

St. Mary's County Farm News

Winter, 2009



Winter is the time of promise because there is so little to do - or because you can now and then permit yourself the luxury of thinking so. Stanley Crawford

The numbers are just in. The “I” is dotted and the “T” is crossed. The bean counters are finished counting the beans and every other agricultural product as well. I am sure everyone remembers filling out the survey forms and answering the many questions for the 2007 Agricultural Census. So--after all the effort on your part and that of the National Agricultural Statistics Service, we have the first glimpse into the state of agriculture in Maryland. The last comprehensive census was taken in 2002. Here are the 2007 Census results for St. Mary's County:



CALENDAR OF EVENTS WINTER 2009

February 9, 2009 -- Optional Training Review Session for Private Pesticide Applicator Exam

February 11, 2009 - S. MD Vegetable & Fruit Conference

February 18, 2009 – Bay Area Fruit School

February 21, 2009 – Poultry Party Short Course Charles County Extension Office

February 23, 2009 – Private Pesticide Applicator Exam

March 10, 2009 – Greenhouse Production Conference

March 16, 2009– Tobacco Production Update

**March 23, 2009 – Pesticide Recertification & Nutrient Voucher Trainings
Charlotte Hall Library**

The total number of farms actually increased 8% to 621 in 2007 from 577 in 2002. This represents an increase of 1% in the amount of land in farms to 68,648 acres. Average farm size in St. Mary's did decrease to an average size of 111 acres. The most

marked indicator in the report is a reported **increase in the annual market value of production by 31% to \$15,947,000 from 2002 level of \$12,196,000.**

That's right! Amidst all of the negativity and pessimism regarding the farm industry, farmers in St. Mary's county stepped up to the plate and hit a home run. Farm numbers increased by 8%, market value increased by 31% and average farm income increased 21% to \$25,680 per farm. What a pleasant surprise. In this time of economic downturn, the importance of natural resource based industries such as forestry, agriculture and the like play an ever important role. Not only do they produce products of tangible value, they produce products that are absolutely necessary for our countries survival--feed, food and fiber. In terms of crops and livestock, the top six commodities produced in St. Mary's are: 1) Grain and oilseeds--\$4,475,000; 2) Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod--\$3,163,000; 3) Vegetables--\$2,411,000; 4) Cattle and calves--\$2,343,000; 5) Milk and other dairy--\$1,357,000; and 6) Tobacco--\$906,000.

So take a moment, step back and smile. Agriculture is alive and growing. In fact it is doing better than most had ever expected.

Ben

February 11, 2009: Southern Maryland Vegetable & Fruit Conference

Maryland Cooperative Extension is hosting the **2009 Southern Maryland Vegetable & Fruit Production Meeting on February 11, 2009**, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at A-Maze-N-Place Banquet Hall in Clements, Maryland.

Vegetable growers will find a buffet of learning opportunities to choose from including: High Tunnel Chili and Low-Tunnel Transplanted

Sweet Corn Production; Vegetable Weed Control and Herbicide Update; Blueberry Establishment; Catnip



Production; Disease Control Tactics and Fungicide Updates; Cover Crops; Vegetable Pest Management and IPM Updates; Continuity of Operations Planning; Nitrogen Reductions Using Precision Applications of N During the Season and Using Seaweed as a Growth Enhancement Factor in Watermelon Production.

Don't miss this opportunity to meet with other growers and industry sponsors as you get ready for the 2009 growing season. Private Pesticide Applicator Recertification credit and Nutrient Voucher credit is awarded for all day attendance at this meeting.

For information and registration, contact your location extension office or 301-475-4484. There is a \$15 registration fee, which includes all program materials, a 2009 EB-236 Vegetable Production Guideline Handbook and a hot lunch.

**February 9 and 23, 2009:
Private Pesticide Applicator Optional
Class and Exam**

***Need a Private Applicator Pesticide License?
Did you miss the last class or need to take the
test again?***

If so, you will want to attend the Private Pesticide Applicator Certification Training and Examination sessions being held in St. Mary's County. A Private Applicator Pesticide exam review class (optional) will be conducted at the Charlotte Hall Library on February 9th at 6:30 p.m. The Private Pesticide Applicator exam will be given at the Charlotte Hall Library on February 23rd at 6:30 p.m. Please call the office at 301-475-4484 to request a copy of study materials and to register.



