

RIVER COUNTRY COOPERATIVE



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SPRING 2017 EDITION

Not Your Average Diesel Fuel

By LANCE PROUTY, ENERGY DIVISION MANAGER

Most companies are content offering the same diesel fuel everyone else sells. At River Country Cooperative, we believe our customers deserve—and modern diesel engines require—something better. That's why we developed our own high performance diesel fuel, RCC Gold™ High Performance Diesel Fuel.

Recently, we held a meeting for our ag customers featuring the differences between typical diesel formulations and RCC Gold High Performance Diesel Fuel, and how those differences are critical in modern diesel engines.

Modern diesel injection systems operate in a high-heat, high-pressure environment. The injectors themselves are very sensitive to fuel quality, and small deposits can easily cause problems. Modern diesels cycle fuel back to the tank, subjecting it to high pressure and thermal shock. The result, for an average diesel fuel, can be carbon-like deposits in the fuel tank as the fuel is basically "cooked." Those deposits can break loose and accumulate in the injectors.

The result—fouled injectors with a corresponding loss of power, mileage and, ultimately, injector failure. For an eight-cylinder engine, the cost of injector replacement can fall just short of \$7,000.

RCC Gold High Performance Diesel Fuel contains an additive



package formulated to stand up to the modern diesel engine, reducing deposits, keeping the injection system clean, boosting lubricity and keeping water in the fuel from reaching the engine, where it can destroy the injectors.

Today's modern engines deserve a modern diesel fuel formulated for performance and long engine life. So do you. That's why we went the extra mile to develop RCC Gold High Performance Diesel Fuel.

Safety season

Summer is the season when our trained propane service team heads out to perform free propane safety checks for our customers. On average, we'll do about 1,000 of these each year. It's true that many companies no longer perform safety checks unless requested. Why do we do it and why don't we charge a fee? For the same reason we employ highly-trained drivers and service technicians. The safety of our customers and your propane systems is our number one priority.

At River Country Cooperative, our goal is to provide propane service that goes beyond a fill and a bill. If you're a current River Country customer, thanks for your business. If you're not and you're looking for a truly professional propane supplier, consider River Country Cooperative. For answers to your questions about fuel or more information, call us at 651-451-1151. ★



New to the Team

BRET OTTE

The most recent addition to the River Country Cooperative staff, Bret hit the ground running in mid-February. Having grown up on a 450-cow dairy in the Randolph area, he admittedly had a head start.

"I do know a lot of dairy producers in the area, and I've had the chance to meet the majority of River Country Cooperative's dairy customers already," Bret says. "Getting on the farm, talking with producers and helping them enhance their operation—that's what I'm most looking forward to."

Bret earned his animal science degree, with a minor in ag business, from the University of Minnesota in 2016. He was an assistant site manager with another cooperative prior to joining River Country Cooperative.

"Knowledge is one of the biggest things we can provide to our customers," Bret says. "The dairy consumer wants to know what they're buying, where it's coming from and what's in it. Our job is to ensure that the dairy producers we serve are feeding their herds in a way that keeps the consumer happy."



Bret Otte visits with Kevin Kieffer at River City Dairy.

BOB CREAMER

Bob brings a lifetime of experience in the CHS energy system with him to his new position as location manager in South St. Paul. After starting in the CHS mailroom 37 years ago, Bob worked his way up the ladder, spending his last 20 years working in private label and branded energy sales.

"I know the energy business and the energy product line extremely well," notes Bob, who became location manager this January. "Right now, I'm putting some new processes in place, learning the location and getting organized."

As a location manager, what does "Service Beyond" mean to him? "That means ensuring that there are no hurdles that keep the people who work for us from providing the best possible customer service," he states. "I need to make sure the equipment is in good working order and work with my counterparts at our other locations to make the best use of our resources. I enjoy being part of a team."

Bob has enjoyed the first few weeks of his new position. He delights in the new challenge and looks forward to servicing the customers.



