures a sustainable farming operation in an environmentally-responsible and profitable manner. The applied mission and vision of the LSU AgCenter is shared and embraced by the independent crop consultants of Louisiana. I was honored to be part of this excellent networking relationship serving those who feed the world and working hand and hand with those who facilitate the process.

Experiences with EPA

by Roger Carter

In May of 2006, consultants with AMS, Inc. began to observe threshold levels of aphids in cotton. Our standard applications of Trimax, Centric, or Intruder at labeled rates was giving less than optimum control even when applied with higher volumes of water per acre (10 - 20 gpa), with the addition of proper additives, and utilizing proper nozzles. Soil and air were drier than optimum during the period in early June when we began applications. By the second application on some fields, we began to contact Dr. Roger Leonard, Dr. Ralph Bagwell, and our company reps to indicate that there was a problem with control of aphids.

LACA New Members in 2006

Joining LACA as a Voting Member in 2006 was Joshua Price and Randy Richard. Joining as *Affiliate Members* were Ernie Clawson, and Sandy Stewart.

Even though application conditions were less than optimum, we feared that at least part of the issue was tolerant or resistant aphids. The aphid colony on one cotton plant would be completely destroyed and the one adjacent to it not controlled. This looked more like resistance than application, therefore Mr. Bobby Simoneaux with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry agreed to apply, with the support of several other consultants, Dr. Leonard, and Dr. Bagwell, for a Section 18 from EPA for Furadan.

The initial application took approximately three days and then we were to have the Section 18 within another three days, but were told by EPA that it would be a week. During this time, EPA was asking for data from Dr. Ralph Bagwell, et. al., to verify that a problem did exist.

Bobby Simoneaux arranged a conference call with EPA. This occurred approximately five days after the application was submitted and eight days after our initial contact with the state.

On the call, I explained our situation to four or five scientists from EPA and was questioned about possible substitutes for the currently standard registered products. One EPA employee wanted to know why we didn't use Bidrin which has not controlled aphids for us in Louisiana in May or June in several years. I gave information on what our criteria is for treating, application information, timing, rates, etc.

After forty minutes of conversation another person from EPA joins the conference call and begins asking the same questions we had previously answered over the past $\frac{3}{4}$ hour. There was a lack of respect from this one person, but the other EPA folks were professional and concerned about our situation. Bobby and I took our time answering their questions.....with tact.

One from EPA made the comment that EPA was really concerned about all the lawsuits that could possibly be filed against them if they gave us the Section 18 on Furadan. Bobby asked if EPA was "more concerned about lawsuits than science and the economic effects this decision could have on our farmers". They were concerned about black bears' exposure to Furadan.

Five days later - ten days from our initial request to the state - EPA granted the Section 18 for use of Furadan on not to exceed 15,000 acres of cotton in Catahoula, Concordia, northern Avoyelles and southern Tensas Parishes. This was granted by Commissioner Bob Odom's office the same day. We were required to send locations of fields to be treated along with the recommendations to the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry for their approval. We faxed those requests along with the maps to Baton Rouge and immediately received approval from the Department.

Only approximately 2500 acres were eventually treated with Furadan with little impact on the environment. Control behind the Furadan was virtually 100% for up to three weeks. Some farmers received showers soon

after the Section 18 was granted and we began to see diseased aphids, albeit earlier in the season than usual. Therefore we did not have to apply Furadan to the larger acreage.

It is uncomfortable knowing that EPA does not respond as quickly as we may need to avert serious issues with insects. Hopefully, the process can be expedited for the benefit of our farmer clients.

Without the help of Commissioner of Agriculture Bob Odom, Bobby Simoneaux, Dr. Roger Leonard, Dr. Ralph Bagwell, and Mr. Ray Young this Section 18 may never have been granted. We believe that it increased income on those 2500 acres of cotton for this year. This was an atypical year with tremendous yields from who knows where, but in an average year the acres we treated could possibly have had severe yield losses without the use of Furadan.

Regardless, the experience has taught us:

1. To request Section 18's sooner - they are not granted overnight.
2. To have application information, insect numbers, and potential acres to be treated available.
3. To request that everyone involved at EPA be present at the appointed time of any meeting or conference call.
4. To have confidence in the support that we may ever need from Commissioner Odom and Bobby Simoneaux and our cotton university researchers and specialists.

EPA has a job; we have ours. The decisions that EPA makes are for the benefit of the environment and do not necessarily always agree with what we think is best. EPA is aware of information and data on the detrimental effects of chemical inputs; we seldom see that information. We do not know all the hoops that good scientists with EPA must negotiate in order to render a decision in favor of agriculture.

I've learned from my experience this year that EPA is made up of people whose blood is as warm as ours. Education of EPA about our role in production agriculture is paramount to us being able to communicate positively with the scientists there. It begins with a "Hello" and a handshake. It is our job representing our farmer clients interest to make the first move.

**Mark your calendars now for the
2007 Louisiana Agricultural
Technology & Management
Conference
February 7-9, 2007
Best Western Conference Center
Alexandria, LA**

Our Independence

by Denise Wright

Recently, I had opportunity as a NAICC Executive Board member to visit with several sustaining members of both NAICC and LACA while attending a board meeting in Research Triangle Park, NC. While discussing ways in which we as crop and research consultants can work with our sustaining membership to subsequently benefit the producer, independence as a very important aspect, was brought up from at least two of the four companies I visited. Research and marketing department heads commented on how our independence is appreciated and expressed their confidence in the certified crop consultant. Our ability to evaluate various programs offered by industry and by dealer-distributors and provide unbiased feedback is invaluable.

Louisiana is one of very few states that license crop consultants and require recertification every three years to maintain that license. Current policy set forth by the Louisiana Dept of Agriculture and Forestry dictates that the applicant must possess a bachelor degree in a field of agriculture and have a specified number of years' experience as a field scout under a licensed consultant. Those licensed consultants who are members of the Louisiana Agricultural Consultants Association furthermore agree to conform to the LACA Code of Ethics. The "independence" rationale is that "the consultant receives no compensation from a client's purchase or application of products based on consultant's recommendations and/or data, and further, if compensated as an employee, whose compensation is not subsidized or supplemented by any portion of the employer's revenue which is derived from the sale, distribution, transfer, or application of products".

Our independence is extremely important when it comes to giving our grower clientele unbiased recommendations. It gives us the freedom to help our clients choose which products to use for their optimum profit.

For information on membership in NAICC
go to www.naicc.org or
contact Allison Jones at JonesNAICC@aol.com
or Denise Wright at glpbues@bellsouth.net

**Affiliate
Member of**



NAICC



**May You and Yours Have a Very
Merry Christmas!!! Best Wishes for
a Productive and
Prosperous New Year!!!**

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PEST ID QUIZ

Plan to participate in the Pest ID Quiz this year at the '07 LATMC. Albaugh, Inc. has generously committed to sponsoring this event. The prize money has been increased and the quiz will be brand new. Test your knowledge of pests affecting our Louisiana crops and win as much as \$200.00. And, get your picture taken for the website and newsletter.

Nominations for LCES County Agent Award

If you are a voting member of LACA, included in your preliminary program packet is a nomination form for Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service County Agent Award. Please think about nominating one or more county agents who are deserving of recognition as those who work diligently with independent consultants and other agricultural professionals for the good of producers in their parishes. The recipient (s) of the award will be honored at the '07 Louisiana Agricultural Technology & Management Conference.