**February 18, 2009:
Bay Area Fruit School**



Attention all fruit growers! Plan to attend the Bay Area Fruit School on February 18, 2009 at the WYE Research and Education Center in Queenstown, Maryland from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. This all day meeting will provide Private Pesticide Applicator Recertification Credit. For full meeting details and registration call Debbie Dant, WYE REC at 410-827-8056, Ext. 115.

**February 21:
It's for the Birds... Attend the "Poultry Party" Short Course**



Raising a home poultry flock can be a rewarding small business, or a hobby that the whole family can enjoy. But, a healthy, productive flock depends on good management practices and disease prevention. Attend the "Poultry Party" Short Course, sponsored by University of Maryland Cooperative Extension, and learn about taking care of your birds the right way. Topics include basic bird management, poultry nutrition, home processing, regulations, diseases and much more.

"Poultry Party" Short Course
Saturday, February 21, 2009
Charles County Extension Office
9375 Chesapeake Street, Suite #119
LaPlata, MD
9:00 am – 12:30 pm

In addition to presentations from the experts, door prizes, free publications, and University Poultry specialists will be available to answer

your poultry questions. And, an **Advanced Course** will be offered on May 2, 2009 at another location.



The short course is free, but seating is limited, so register now. For further information and registration call your local Cooperative Extension Office or (301) 934-5403 or (301) 753-8195.

**February 27, 2009
March 3, 2009
Woods in Your Backyard**

The SMC Master Gardeners will be offering **"The Woods in Your Backyard"**- an

informative educational opportunity ideal for homeowners with 1-10



acres of land. This two session class will meet on February 27 and March 3, 2009 from 5-8 p.m. at the Charlotte Hall Library meeting room. Participants will learn simple stewardship practices that will enhance or create natural areas and woodlands on lots so that recreation, aesthetics, wildlife and water quality can be improved and enjoyed.

Pre-registration is required and a fee of \$25 per person or \$30 per couple is requested. A workbook is included. Registration deadline is February 16, 2009.

Please contact the St. Mary's Extension Office at 301-475-4484 to register for this class.

**February 27, 2009
Soil Conservation District Cooperators
Dinner**

The St. Mary's Soil Conservation District is hosting their annual Cooperators Dinner on February 17th at the Crystal Room in Callaway. Social Hour will be 6 – 7 p.m. followed by dinner at 7 p.m. Reservations are required. Fee: \$20.00 per person. Reservation deadline is Friday, February 20, 2009. More information and a reservation form is available on the District website - www.stmarysscd.com. Call 301-475-8402 ext. 3 with any questions.



A greenhouse production workshop, sponsored by MCE and Maryland Greenhouse Growers Association will be held March 10, 2009, at the farm of Joe and Mary Wood in Mechanicsville, Maryland. This will be a busy day with excellent speakers throughout. Agenda items include:

- Production Costs of Bedding Plants in a Greenhouse--Ben Beale
- Troubleshooting the Really Tough Spring Bedding Plants in a Greenhouse--Rick Yates, Griffin Greenhouse & Nursery Supply Company
- Cutting Off the Really Big Losses from Diseases in Greenhouses--Karen Rane, Director of Plant Diagnostic Clinic, University of Maryland
- Keeping the Nasty Thrips, Aphids, Whiteflies, and Mites from Bringing Down the House--Stanton Gill, Extension Specialist, University of Maryland

- Alternatives to Plastic Pots -What is Happening with Wheat Sugarcane, Corn-Based Pots For Greenhouse Use---Ginny Rosenkranz, Extension Educator
- What Does the Customer Want? Deer Resistant & Drought Tolerant Plants & Other Specialty Needs--Ginny Rosenkranz, Extension Educator
- Growing Spring Bedding Plants at Cooler Temperatures and Still Meeting the Spring Schedule--Jack Ford, Maryland Plant & Supply Company
- What Can Go Right and Wrong with Bedding Plants & Correcting the Problems Before They Cost You Money---John Speaker, Speaker's Garden
- What You Should Know About Your Water and Substrate & Monitoring & Testing Soil--Andrew Ristvey, Regional Commercial Horticulture Extension Specialist

Ticket Fee: \$20 per person by March 3, 2009 -- After March 3, 2009: \$25 per person (Lunch Not Guaranteed)

**Please make check payable to:
University of Maryland**

Register by calling the St. Mary's Extension Office by March 3, 2009, to ensure space and lunch availability.

