

Gaddesden Estate News April 2017

Now that spring is here farm work really speeds up, with the crops growing fast, these have to be nurtured with the application of fertiliser. Nowadays we use liquid Nitrogen applied with our Bateman sprayer. The other main nutrients are phosphate and potash which are applied with a conventional fertiliser spinner mounted behind on the tractor's three-point linkage. The solid fertiliser can be very dusty, so the tractor and the spreader have to be thoroughly hosed down with the pressure-washer when the task has been completed.

Both the sprayer and the spreader are now satellite controlled, as is the drilling of the crops. This ensures that the nutrient is applied at the correct quantity in the place where it is needed and considerably reduces the amount used.

As the weather warms, the fungal diseases and insect pests appear and so the nozzles on the sprayer have to be changed so that fungicides, weed control and insecticides can be applied, again using the GPS system.

We are getting very involved now with the management of our most important resource, the soil. It is seventeen years now since we last ploughed the fields, moving to a system called "min till" (minimum tillage) and we are now considering if we should go one step further and operate a "no till" system. Without going into technical details these systems have three main advantages: they improve soil structure, are much less expensive on wearing parts of machinery and almost eliminate the release of carbon to the atmosphere, compared with conventional cultivations.

There was a farm sale recently, just over the Hertfordshire frontier in Essex where we were able to pick up a fertiliser hopper to go on the front linkage of the John Deere 7530. Used in combination of our Horsch seed drill this will allow us to place fertiliser in the ground in the same slot as the seed we are sowing.

Gaddesden Estate Ride

Another spring job is to repair and renew the jumps on the ride and to harrow and roll the grass in the gallops. The first of our monthly summer ***Park and Ride*** events takes place on 30th April starting at Bridens Camp. This is a great way of experiencing our ride prior to purchasing an annual membership when the new ride year starts at the beginning of June. This year we have arranged for a photographer to capture the horse and rider whilst out riding on the estate. The riders are able to purchase a photo or digital download as a memento of their day. For further information or to book a place on one of our Park and Ride events visit www.equoevents.co.uk.

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