



GROWING SMARTER



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NEWS & INFORMATION TO HELP YOU GROW

Take Steps Now for Better Alfalfa Stands

Fertizona products and programs can make all the difference

The Southwest is an ideal place for growing high-quality alfalfa because our climate and soils are so well-suited for it, but that doesn't mean it's easy. Growers still have to address many choices and cultural practices, from seed selection to consistent planting depth to crop protection and so on. But whatever the challenge, Fertizona is ready to help.

"There's always going to be a need for good quality hay," said Tom Montoya, Pest Control Advisor, Fertizona - Casa Grande. "Growers need to remember that certain steps can help them maximize their yields and profits."

A key first step is to get your soil tested to determine the levels of available nutrients. Some forage growers reduce their fertilization because an alfalfa crop fixates its own nitrogen, but that can hold back yields. Alfalfa plants need adequate amounts of potassium and phosphorus, as well as supplemental levels of sulfur.

Phosphorus supports plant metabolic processes responsible for transferring energy, and it's critical in root development and flowering. Potassium is essential for many plant growth functions, such as root health. That can become a bigger issue later in the year, after multiple cuttings compact the soil and inhibit root efficiency. Montoya's top fertilizer recommendation is a



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Improving our knowledge to improve yours

If you ask the leaders of top service-providing companies what makes their organizations successful, it's a safe bet most of them will say it's the high quality of their people. When your employees are knowledgeable, experienced, and enthusiastic about their jobs, there's a good chance they can outperform their competition. And that makes them more valuable to their customers.

Fertizona has always believed in recruiting and hiring outstanding individuals for our team. Then once they come aboard, we like to reward and encourage them. I'm proud of the fact that our

employees stay with the company for so long. You don't have to look far to find people who've been here twenty, thirty, or forty years, and that says a lot about dedication.

Investing in ways to promote their careers is just good business on many levels. As an example, take a look at the story on page 6. It talks about some recent advanced training courses we sent some of our employees to. By attending these world-class educational sessions, they came back better-equipped to advise you about your specific challenges and product options.

We call this magazine "Growing Smarter" because it's designed to help you be more informed about how you grow your crops, turf, or livestock. But finding ways to work smarter is also something we do for ourselves . . . and then everybody benefits.

Jim Compton
President, Fertizona &
Compton Ag Services



Story continued from cover

preplant application of Fertizona's granular 11-52-0 product. He also frequently advises growers to add sulfur to their fertilizer, such as Fertizona's 9-41-0-18S blend. "You need sulfur for a quality alfalfa cutting and yield," he said, "but most fertilizers don't have it."

Fight weeds and insects

The right pesticides can have a significant impact on your alfalfa crops. This year, Fertizona is recommending Eptam® 7E herbicide from Gowan Company.

"Eptam is one of only two preplant treatments registered on alfalfa," said Barry Tickes, Area Agent, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension. "Eptam is particularly good at suppressing perennial weeds like nutsedge and Bermuda grass that are already established and not controlled by other preplant treatments."

"Eptam is a great way to start off your new alfalfa planting, because it prevents many difficult-to-control grasses and broadleaves we find in Arizona," agreed Gowan's Chris Denning. "I recommend using no more than 2.5 pints

per acre of Eptam on a germination water to avoid 'cupping'—when the trifoliate leaves stick together. It's an effective way to rotate out of commonly used chemistries such as ALS inhibitors (Pursuit® and Raptor®) and also the DNAs (Prowl® and TR-10). It's also a great tool for nutsedge."

"Unlike many other alfalfa herbicides, Eptam stays in suspension," Tickes added, "so it can be conveniently chemigated."

Growers also need good insect-control strategies, addressing both preventive and curative scenarios. Scout your fields for early signs of pest infestations or damage, and if you spot any questionable conditions, talk to your PCA or Fertizona sales rep about the best products for your situation.

Choosing the right seeds

Many Arizona alfalfa growers have discovered the benefits of Fertizona's exclusive Fertilac 11 variety. Developed specifically for Southwestern environments, nondormant Fertilac 11 is an excellent choice for forage production because

"Certain steps can help maximize yields and profits"

– Tom Montoya, Pest Control Advisor,
Fertizona, Casa Grande

it combines very good yield potential and high nutritional value. It also provides superior resistance to many serious alfalfa diseases and insects, including stem nematodes and pea aphids.

"Fertilac 11 grows in the winter, so February and March cuttings are typically heavier," says Tyke Bennett, Seed Products Manager, Fertizona, "and selecting an alfalfa seed with higher resistance helps you launch a pre-emptive strike against pests that can hurt your crop."

For the high-yielding, high-quality alfalfa stands you want, contact your Fertizona rep or nearby location, or visit www.fertizona.com.