**March 16, 2009:
Tobacco Production Update**

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the winter *Tobacco Production Update*.

Topics will include:

- Burley variety study
- Sucker control study
- New insect and fungicide products
- Burley Production recommendations



The update will be held on Monday, March 16, 2009, from 7-9 p.m. in the Charlotte Hall Library.

Every mile is two in winter.

George Herbert

March 23, 2009:

**Nutrient Voucher
5 p.m. to 7 p.m.**

**Pesticide Recertification
7 p.m. to 9 p.m.**

On March 23, 2009 a Pesticide Recertification Training class will be held at the Charlotte Hall Library and applicators are signing up. The Recertification class will be held from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Please call to register at 301-475-4484.

St. Mary's Extension Office will also host Nutrient Voucher Training the same evening from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. This class will provide the required credits for Nutrient Voucher holders. If your Nutrient Voucher expires this spring, you may consider attending this update class.



**June 26-28, 2009
Fifth Annual SMILE Livestock Expo**

The 2009 SMILE Livestock Show for youth will take place on June 26 through June 28, 2009, at the St. Mary's County Fairgrounds in Leonardtown, Maryland.

Livestock, horse and dog owners ages 8 – 21 years are invited to participate in the popular annual two-day competition, which includes classes for traditional livestock breeds of sheep, beef, dairy cow, swine and goats, a dog show, and an innovative horse show featuring video review of classes with the judge. Also planned are fun, hands-on activities during the expo that are designed to encourage teamwork and mentoring skills.



SMILE is the result of the collaborative efforts of dedicated volunteers and is sponsored by the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC). The event provides an opportunity for youth in the Southern Maryland region to participate in a local competition and to increase awareness of the region's agricultural heritage.

Registration packets for all species will be available in May. For registration forms, sponsorship opportunities and information on show days and times, rules, and breed class requirements visit www.somarylandsogood.com/events or call Susan McQuilkin at SMADC on 301-274-1922.

**Many Crop Updates and
Conference Presentations
Now Online**



New information technology has made access to the latest information much easier. Given the abundance of information, it has become even more critical to be able to decipher what information is accurate, reliable and applicable to your situation. In the last few years, many of the major crop production conferences have

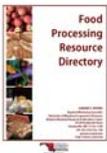
recorded their presentations and posted them on the web for your viewing. I find these presentations to be very beneficial, not only to recheck something I thought I heard, but to also actually listen to a presentation that I couldn't attend. I encourage producers to check out the below links to view current presentations on crop production.

The Mid-Atlantic Crop Production School is held every year in November. This school updates crop professionals on soil and water, nutrient management, crop management and pest management issues. I consider this school the premiere production conference for the East Coast. The presentations are available with audio at:

<http://midatlanticcropmanagementschool.pbwiki.com/FrontPage#pbview>

Ohio State University provides access to the latest presentations from the 2009 OSU/OSBA Crop Production Conference and the OSU Advance Agronomy School. They can be found at: <http://agcrops.osu.edu/weeds/>, in the Presentations section.

Meat Producers Have Three New Marketing Resources - By: Ginger Myers



Profitably marketing farm-raised meat requires having a high quality, in-demand product and a good understanding of the regulations and marketing outlets that govern those sales. Producers raising, processing and direct marketing their farm-raised meats now have a trio of new resources that provide information on processing regulations, direct marketing from the farm, and resources for value-added or processed food products.

Written by Ginger S. Myers, Regional Marketing Specialist, University of Maryland Extension, these publications include:

- A Producer's Guide to Meat and Poultry Processing Regulations in Maryland. This 13-page guide is intended to assist farmers, growers, and their advisors in understanding the regulations affecting the processing and marketing of meat and poultry products in Maryland. This guide also containing information on labeling, marketing, risk management, and regulatory exemptions.
- Direct Marketing Farm-Raised Meats in Maryland is a brief outline how Maryland farmers who raise meat, beef, pork, lamb, chevon, and veal, on their farms can obtain a State license to sell their USDA processed frozen products and frozen cuts directly to the public from their farms.
- Food Processor's Resource Directory is a 43-page publication covering a wide range of food processing resources from analysis labs to website designs. A sample of the categories covered include HACCP Audits, Processing Authorities, packaging supplies, ingredients, and a wide range of service providers catering to the small and specialty foods processing industry. This publication is a valuable resource for any small food processing business.

