

Crops need cooler weather and more rain

Douglas County is in a moderate drought according to the National Centers for Environmental Information. The last good rain was the week of the 4th and the totals varied widely from that event. Our crops continue to grow. The corn seemed to jump a foot after that early July rain. Most of the corn is tasseling and the soybeans are blooming. We need more rain and cooler weather.

Dry weather when the corn was pollinating was a big problem in the past. The pollen-bearing tassel at the top of the plant would come out ahead of the ear shoot and be out of pollen before the silks on the ear shoot emerged. The varieties we plant now have much closer timing of these events so pollination is more likely to be successful. An unfertilized silk continues to grow for some time. I remember drought years with 5-inch-long silks but no grain on the cob at harvest.

Soybeans have always had the reputation of being a more drought-resistant crop. Naturally, they do better with good rain. An Iowa State University article I found had the opinion that soybean breeders had been selecting for yield and need to look at drought-resistant varieties. Usually, a plant that has good defensive characteristics against drought will not hit a top yield even with good conditions and a high yield variety won't do well in a stressful environment. Most farmers will plant a mix of varieties to spread the weather risk.

There are a couple of cautionary agriculture stories in the news. The president of the island nation of Sri Lanka

Douglas County Agriculture

By Larry Dallas



decided last year that all crop production would be organic and banned all synthetic fertilizer and pesticide imports. The result was a catastrophe. The island was self-sufficient in rice, but the production fell as much as 39 percent after the ban. Production of the country's main export, tea fell 18 percent. They cannot feed themselves and have less income from tea export.

Sri Lanka's prime minister has been forced out of office. The president has fled the country, which is in economic collapse. Some of the articles I have read have downplayed the effect of the fertilizer ban and the country did have other problems. It is hard to deny the effect of going from food self-sufficiency to importing food.

You may have seen pictures of farmers in the Netherlands blocking roads with their tractors and farm machinery. They fear that government plans to cut nitrogen emissions will put them out of business. The Dutch raise a lot of animals on limited acres. The government has given local authorities one year to make plans to cut emissions 50 percent by 2030. They are giving the farmers three options - become more sustainable, relocate, or stop farming. The example of Sri Lanka should make them stop and think.

I know I have said this before. We eat the same food, drink the same water, and breathe the same air as everyone else. We are not going to foul our own nest. We farm the way we do to be productive and provide cheap food for this country and the world. We labor under many regulations and try to clean up our problems when they are shown to us. Putting farmers out of business in pursuit of an impractical utopia will lead to hunger and strife.

Farmers continue to be concerned about fuel and fertilizer prices. Gasoline prices have eased but the diesel fuel we use has not gotten much cheaper. Harvest is an energy-intensive operation. We use more than a hundred gallons of diesel each day in the combine, and we run 2 of them part of the time. The grain goes to the elevator or the bin in diesel trucks.

Fertilizer prices are hard to pin down. We hear prices have eased somewhat. The International Trade Commission ruled the United States cannot impose tariffs on imports of nitrogen fertilizer from Russia or Trinidad. That is good news but as a nation, we do not import a lot of nitrogen fertilizer. It remains that fertilizer is a world market. Until the Ukraine - Russia situation is fixed, prices will be high.

It is in the news periodically that ships might be allowed out of the Black Sea. This would free Ukrainian grain and Russian fertilizer to move into world markets. After signing an agreement to open the port of Odessa, the Russians shelled the port. The main effect is to drop commodity prices in this country for a couple of days. The prices go back up when it becomes clear nothing has changed.

There is no easy solution to the fertilizer problem. Any new production facility will be expensive and a long time coming online. Fertilizer production still requires expensive natural gas as a feedstock. We are lucky because we are less dependent on imports than almost every other country in the world. It is still going to be expensive to get ready for the 2023 crop.

The Illinois Farm Bureau Board, along with leaders from some of the Illinois commodity groups, toured the container port of Savannah in early July. It is the third largest volume of cargo in the nation. The ships, containers, trucks, and railcars were a little overwhelming. The ships are piled high with containers and there were acres of containers in the surrounding area.

The ships are not backed up at Savannah as we see on the west coast and the managers were proud of that. They do have the same problem with where to go with the cargo once it is unloaded. We saw many warehouses under construction. The container contents must be broken down and sent where it is wanted. The local Do It Best does not need a shipping container for one item.

Loaded containers are going out of Savannah as well. We toured a freezer warehouse and saw pallets of chicken thighs and legs headed to the port. Another high-volume export from Georgia is wood products. We saw a facility that grinds trees into wood chips headed to foreign markets. The trip brought home the complicated path of imports and exports.

We have been mowing and doing some repairs. We need to start going over our harvest equipment. Repair parts can be hard to find so we need lead time for anything we might need. Thank you for reading about agriculture this month.

Larry W. Dallas is District 12 director of the Illinois Farm Bureau.

Two upcoming CUAS events

A thick crescent Moon can be seen just above the bluish star Spica in the southwest after sunset tonight. The Moon will trek farther eastward each evening this week.

The CU Astronomical Society hopes you'll join them for two events on Saturday. For starters, the club will staff the "Science at the Market" table at Lincoln Square until noon. If daytime skies are clear, we hope to show people the Sun through special filters. There has been quite a bit of activity on the fact of the Sun as of late.

Then our next free observatory open house is Saturday night beginning at dusk. There's a first quarter Moon in the sky Friday meaning we'll have some craters to

In the night sky

By David Leake



see Saturday. The observatory site in southwest Champaign County has a nice, low western horizon so we might get a glimpse of Mercury in the west-northwest just after sunset. We have a special smart phone mount where you can take your own photos of the craters on the Moon if you wish.

