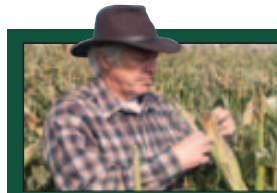


Dakota

FARMER



Corn pruning proposition
Page 36

Farmer gets marriage advice Page 60

Kesslers win Limousin award Page 62

Rainy spring

By LON TONNESON

Key Points

- Continued wet and cool weather expected for spring.
- La Niña pattern is affecting weather outlook.
- Weak La Niña may fade by summer.

SPRING is likely to be cool and wet, and the summer is likely to be mild and wet over much of North Dakota, especially eastern North Dakota, says Adnan Akyuz, North Dakota state climatologist.

A weak La Niña — below-normal surface temperatures in the Pacific around the equator — has returned, he says.

Parts of western North Dakota could again turn dry, even though winter snows have erased nearly all of the official drought designations.

South Dakota State Climatologist Dennis Todey says he expects a similar cool and wet pattern in the spring in South Dakota.

"I have been warning people in northeastern South Dakota about this setup because of the fall rain, the current snowpack and potential for any additional precipitation," Todey says. "From about Brookings south, I'm less concerned because soils were a little drier overall, and there is not the snowpack anymore. There is more room to handle late-winter and spring precipitation [in that area]."

Todey expects La Niña to fade by summer.

For updates and quick links to the North Dakota and South Dakota state climate Web sites, go to www.DakotaFarmer.com. Check the "Local News" and the "Web Exclusives" sections.

DIG FOR DOLLARS

RON Volk gets down and dirty in his effort to better manage high-priced fertilizer as he collects a soil sample from barley stubble in north-central North Dakota. Volk will use the soil sample in a technology new to the Dakotas that measures not only soil nutrients, but also how much mineralization will likely take place in the soil during the growing season.

Developed at the University of Saskatchewan, the Plant Root Simulator Nutrient Forecaster is more dynamic than a soil test, Volk says. Patented probes

"see what roots see." The Forecaster software uses tests of different crops, fertilizer prices, grain prices, weather conditions and other factors to come up with fertilizer recommendations that optimize yield and minimize risk.

"It's given me a road map to managing my fields more intensively," says Volk, who has used the tool for three years on his own farm and offers it to

other farmers through his consulting service, Western Ag Labs of North Dakota. The PRS Nutrient Forecaster has been used to make fertilizer recommendations on nearly 2 million acres in Canada. Volk has used it on 40,000 acres in North Dakota. "It's not snake oil," he says.

■ Read more on Page 4.



Nominate Master Farmer

TELL the world about someone you think is a successful farmer or rancher. Nominate him or her for the Master Farmer award.

Dakota Farmer will recognize two farmers or ranchers from South Dakota and two from North Dakota in 2009 in a revival of an award that dates back to 1925.

The Farmer magazine started the program in the Dakotas to "reflect due credit on those individuals whose achievements as farmers and rural citizens have been worthy of particular note."

That's the main purpose of the program today, too.

Anyone can nominate a person or couple for the award. The deadline for nominations is March 31.

See Page 6 of this issue for more information and a nomination form.

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