These publications are available free of charge at agmarketing.umd.edu. Printed copies of A Producer's Guide to Meat and Poultry Processing Regulations in Maryland and Food Processor's Resource Directory are available for \$3 each. Checks should be made payable to the University of Maryland and mailed to WMREC,

Attn: Ginger S. Myers, 18330 Keedysville Road,
Keedysville, MD 21756.

For more information contact Ginger Myers at
gsmyers@umd.edu or Susan Barnes at 301-432-
2767.

Key Steps in Corn Hybrid Selection in 2009

Dr. Peter R. Thomison Professor—OSU Extension State Corn Specialist The Ohio State University
Email: thomison.1@osu.edu

One of the most important management decisions a corn grower makes each year is the selection of corn hybrids for spring planting. During the past 40 to 50 years, there has been continuous improvement in the genetics of corn hybrids which has contributed to steady increases in grain yield potential ranging from 0.7 to 2.6 percent per year. To stay competitive, growers must introduce new hybrids to their acreage on a regular basis.

Growers should choose hybrids best suited to their farm operation. Corn acreage, previous crop, soil type, tillage practices, desired harvest moisture, and pest problems determine needs for such traits as drydown, insect and disease resistance, early plant vigor, plant height, etc. End uses of corn should also be considered - is corn to be used for grain or silage? Is it to be sold directly to the elevator as shelled grain or used on the farm? Are there premiums available at nearby elevators or from end users for identity-preserved (IP) specialty corns such as food grade or non-GMO corn? Capacity to harvest, dry and store grain also needs consideration. The following are some steps to follow in choosing hybrids that are best suited to various production systems.

STEP 1.

Select hybrids with maturity ratings appropriate for your geographic area or circumstances. Corn for grain should reach physiological maturity or "black layer" (maximum kernel dry weight) one to two weeks before the first killing frost in the fall. Use days-to-maturity and growing degree day (GDD) ratings along with harvest grain moisture data from performance trials to determine differences in hybrid maturity. Because fossil fuel prices have risen significantly, corn producers should give careful attention to moisture differences between hybrids when evaluating grain yield. Grain drying represents a major portion of the energy requirement for corn production. It may be preferable to select short to mid season hybrids than full season hybrids for grain, especially if planting is delayed until late May. Results of the 2008 Ohio Corn Performance Test results indicate that the average yields of hybrids entries in the early maturity test were similar to those in the late maturity test but that the average grain moisture of hybrid entries in the early test was 1.5 to 3.5 percentage points lower than those in the full season test.

STEP 2.

Choose hybrids that have produced consistently high yields across a number of locations. The 2008 Ohio Corn Performance Test indicates that hybrids of similar maturity varied in yield potential by as much as 60 bu/acre depending on test site. Choosing a hybrid simply because it's a "triple stack" or "quad stack" or possesses appealing cosmetic traits, like big "flex" ears, will not ensure high yields; instead, look for yield consistency across environments. Hybrids will perform differently, based on region, soils and environmental conditions, and growers should not rely solely on one hybrid characteristic or transgenic traits to make their product selection. Just as was the case for conventional (non-traited) hybrids in the past, there is considerable variation

in yield potential for hybrids with transgenic traits. The 2008 Ohio Corn Performance Tests revealed that stacked trait hybrids not only produced the highest grain yields in the trials but also the lowest. Several non-transgenic hybrids suitable for non-GMO grain production produced yields that were not significantly different from the highest yielding triple/quad stack entries.

When planting fields where corn rootworm (RW) and European corn borer (ECB) are likely to be problems (in the case of RW - continuous corn, presence of the rootworm variant, and in the case of ECB - very late plantings), Bt traits offer outstanding protection and may mitigate the impact of other stress conditions.

STEP 3.