Join us! Call 217-351-2567 if there are clouds. See cuas.org for details.

David Leake is retired Planetarium Director of Staerkel Planetarium at Parkland College and co-founder of the Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society, Inc.

Understanding chemical chronic pain

Last week, I began discussing the three aspects of chronic pain. There is Physical, Chemical and Mental aspects of every area of chronic pain in your body. Unless you have a clear idea of each aspect, you will never be able to take control of your own health. I believe you should be your own primary healthcare provider... don't you?

This week I will describe the chemical aspect of chronic pain. Sadly, this area of healthcare hasn't been focused on for the last 50 years. Science made the mistake of putting every person into the same chronic pain bucket. If both you and I have chronic pain, it should be coming from the same chemical reason... right?

Wrong!

As science evolves, it has been proven your chemistry is different than mine. Your genes are turned on or off different than mine. Your diet and environment are different than mine. All these differences make your chronic pain triggers different than mine. Therefore, one medication might be great for you and not do anything for me.

I have recently uncovered a urine test which goes a long way to identifying your specific chemical triggers for chronic pain. It's called the Ethos Foundation Pain Index. I'm usually not much on doing lab testing, but this test highlights how much different each of us can be with our chemical aspect of chronic pain. So, I'm leaning toward using this

Real Life Wellness

By Dr. Bill Hemmer



test if there isn't clear path to chemically addressing someone's chronic pain in my practice.

This test assesses chemical chronic pain in four different ways. Each way can feed your chronic pain. These four ways include: Nerve Health, Neurotransmitter status, Oxidative Stress and finally Chronic Inflammation. Urine biomarkers have been identified in all

four areas. If one or more of those areas are out of range, you will never be able to control your chronic pain effectively.

It only makes sense that your nerves must be healthy to decrease your chronic pain. There are many different effective ways to increase your nerve health. These include vitamins like Calcium Lactate, B-complex vitamins, St. John's

Wort, and another herb called Skullcap. These herbs and vitamins feed your nerves what they need to build health.

The second assessment is your Neurotransmitter status. Your Neurotransmitters are the substances that allow your nerves and brain to talk to each other. If they aren't talking to each other nicely, then your chronic pain will continue. 80% of your neurotransmitters are made in your Digestive System. So, eating enough protein and supporting your Digestive System increases your Neurotransmitters and allows your brain and your nerves to talk between each other.

The third way is called Oxidative Stress. Simply put, this is how much your body is rusting from the inside. When you

have too many free radicals in your body, they react with oxygen and creates a type of rust inside of you. There are many different types of whole food supplements to decrease the amount of rust you create. But first, you must know that's a problem for you.

Finally, chronic Inflammation can also lead to chronic pain continuing inside of you. Once you assess the amount of chronic Inflammation you currently carrying around, then you can do something about it.

Next week, I will discuss the second aspect of chronic pain, which is the Mental aspect. This is by far the aspect that gets ignored the most. But you can change it quickly if you know how. I will share how next week.

Recognizing and honoring life's blessings

When was the last time you had a good day?

I mean a REALLY good day. A driving too fast down a country road with the sunroof open, the windows down and the rock and roll blasting kind of good day?

For me, this doesn't happen as often as it should, and when it does, I need to recognize and honor it.

Today has been one of those kinds of days. Started with coffee with the little brown-haired girl, who by this time next week will have put up with my nonsense and she-nigans for three decades. Zoinks! Then I squeezed in

Hook, Line and Sinker

By Tony Hooker



nine holes of golf with a really good friend who I don't get to see nearly enough. And I won, which happens about as often as Big Foot goes to Juscinda and Mel for a mani-pedi and trim. 'Squatch, if you're reading this, you should consid-

er giving them a try, because they'll get you shaped up in no time, like they do for Zeus and Noodles, my little ankle biters. Then, the aforementioned rock and roll cruise happened while taking the townie detour west of Villa Grove and with

the wind blowing through what's left of my snow-white mane and the sun shining on my face with Classic Rock blaring out of the factory speakers, I was struck with a feeling of incredible joy and thankfulness at the life I lead. I've been truly blessed in my time on this planet and sometimes it just takes a simple moment like that to be reminded of it.

You want to know something else that we should all feel blessed by? That there are people here in the river city who are willing to volunteer for so many things. Ag Days is next week, and it's getting harder and harder for Bruce

and his band of merry-makers to find helpers. I am afraid that the time will come when they decide enough is enough, and Ag Days will join the Pancake Festival and exist only in the pages of our collective Villa Grove memory.

Jackie at the library is another blessing for our little town. She and her staff were involved in some wet and wild merriment for the younger set today. The love and enthusiasm she and her team bring to those kiddoes is truly amazing.

Elsewhere, there are dedicated guys and gals getting the JFL teams and cheer squads whipped into shape for their

upcoming season. Long hours and no pay but the satisfaction of seeing their charges get better as time goes by and knowing deep in their hearts that their sacrifice has been worth it. I have to tip my hat to those guys and gals and to all youth sports coaches, because herding cats can be a cake walk compared to coaching this particular age group, and they all do it well. Especially the old guy with the grey beard yelling at the heavy weights pushing the blocking sled. He's been doing this a while even though he doesn't have a dog in the hunt, and he's one of the best.

Send letters to the editor to presseditor1@gmail.com