ERIN WERNER

Hastings native Erin Werner first connected with River Country Cooperative in 2014 as an intern, and she never left.

"I didn't grow up on a farm, but I spent a lot of time on my neighbor's hog farm growing up," Erin recalls. "I was going to school at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and always planned to major in business. One of my mom's friends said I should look into ag business. That turned out to be a good suggestion."

Three years of interning experience have paid off, as Erin became the operations manager at Hastings agronomy Jan. 1. Now she's awaiting her first spring.

"I've been paying attention, soaking everything in and increasing my knowledge," Erin states. "I like what I do, because there's always a variety of work in this position. Spring will be a challenge, but I'm ready for the opportunity." ★



New Feed Breaks Barriers

For the dairyman, obstacles are a fact of life, whether they are low milk prices, new regulations or changing consumer and processor preferences. At River Country Cooperative, we've developed a unique new feed product that can help overcome some of those hurdles.

More and more milk processors are no longer accepting milk from cattle treated with bST, a drug used for more than 20 years. bST increased milk production and kept cows in the milking herd as long as possible until pregnant. Dairymen also grew accustomed to the increased income generated by bST use.

Our new feed product, called corn-soy, is produced by a process that gelatinizes the starch imbedded in each kernel of corn. As a result, rumen digestibility increases dramatically from 51% to 90%. Those are impressive numbers, but what do they mean for a dairy producer?

One of the dairy operations using corn-soy is River City Dairy, owned by Wayne Kieffer and his sons, Kevin and Tim. Here's what Tim had to say about the results they've seen since beginning to feed corn-soy.

"The first thing it did was lower the feed cost, which really helped this year," he said. Due to a recent expansion, roughly 50% of the Kieffers' herd is currently heifers. "The heifers have been producing more milk," Tim continued. "The conception rate has increased about five points since Sept. 1, 2016. The cows have been in better health, and we've noticed a more consistent manure."

For these producers, corn-soy has helped lower feed costs, deliver

higher milk production and conception rates and improve herd health. If these are benefits you'd like to see on your operation, talk to Duane, Bret, David or any member of the River Country Cooperative feed department about corn-soy. ★



Alfalfa Bears Watching

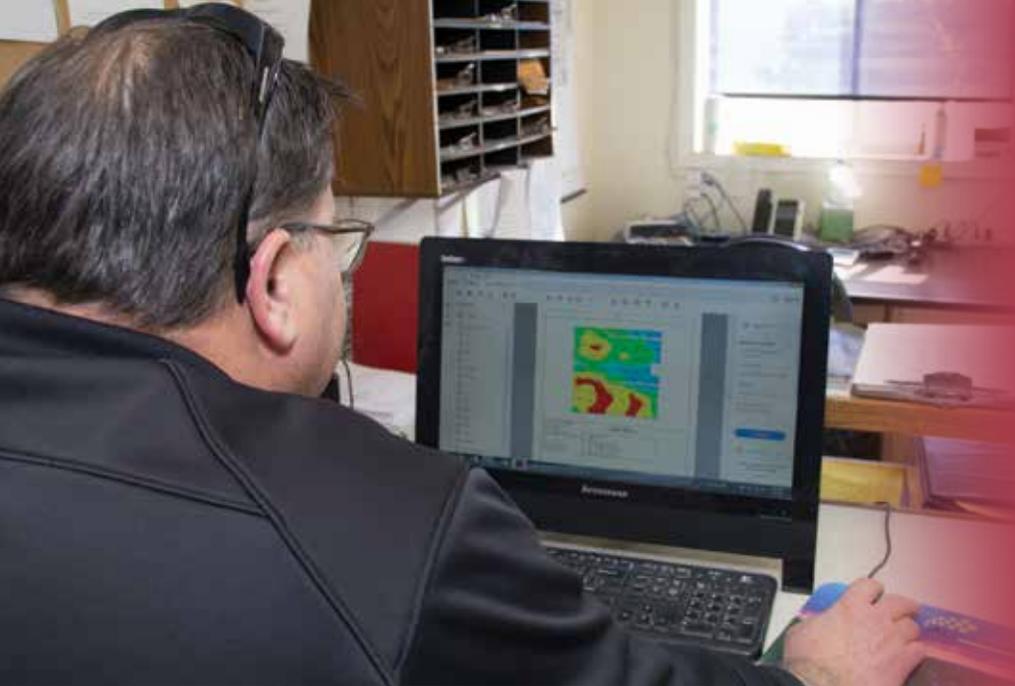
Alfalfa is the dairy producer's most valuable crop. Our unusual winter weather has the potential to create problems for some alfalfa stands in our area, according to Lowell Tangen, Montgomery location manager.

