7190 Perth Road 147
Atwood, Ontario
N0G 1B0
519-356-2706

**Grower Meeting:** Atwood Farm Supplies will be hosting a Grower Information Meeting at the Atwood Community Centre on February 20th. We had a great turnout last year and are hoping for the same with our diverse line-up of speakers.

- Martin Kiefer -Agrico Canada– Fertilizer Markets & What are the Influences
- Tracey Baute -OMAFA– Managing Corn Rootworm
- Scott Kraker -LAC– Influences on Commodity Prices & What to Watch for in 2026
- Christine Brown - OMAFA– Soil Health & How we can Improve it
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The meeting will run from 9:15 am – 1:45 pm with a catered lunch at noon. Please register by February 11th by calling our office at 519-356-2706 to let us know if you are interested in attending.

**Employment Opportunities:** Atwood Farm Supplies has some seasonal positions available for the 2026 season. Please reach out if you know someone who would make an excellent addition to our team. Details for the job positions can be found on our website at atwoodfarmsupplies.com under 'Careers.'

- DZ Drivers (seasonal)
- Professional Applicator (seasonal)

**Continued Learning:** Some of our employees were able to attend the Southwest Ag Conference at the beginning of January and saw some great sessions. Here are some highlights:

- **Staying Ahead of Disease:** Disease pressure can vary from year to year, making it important to understand what type of management practices can be done to help mitigate risk. For a plant to become infected, three factors must be present: a susceptible host, presence of a pathogen, and favorable environmental conditions. If one of these factors is missing, the likelihood of infection is reduced. To prepare for the upcoming growing season, some effective disease management strategies include:
    - Hybrid Selection – picking a hybrid that has an appropriate tolerance or resistance to the disease of concern
    - Plant Density – managing plant populations to reduce interaction and the creation of microclimates
    - Rotation – can be critical for certain disease cycles like corn rootworm
    - Fungicide Applications – can adding additional crop protection from different diseases

It is important to remember that not every season will have high disease pressure and is often driven greatly by weather conditions. Therefore, if you are worried about infection, it is key knowing what to look for in season and to utilize as many disease management strategies as possible to try and reduce the risk for infection.

- **King Korn:** In this talk, Dr Fred Below gave some of his thoughts and strategies for producing high yielding corn. He began the talk by asking a simple question: "What management factor that the grower controls has the biggest impact on yields?" The answer is fertility, specifically the management of 6 key nutrients including nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, sulfur, zinc and boron.

  He talked about the importance of N in corn. During the initial growing stages of corn (VE-V6), relatively little N is needed, however, adequate availability is important to maximize yield potential. For this reason, he recommended that you put about ½ of your total N down upfront. The peak uptake of N comes later between the V10-R1 stages where the plant can use up to 7-8 lbs of N per acre, per day for high yielding corn. This is the most important time where you do not want N to be limited. Therefore, he recommends ensuring you apply adequate N, potentially in the form of sidedress, for top end yields. Since N moves vertically in the soil rather than horizontally, placement is essential. Banding fertilizer is typically a better option than broadcasting as it places the nutrients closer to the plant's root zone, since corn roots move vertically as well and usually only span 6-8 inches horizontally. Proper placement ensures greater nutrient access during peak uptake periods and improves overall N use efficiency.

  Other than fertility, hybrid selection and plant population also play a key role. Different hybrids have unique root architectures in terms of their root surface area, angle and mass which makes it important to match your fertility management with the hybrids you are growing. Planting population is also a key to yield, as yield is a product of plants per acre, kernels per plant, and weight per kernel. You need to increase at least 1 of these factors to increase yields, with plants per acre being the easiest to control. However, as plant populations increase, root size decreases which impacts fertilizer placement. As a result, some growers may choose to grow corn on narrower rows to increase their planting populations, improving yield potential.

  Overall, high yielding corn systems will rely on better nutrient placement, improved hybrid selection, and optimizing the number of plants per acre to maximize yield potential.

Archie Wilson,
CCA-ON

Kyle Coghlin,
CCA-ON