Al Dahra Farms

McMullen and Hyder Valleys, Arizona

Nathan Melton and his team help to feed the world

Many large international corporations are household names (such as Ford, Apple, Coca-Cola, etc.), but there are also a lot of others that the general public has probably never heard of. One example of those might be Al Dahra, a huge, privately held global organization with major agricultural operations and other related businesses in at least 20 countries.

In North America, the company's agribusiness interests are represented by a California-based division known as Al Dahra ACX, currently the largest forage exporter in the United States. Their extensive land holdings include two large operations in Southwestern Arizona—known as Al Dahra Farms—both of which are managed by Nathan Melton.

"Right now, we have 3300 acres in the McMullen Valley, and 3500 in the Hyder Valley area," Melton

said. "As of this year, we're growing only alfalfa, and about 85 percent of that is for export. The rest of it goes to local dairies."

The Al Dahra Farms typically produce ten hay cuttings a year, plus a harvest of green chop in December or January. Between the two locations, Melton has a full-time staff of about 27 employees. Under his management, the highly successful operation is also a model of efficient growing practices.

"We've completely gone to subsurface drip irrigation," Melton explained. "In addition to saving water, it makes our fertilizers more efficient, and that's helped us to increase our yields."

Fortunately for Fertizona, Al Dahra is also a very good customer, for a variety of products, including fertilizers and pesticides. Melton has been in his current position at Al Dahra for six years, but he has a much longer history with Fertizona.

"I've been working with Fertizona forever," he said, "for years and years -- even going back to our own family farm. John Haggard (Manager, Fertizona – Buckeye and Compton Ag Services) and I grew up in the same home town."

However, there's a lot more to the good business relationship with Al Dahra than friendships and personal connections.

"Because of the size of our operation here, we have to put every big purchase out for bidding, and Fertizona is always super competitive with their prices," Melton added. "And their service is second to none. Whenever we need anything, at any time, Fertizona has always pulled through for us."

"Fertizona has always pulled through for us."

– Nathan Melton,
Al Dahra Farms



aldahra ACX

Experiencing the world from many directions

Finance is only one of Credit Manager Shea Nieto's passions

Some people may have a stereotypical image about bankers and financial professionals being dull, but Shea Nieto, Fertizona's Credit Manager, totally defies that perception. A world traveler, philosopher, athlete, and much more, he's a dynamic individual with a colorful mix of interests.

But before launching his successful business career, Shea wanted to see the world. A native of Casa Grande, he enlisted in the Navy after high school, and spent the next four years sailing to far reaches of the globe—Japan, Korea, Canada, Alaska, Hawaii, and many other ports.

"I was a poor kid from the desert with no opportunities to travel," he said. "I had never been in snow. I absolutely loved going to sea, and I experienced a lot during those years."

After the Navy, Shea went to CAC and ASU and earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Agribusiness, which eventually led to positions in the cotton industry and various other related endeavors.

"I grew up around cotton and livestock businesses," Shea said, "and I always liked agriculture. Then later, I kind of stumbled into banking. I've now been in ag finance for 25 years."

Along the way, he also got to know Lamont Lacy, Fertizona's longtime Credit Manager who retired earlier this year.

"I've known him for over twenty years, and always held Fertizona in high regard," Shea recalled. "I hoped that if Lamont's position ever opened up, I'd have a chance at it."

That scenario actually fell into place in 2017, and Shea joined the company last December, giving him time to transition into his new role before Lamont left in February. "Fertizona is a great organization and a perfect fit for me," he added.

Shea is enthusiastic about his job ("I'm a numbers guy at heart," he admits), but he has many other passions. In addition to being a dedicated family man, his long list of activities is beyond impressive.

"I played baseball and football in school," he began. "Now I'm into mountain biking, swimming, archery, yoga, Kenpo karate, and chess—anything to keep my body and mind fit. I also like to study different philosophies, and I go to concerts for live music and stand-up comedy. I have pretty eclectic tastes."

Shea and his wife Corin have been married for 25 years, and they have a son and two daughters:



"Fertizona is a great organization and a perfect fit for me."

– Shea Nieto,
Credit Manager

Christopher, Sonja, and Carlie. Sonja and her husband Caleb recently had their first baby, a girl named Ellie.

"Listening to myself summarize my personal pursuits," Shea concluded, "it occurs to me that I've done a lot in my short fifty years on Earth."

Contact Shea if you have credit questions, and while you're at it, ask him if he's done anything interesting lately.



New Hires

REYES HERNANDEZ
Casa Grande

TRENT DRACHENBERG
Fennemore

MIGUEL BARRAZA
Willcox

Fighting for Water Rights

Help is needed from other farm families

Mark Lewis is a man on a mission, and it's one that's vital to all agribusiness people: water rights. Lewis is a diehard crusader for Arizona growers' and livestock producers' continued access to adequate water supplies. He owns land and a cattle ranch in Arizona and New Mexico.