Plant hybrids with good standability to minimize stalk lodging. This is particularly important in areas where stalk rots are perennial problems, or where field drying is anticipated. In 2008, severe lodging was present in many corn fields in western Ohio due in large part to the high winds associated with hurricane Ike on Sept. 14. However, severe water stress in July and August in parts of Ohio may have also predisposed the crop to stalk rots. Major differences in lodging were evident among hybrid entries in the 2008 Corn Performance Test with percentage plant lodging ranging from less than 5 percent to over 90 percent at certain test sites. If a grower has his own drying facilities and is prepared to harvest at relatively high moisture levels (>25 percent), then standability and fast drydown rates may be somewhat less critical as selection criteria. There are some hybrids that have outstanding yield potential but are more prone to lodging problems under certain environmental conditions after they reach harvest maturity. Traits associated with improved hybrid standability include resistance to stalk rot and leaf blights, genetic stalk strength (a thick stalk rind), short plant height and ear placement, and high "staygreen" potential. Staygreen refers to a hybrid's potential to stay healthy late into the growing season, after reaching maturity, and should not be confused with late maturity. European corn borer (ECB) Bt resistance minimizes ECB stalk injury that can promote stalk rot in corn. However, the Bt trait is not a substitute for good stalk quality and tolerance to stalk rots. Bt rootworm resistance can significantly limit root lodging caused by western and northern corn rootworm and thereby minimize yield losses where rootworm pressure is heavy.

STEP 4.

Select hybrids with resistance and/or tolerance to stalk rots, foliar diseases, and ear rots. Consult the Ohio Field Crops Diseases web page online at <http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/ohiofieldcropdisease/> for the most common disease problems of corn in Ohio. In recent years, several diseases have adversely affected the corn crop - including northern corn leaf blight, Stewart's bacterial leaf blight, and diplodia ear rot. Corn growers should obtain information from their seed dealer on hybrid reactions to specific diseases that have caused problems or that have occurred locally.

STEP 5.

Never purchase a hybrid without consulting performance data. Results of state, company, and county replicated hybrid performance trials should be reviewed before purchasing hybrids. Because weather conditions are unpredictable, the most reliable way to select superior hybrids is to consider performance during the last year and the previous year over as wide a range of locations and climatic conditions as possible. However, multi-year data for hybrids is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain. In the 2008 Ohio Corn Performance Test only 14 percent of the hybrid entries had been entered in the test for two years and only 6 percent of the entries for three years. Therefore, if limited to single year data, it's important to try to evaluate a hybrid's performance across a range of different growing conditions, for example compare the hybrid's performance at test sites where rainfall was adequate with those where rainfall was limited and stress conditions may have occurred. To assess a hybrid's yield in 2008 averaged across multiple Ohio test sites look at the "Combined regional summary of hybrid performance" tables. These tables and other results for the 2008 Ohio Corn Performance Trial are available online at <http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/corntrials/> and <http://agcrops.osu.edu/~perf/>. Since assessment of a hybrid performance is enhanced by using a number of

test sites, corn growers farming along our borders with neighboring states should check results of the Purdue, Kentucky, Michigan State, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia Corn Test results. The University Crop Testing Alliance web site (<http://www.agry.purdue.edu/pcpp/UCTA/index>).

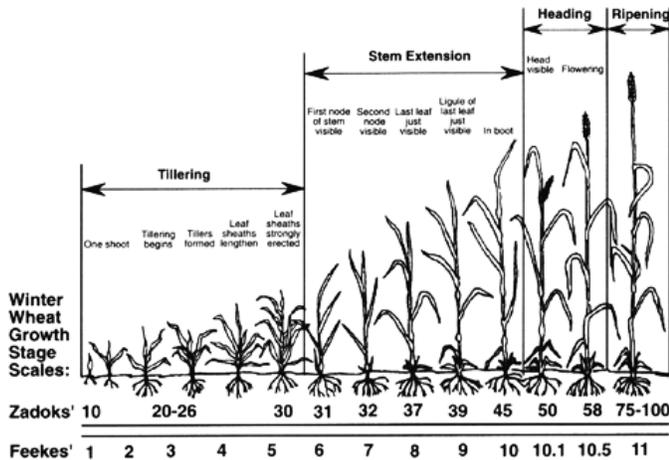
Wheat Nitrogen Management in 2009

Dr. Wade Thomason, Extension Specialist – Grain Crops,
 Virginia Tech, Email: wthomaso@vt.edu
 &
Dr. Mark Alley, W. G. Wysor Professor of Agriculture,
 Virginia Tech, Email: malley@vt.edu

The high price of nitrogen (N) fertilizer at the time of wheat planting resulted in many farmers choosing to forego preplant N. However, insufficient N availability to wheat plants results in low yields and significantly reduced profits compared to a properly fertilized crop.