"Some of you had two inches of rain around Christmas, which turned into

standing water and ice for much of the winter," he notes. "Then we had the unseasonable February warm-up followed by much colder conditions in early March. It's a good idea to keep a close eye on your alfalfa stands as we move into spring."

Lowell adds that River Country

Cooperative agronomists will be happy to help you evaluate the condition of your alfalfa. "If you do find stand issues and expect to be short of feed, we can suggest some interim forages," he concludes. "Our feed team can calculate how to make those replacements work in your ration." ★



Take Control of Your Inputs

These days, almost everyone we work with has two primary goals—maximize yields and keep costs as low as possible. When the topic is nitrogen management, River Country Cooperative offers a service that can accomplish both.

Our Adapt-N program uses climate data, computer modeling and field-specific yield, soil and tissue-test data to predict in-season nitrogen needs. Research has made it clear that split nitrogen application tends to maximize efficient nutrient use and yield. Once we've established management zones within a field and set realistic yield goals for each zone, Adapt-N helps determine what the crop needs and when it needs it to achieve those goals in a given season.

The assumption may be that a program like this will result in higher overall nitrogen use during a growing season. It has been our experience, however, that when nitrogen is applied with more precision, rates are often reduced while yields actually improve. It's an outcome that is good for the bottom line and, with concern about nitrogen runoff growing, good for the environment too.

If a different way to approach nitrogen management makes sense to you, talk to any member of the River Country Cooperative agronomy staff about the Adapt-N program.

Moving on to P and K management, we have been fine-tuning our applications of these nutrients to maintain yields while containing costs. For those farms where we have a good baseline (fields have been grid sampled three to four times), we're using yield data to make removal recommendations. Once you've built up your soil to a certain level, replacing what each crop removes will keep yields up without mining nutrient reserves.

Interest grows in precision planting

Similar in principle to our focus on nutrient management is the expansion of our variable-rate planting program. Just as we do with nitrogen, we create management zones throughout the farm based on soil-test information, soil type and yield goals. The first step is matching the right hybrid to each management zone. The next is determining the optimum seed population for that hybrid by management zone, then creating

a variable-rate seed prescription.

Ultimately, variable-rate seeding enables the seed to express its full genetic potential based on the conditions in each area of a field. This makes the best use of your seed investment and helps maximize yield. With more and more planters capable of variable-rate planting, this may be a technology you should explore. We welcome your questions.

History lessons

It is famously said that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. We've seen the horror stories of weed resistance down south and throughout the I-states. With the new Xtend® soybeans and dicamba system approved for 2017, we need to ensure that we manage this chemistry wisely. Resistance to dicamba already exists, and we need to think long-term to prevent greater resistance problems down the road.

First and foremost—adopt the mentality that every soybean acre needs a pre-emergent herbicide. That means coming in with a Zidua® Pro, Surveil® or Sonic® application, then following up with a Dual® or Outlook®-type product. Practice the principle of using chemistries with different modes and sites of action. There's a lot of information on how to minimize resistance, but we are always available to answer questions about tank-mix combinations and control approaches.

