

Sydney's Parramatta Road. (Probably why today I have very little hair on my head). Note the location of the steering cylinders! Driving over anything larger than a golf ball would result in bent rods!



Finally

A tractor scene that will never be replicated! Tractor racing at Sydney's Rosehill Race Course! Yes – true! The photo shows nine tractors lined up in front of the starting gate, awaiting the starter's flag, to send them hurtling along in front of the grand stand – at the same time inevitably chewing up the sacred turf! How did it happen? This was a promotional stunt engineered by the CEO of Domino Equipment, to promote a new range of Massey Ferguson tractors. Er, were the Rosehill committee members asleep when the request was submitted? ■



IAN'S MYSTERY TRACTOR QUIZ

Question: Can you identify this rugged Australian tractor?

Clue: Take a look at the flywheel.

Degree of difficulty: Easy to a patriotic Aussie tractorman.

Answer: See page 24.



Nitrogen efficiency and a fine 'fishy' tale

NORTHERN NSW cane growers are being urged to consider using a fertiliser blend this season that protects their crop's nitrogen supply, grows more cane, and helps protect the riverine and coastal environment.

The advice comes from Trent Stainlay, agronomist with Norco Grafton, who's working with a number of growers who have successfully switched their fertiliser programs over to Entec.

Entec stabilises the fertiliser in the ammonium form for a period of time after application, which protects it from both leaching and denitrification losses. Trent estimates that this can improve nitrogen fertiliser efficiency by up to 15 per cent, giving growers the opportunity to reduce fertiliser rates or aim for higher yields.

"Cane crops have the opportunity to achieve more when the conditions are less than perfect after fertiliser application," Trent said. "Issues like unexpected rainfall or prolonged wet weather conditions can cause fertiliser losses through leaching and denitrification and that's no good for crop productivity or the environment.

"With fewer losses, more nitrogen is available to the cane for better results."

One of the first cane growers to try Entec urea fertiliser blends was John Hirst, who farms on 400 hectares near Grafton.

"Ideally, I'd like to have 12 mm of rainfall following fertiliser application, but when you get 100 mm or more only a few weeks after fertiliser is applied, that's a problem," John said.

"Cane is hungry for nitrogen and anything I can do to keep it in the soil and available to the cane for longer is an advantage."

John applies the custom-made fertiliser blends developed by Mr Stainlay, on his plant cane and ratoon crops, taking care with the placement of the fertiliser.

His cane is grown on 1.8 metre rows spacings in a dual row system on slightly raised beds. The fertiliser is applied to a depth of 75 mm with a stool splitter to the centre of beds. At least 25 to 50 mm of soil coverage is achieved with press wheels.

And then there's the fishing

The environmental benefits of using Entec are also important to the growers, particularly when it comes to healthy fisheries!

"A lot of my clients, if they're not on farm, then they're likely to be out fishing, so protecting the environment through better fertiliser practices is naturally important," he said.

According to Trent, more and more cane growers are switching to Entec blends for better protection from the unpredictability of seasonal conditions on the northern NSW coast. ■



Len Bebb, farm manager for cane grower John Hirst, at Woodford Island takes a break to talk fertiliser with Norco agronomist, Trent Stainlay.