A harvest objective with current wheat varieties grown in the mid-Atlantic should be 60-70 heads/sq. ft. with at least 30 kernels/head.

Figure 1. Zadoks scale for wheat development.



This means that the wheat plant must develop near 100 tillers by the end of vegetative growth to reach optimum yields (see Figure 1).

Nitrogen fertilizer rate and timing are the major tools available after planting to manipulate wheat to produce higher yields per acre. Nitrogen affects heads/sq. ft., seeds/head, and kernel size. Typically, the first in-season N application occurs at Zadoks growth stage (GS) 25 and is based on wheat tiller density (Figure 1). The purpose of the first N application in a split is to stimulate formation of additional tillers when such stimulation is necessary to achieve optimum tiller density. The main nutritional needs of the crop will be supplied by the second application in the split.

To measure tiller density,

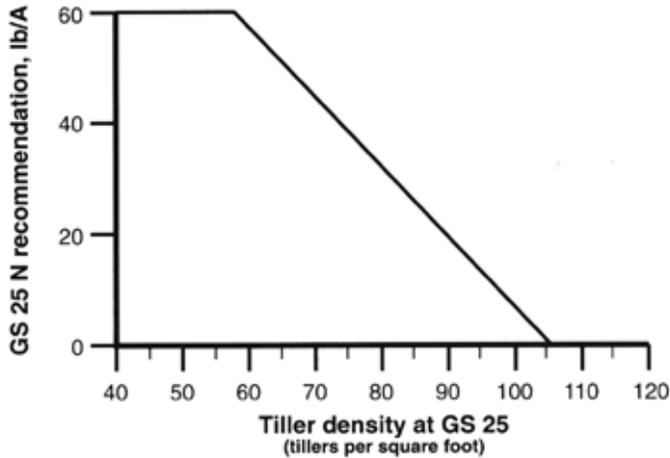
1. cut a dowel rod to a 3-foot length
2. lay the dowel down next to an average-looking row and count all tillers with three or more leaves that are found in the 3-foot length; record this number
3. repeat this count in at least five other locations that are well-spaced around the field
4. average all tiller counts from the field
5. calculate tiller density (in tillers per square foot) with the following equation:

$$\text{tiller density} = \frac{\text{average tiller count} \times 4}{\text{row width (in inches)}}$$

Figure 2 shows the recommended N rate in response to tiller density at GS 25. If tiller numbers are low, 50/sq. ft. or less, N fertilization at this time is critical for the crop to develop any reasonable yield potential. Fields with low tiller counts should be fertilized before fields with more tillers, if possible. If tiller numbers are high, 100/sq. ft. or more, no N application is needed at this time. When winter rainfall/precipitation is above average and may have lowered the level of residual soil N, you

should consider adjusting the recommendation upward.

Figure 2. Recommended GS 25 N rate based on tiller density.



The appropriate rate for the second application (GS 30) is best determined by tissue N content. See <http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/grains/424-026/424-026.html> for more information.

Total spring N applications (growth stage 25 plus growth stage 30) should not exceed a total of 120 lbs. N/acre in order to avoid problems with lodging and yield loss. For example, if 40 lbs. N/acre was applied at growth stage 25, and tissue test results give a recommendation of 100 lbs. N/acre at growth stage 30, only 80 lbs. N/acre should be applied at growth stage 30. A dry summer combined with overgrazing has significantly reduced pasture growth and vigor in many Mid-Atlantic States. The good news is that drought stressed pastures often look worse

On the Lighter Side:

Plant those taters when??



A farmer gets sent to jail, and his wife is trying to hold the farm together until her husband can get out. She's not, however, very good at farm work, so she writes a letter to him in jail: "Dear sweetheart, I want to plant the potatoes. When is the best time to do it?"

The farmer writes back: "Honey, don't go near that field. That's where all my guns are buried."

But, because he is in jail, all of the farmer's mail is censored. So when the sheriff and his deputies read this, they all run out to the farm and dig up the entire potato field looking for guns. After two full days of digging, they don't find one single weapon.

The farmer then writes to his wife: "Honey, now is when you should plant the potatoes."



*Away in a meadow all covered with snow
The little old groundhog looks for his shadow*

*The clouds in the sky determine our fate
If winter will leave us all early or late.*

Don Halley

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