

Crop Watch

April showers brought plenty of much needed moisture to the Pacific Northwest and essentially washed away any talk of drought-damage to grass crops. This coming year's seed crops look good at this point. Now is the time where farmers and companies start looking at their warehouses, matching them with their production fields, looking at the cost of fuel, land, chemicals, etc. and deciding whether they want to hold tight, clear the barns, or wait another month. Inquires on new-crop prices, like annual ryegrass, cause some to think they can get more, while others take the bird in the hand.



About two weeks ago, we saw a bump in new crop annual, fueled at a grower level primarily by concerns that the cost of production is just too high for the current prices. As some of you know, this argument has seen mixed success with the creeping red fescue growers of Canada. We will see how it holds down here. The other crop that appears to have some direction off-center (although in the other direction) is Kentucky bluegrass, where there has been some new crop activity at notably lower than prompt prices. Watch for these two numbers to find closer common ground in the next 30 days.

Market Watch



Last month's newsletter reported that Spring had finally arrived. Many of you would agree that the past 4 weeks have had some days that were busy beyond measure. Some would say that nearly the whole month has been that way, while others would report a mixed bag. But all in all, the industry was very grateful for a good April. As the first workday of May starts, most of the country is feeling below normal temperatures. Hopefully, we can get 3-4 fantastic weeks out of this month, too. As far as markets go, the shipping activity from West Coast to distributors during the past month has helped keep prices pretty firm. Don't expect many changes between now and new crop unless the next 4 weeks plays out either totally dead or unbelievably active as far as West Coast new order and shipments to distributors goes.

One shipping note similar to last months: Rail has been painfully slow for some. Over-the-road trucks are expensive, but use rail at your own risk!

I've always wondered why..

Why does it seem like perennial ryegrass looks like it has been run through a shredder after it has been mowed -not always, just some- According to Dr. Karl Danneberger of Ohio State University, there's more to it than dull blades or older varieties. These two are the biggest factors, but even with newer varieties and sharp mower blades, they SOMETIMES seem to shred worse than other times. Here's what's going on: "As plant cells grow and develop so does the cell wall. The primary(outer)cell wall that develops is like paper and is easily cut. As the primary cell wall develops, interior to it develops the secondary cell wall. The secondary cell wall is comprised of micro fibers...These fibers are often the strands that appear from the shredding of the perennial ryegrass leaf blade. As the secondary cell wall forms it lignifies providing additional hardness to the cell wall...When perennial ryegrass is actively growing, the plant cells are growing and thickening the (outer) cell wall. The mower blades in this case have a higher likelihood of hitting the primary cell wall in a smooth cut. Under less active growth, the secondary cell wall has a chance to catch up with the primary cell wall. Thus, the likelihood of a blade hitting the secondary cell wall increases. In the case of perennial ryegrass this causes shredding." Read the whole article at <http://hcs.osu.edu/sportsturf/>. (Of course, to reduce your chances of unnecessary shredding, make sure you are using good varieties, like Renaissance, Nexus, Protocol 3, and Paradigm.)