Handling the new dicamba-system products carefully is critical, due to the presence of susceptible crops in nearby fields and the probationary period placed on the system by the EPA. Keep excellent field records of where your dicamba-tolerant varieties are planted this year, and stay in close contact with your agronomist and applicator.

Agriculture is constantly changing and so are we. We know your needs evolve, so if there is a service you'd like us to provide, don't be afraid to ask. We'd love to see if we can make it work. Precision agriculture continues to present all of us with new possibilities, and we'll look at just about anything that can benefit your operation.

Just a final reminder as planting season nears—we do make bulk seed deliveries to the farm. ★

Community Commitment

When single-stream recycling became available to businesses in the Twin Cities area, Olaf Johnson, director of the River Country Cooperative C-Stores, saw an opportunity to simultaneously serve his customers and improve the environment. He applied for grants to install recycling containers by the fuel islands and building entrances at eight SuperAmerica® stores.

“Statistics tell us that one in five meals is now eaten in a car,” Olaf points out. “As members of the communities we serve, we see it as our responsibility to provide recycling for the plastic bottles, cans and paper that our customers need to dispose of when they visit our stores.”

Does it make a difference? The numbers would say yes. At the New Prague store alone, almost 14 tons of material will be recycled annually. And it turns out that going beyond the expected to serve customers, communities and the environment is also good business. “The grant paid for all of our containers, and we’re saving roughly \$1,800 a year on our waste bill in New Prague.”

Convenient recycling—one great example of service that goes beyond a cup of coffee or gallon of gas. ★



Instant Information for Informed Decisions

In today’s digital world, the quick decisions necessary to take advantage of a volatile grain market require current information. At River Country Cooperative, we’ve taken steps to make that information available to you.

With the introduction of our new website, we have two options available that will help you stay on top of the markets. We can send you market alerts during the day by text or email. Just let us know if you prefer local or terminal bids. In the future, we plan to offer options through our site as well, and will continue to expand the site to make it more useful to you.

Also, if you have a target price in mind, let us enter it into our electronic offer system so you don’t miss your price objective. Take advantage of this option during busy times of the year or when you will be out of town or in the field and away

from your normal market information sources.

We continue to offer a variety of marketing options, including hedge-to-arrive and basis-only contracts. We have trucks available for on-farm pickup and flexible delivery locations if you prefer to haul your own grain. Don’t forget about our traditional grain handling services—receiving, drying and storage programs are always available to help you handle your crop.

We also offer grain bank programs to hold your corn and beans for use in your feed rations. Talk to the feed department about our unique extruding technology, which can turn your farm-grown grains into highly digestible feed for your livestock. You can read about how this feed has worked on one area dairy farm on page 3. ★

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Defining “Service Beyond”

By JOHN DUCHSCHERER, GENERAL MANAGER/CEO

Each year, the board of directors and management team take time to assess what River Country Cooperative has accomplished in the previous year and how best to address the needs of our patrons in the year ahead. From those discussions, a theme emerged for 2017—“Service Beyond.” You’ll see it featured prominently on our retooled website.

As a company, serving our customers is certainly our focus and our promise. At the same time, we realize we’re only as good as our ability to deliver on that promise. I’d like to explain in more practical detail how we see Service Beyond and how we expect it to benefit you.

On a nuts-and-bolts level, Service Beyond means offering products and services in energy, agronomy and feed that anticipate the needs and exceed the expectations of our customers. You’ll read about some of those offerings—RCC Gold Premium

Diesel Fuel, the Adapt-N program and corn-soy feed—elsewhere in this newsletter.

More than anything else, however, Service Beyond represents an attitude—a willingness to go well beyond the expected in the field, the jobsite and the community. We work to anticipate the future and find solutions to issues before they become problems.

Our most important priority is always your success. So whether it’s a program that helps our agronomists precisely match the right seed to the right acre, the ability to manage risk by contracting your inputs from fuel and propane to fertilizer and seed, energy delivered with a focus on your safety or feed products created to meet changing consumer preferences, count on us to deliver Service Beyond. ★

