



Layman's Language



As spring emerges
through the frost...



The winter season is another busy time for us, albeit somewhat slower. On any given weekday we normally have two semi trucks rolling - bringing in liquid fertilizer and lime and hauling out stored grain. We utilize the shop time to go over each piece of equipment to make repairs and ensure it is ready to hit the ground running when good weather breaks in the spring. We have also been receiving shipments of seed and chemistry, as well as delivering bulk seed beans for KG Agri Products Inc. (Honda beans) and Ebberts Field Seeds Inc, who Matt and Genny are now dealers for. As final preparations for the spring season are completed, we give thanks for our blessings and hope for good weather this season!

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Sessions

TEPAP. AAPEX. MFAC. Taking advantage of opportunities to enhance our education is important to us. We are continuously searching out experiences which allow us to further educate ourselves, improve our business model and practices, and network with fellow farmers and agricultural professionals across the United States, and beyond. Over the last 10 years, we have done just that.

Jan attended the first session of The Executive Program for Agricultural Producers (TEPAP), hosted by Texas A&M University, in 2011 and Cindy joined him for the second session in 2012. The Association of Agricultural Production EXecutives (AAPEX) is the alumni group of TEPAP and meets annually for informative seminars. The destination is usually somewhere warm, alternating between the East Coast and West Coast. Some locations we have visited include Cabo San Lucas, Mexico; Palm Springs, CA; New Orleans, LA; Ponce, Puerto Rico; and Napa, CA.

Our family joined the Moving Forward Advisory Council peer group in 2016. This involves sharing our operation and specific details with other similar farming operations throughout the US. We usually get together for annual summer and winter seminars, as well as annual regional meetings. Those trips include: Lake of the Ozarks, MO; Bardstown, KY; Great Wolf Lodge, Kansas City, KS (3 generations!); Nashville, TN; and Kansas City, MO.

In The Know

When “Green” Isn’t A Good Thing... Algal Blooms and Hypoxia: Doing Our Part to Help.

As the (hopefully!) last of the winter snow fades away and signs of spring start to appear, you may have noticed some of your fields are beginning to turn green. No, it isn't a wheat crop that tends to come out of dormancy this time of year, what you see is cover crops! Farmers across the region have faced multiple concerns in recent years, particularly pertaining to water quality and how our practices can affect it. Please follow along with me as I discuss several of the issues at hand, and how we are doing our part to help.



Lake Erie and its correlation to farming in northwestern Ohio has had a fair share of local top news articles lately. Most recently, the open waters of Lake Erie's Western Basin were declared impaired for recreation, due to harmful algae and drinking water concerns related to the toxin microcystin. This declaration came from the Ohio EPA and Governor John Kasich on March 22, 2018, based on input from Ohio State University's Sea Grant college program, Bowling Green State University, the University of Toledo, as well as the NOAA and the U.S. EPA.

Multiple farm groups are concerned the public may view this action as a “silver bullet” to immediately correct the issue at hand, when in reality, the designation may have no immediate impact on water quality, or on farmers. Due to regulatory and legal processes, it could take five to seven years before actual nutrient reduction steps would be taken. Further, uncertainty over what actions might be required in the distant future may cause municipalities, farmers and others in the regulated community to question their current efforts to improve water quality.

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A significant portion of the farmland within Hardin County lies within the Mississippi watershed, not the Lake Erie watershed. Meaning, any water draining away eventually makes its way to the Gulf of Mexico, which provides its own situation. Annually, an area of the Gulf is deemed hypoxic for a period of time. Hypoxia, or low oxygen, occurs when excess nutrients in the water, specifically phosphorus and nitrogen coming from multiple sources, encourage the growth of algae. This algal bloom blocks sunlight and lessens available oxygen in the water. Organisms either flee or suffocate, then sink to the bottom where they decompose, reducing the oxygen level even more.



Rye growing as a cover crop at spring planting, 2017.



Corn emerging through cover crop.



A terrific stand of corn with remnants of cover crop.

Farmers and other individuals involved in production agriculture all across the United States are actively engaged in taking necessary steps to reduce our impact on water quality. Here at Layman Farms, we have several actions in place. We utilize intensive soil sampling which allows specific prescriptions to be written for each field. We then apply those prescriptions using Variable Rate Technology (VRT) so only the areas of the field needing individual products are applied. This allows us to minimize excess product use and potential runoff. Certain nutrients are more readily available to the plant within the soil, when applied in a specific medium, whether it be dry versus liquid, or surface applied versus in-furrow at planting. Regardless of the application method, we monitor weather conditions closely.

Back to those green fields I mentioned in the beginning. We planted cover crops, mostly cereal rye, last fall after harvest, some with an air seeder drilled into the ground, and some flown on as the standing crop began to turn. Cover crops provide multiple benefits. They have intense root structures that can break up soil compaction allowing for better growing crop root penetration and water filtration. As the natural cycle allows, they are terminated and begin to decompose back into the soil during the winter or just as spring planting occurs, which boosts the amount of organic matter within the soil. Having a living crop in place as snows melt off or as heavier spring rains occur prevents soil dislocation, and allows for work such as tile repairs to take place.

Seeing green in your fields is always a good sign, but American farmers are actively striving to keep it out of the water supply. Should you ever have questions about us doing our part in protecting water quality, or any other conservation practices, please feel free to contact us. We are happy to share our experience.

Cindy's Corner

View From the Cab by DTN



In March, Genny responded to a call for volunteers to share their “View From the Cab” of their farming operation. In early April, Genny was notified she has been selected as the correspondent for Layman Farms to be featured in this weekly post alongside an operation from Kansas. She is excited to share our experiences this season through interviews, photos and videos, with farmers and readers across the nation.



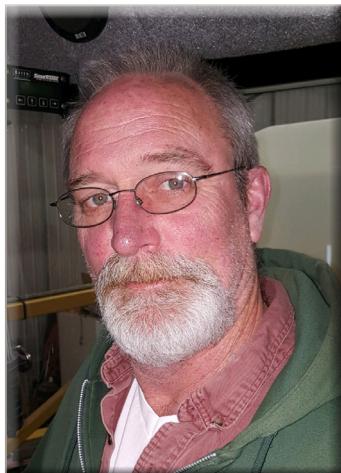
Genny's view from the cab
planting cover crops last fall.

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Employee Spotlight

Ron Hamilton has been with Layman Farms since April 1, 1997. He brings extensive expertise when it comes crop chemistry, and completes all mixing and applications himself. Ron is also our main crop harvester, operates the field pan when constructing waterways, and lends a hand in other projects as needed.

Motorcycles, fast cars and firearms grab his attention when he isn't at work. Ron has two daughters, Lindsey and Erika, and two grandchildren, Gavin and Sydney. He and Kim also enjoy their pond as well as tinkering around the house.



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