Lewis is a longtime board member of the Central Arizona Project (CAP)—the elected group responsible for preserving Arizona's single largest resource for renewable water – but he often feels overwhelmed by the fight he's leading. Obviously, we all need sufficient water, but apparently many people take their water rights for granted, and they're not willing to work for their protection.

"The farm community needs to get more involved," he said emphatically. "For 110 years, we had farm-friendly people sitting on boards of our water districts, but now they don't seem to care. It's frustrating. But they're sure going to care when their water gets cut off."

The CAP and other organizations often drive efforts that everyone can agree on, such as conservation measures, funding high-efficiency pumping, etc., but there's always the underlying us-against-them battle of urban vs. rural users.

"We need candidates," Lewis added. "A lot of farms are small businesses, and some families think they can't afford to take time away, but serving isn't much of a time commitment at all."

Lewis is actively recruiting interested participants, and there are several key board vacancies coming up in 2019 and 2020. He especially wants women to run, because they're often more appealing to voters.

"I can get 'em elected," he said confidently.

If you're interested in running for the board, or if you'd like more information, Mark encourages you to contact him directly at 480-788-5003 or marklewisaz@gmail.com. Your future success may depend on it.



Making Our Best People Even Better

Continuing education enhances Fertizona service

When Fertizona says we're committed to providing you with the best products and service, that's not just talk. We continually invest in ways to increase our capabilities to support you.

One noteworthy example is the ongoing education of our employees. Earlier this year, Fertizona sent two key staff members – Byron Ollerton (PCA, Casa Grande) and Sarah Thielman (Hydrology Manager, Fennemore) — to intensive courses of study in their respective areas of expertise. In Byron's case, that trip involved an ocean, as he attended an international class at Wageningen University and Research center in The Netherlands.

Wageningen is known as the "knowledge heart" of the Dutch greenhouse industry, and is ranked among the most advanced and productive research facilities in the world. Byron's two-week course was designed to educate students about greenhouse horticulture in general, with specific emphasis on plant physiology, nutrition, climate management technology, resource use efficiency, and more.

"Casey Compton (Manager, Fertizona de Mexico) saw an article in a magazine about this course and thought it would be beneficial for me to attend," Byron said. "My goal was to come away with better knowledge that I could apply for our growers."

Sarah's trip was closer to home. Her course, "Irrigation System Evaluation," was a week-long session at California State Polytechnic University (CalPoly).

"I took the course to get more familiar with different irrigation systems and water delivery methods," Sarah said. "It taught me more about how to calculate and analyze uniformity and efficiency of water distribution."

Both Sarah's and Byron's experiences will enhance their abilities to address Fertizona customers' specific challenges and needs, and to troubleshoot a wider range of situations.

"With what I learned about analyzing irrigation problems," added Sarah, "I can provide better solutions and additional tools to help our growers with their water issues, and help them to succeed."

**"With what I learned,
I can provide better
solutions."**

– **Sarah Thielman, Hydrology Manager,
Fennemore**



The Importance of Clean Spray Equipment



Avoid cross-contamination from residual defoliants

Effective defoliation of your cotton crop requires many important decisions about timing and product choices, and there's no single right answer that fits every field and variety.

"Each situation is different," said Dennis Osborn, Crop Protection Sales Manager, Fertifzona. "If you ask five people about the best time to defoliate, you'd probably get five answers."

However, there's one factor that every cotton grower should agree on: the need to have clean spray equipment, before and

after you apply defoliant. There have been many horror stories in the news in recent years about crop damage from cross-contamination of pesticides, often resulting from improperly cleaned spray equipment.

"Cross-contamination is a big issue with defoliants, so you really need to rinse the tanks," Osborn emphasized. "One sure strategy is to use separate, dedicated tanks for different kinds of products, but when you don't have that option, it's not worth skipping your clean-out."

For maximum safety and product efficacy, start with clean, well-maintained equipment. Then immediately after application, rinse

and flush the entire system – tanks, hoses, booms, nozzles, and all. Thoroughly cleansing the spray equipment is critical so that hardened deposits of lingering contaminants don't form in the tank or lines.

Fertifzona offers many excellent spray-cleaning products, such as Tanklean and Nutra Sol®, which essentially make your rinse water work better. Nutra Sol effectively breaks down hard-to-remove chemicals on surfaces inside the tank and its components, which helps to minimize any risk of dangerous residues.

"You definitely don't want any cross-contamination between one season and the next, especially if you're growing grains," Osborn added. "Always remember that clean-out is a huge issue with defoliants."

"Clean-out is a huge issue with defoliants."

– Dennis Osborn,
Crop Protection Sales Manager,
Fertifzona

For more information, contact your Fertifzona rep or nearby location, or visit www.fertifzona.com. or visit www.fertifzona.com.



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