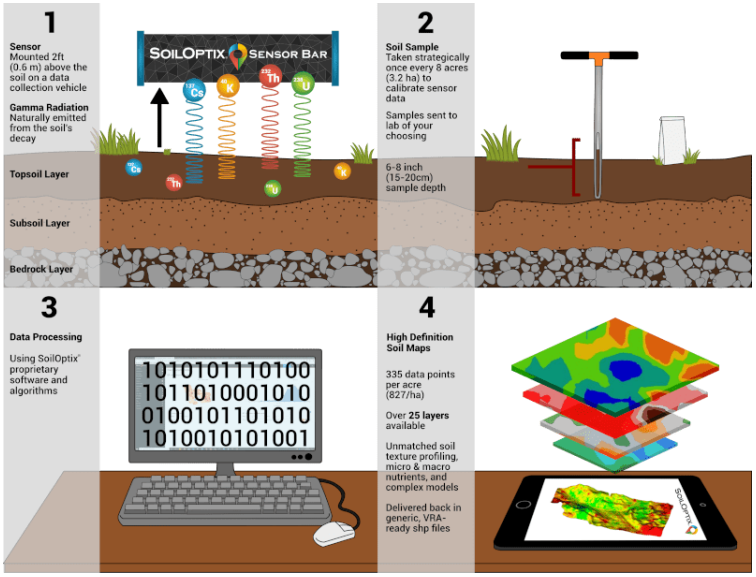
Holmes Agro-Nomic Newsletter

August 2025

Everything Starts with the Soil – Soil Sampling Strategies

As wheat harvest wraps up for another year it's time again to analyze your largest asset as a grower, your soils. Best practices for soil fertility and 4R nutrient management state, soils should be tested every 3 years to identify soil fertility issues and/or soil amendment requirements. After wheat or spring cereal harvest is the optimum time to review sampling requirements and execute a strategy which sets the foundation for 2026.

How you sample should be the next discussion point and often depends on the level of variability on the farm and the data you have available at your fingertips. Yield maps are a great tool that can aid in creating a zone soil sampling approach and should be looked at when available. Grid sampling has always been an excellent choice in the past but is slowly being replaced with soil scanning technology like Soil Optix. Soil Optix is based on a 4-step approach including the soil scan, sampling to validate the scan, data analysis, and finally interpretation and execution of application strategies. Data layers available not only include fertility information, the same as traditional grid sampling, but also include soil property layers such as % sand, silt, clay, and plant available water. This technology provides the highest degree of resolution and most detail of any soil sampling methods currently available.



Check out the Soil Optix website at www.soiloptix.com and speak with your crop advisor about utilizing this technology on your farm.

Bringing Diversity to Your Rotation – Winter Cereals

There are many reasons to keep winter cereals in your crop rotation as it helps maintain a sustainable cropping system, improves soil health and structure, while also spreading out your yearly workload.

Our highlighted varieties for this fall include:
Blaze (SRW) – Top-level yield performance, strong fusarium tolerance, this variety can perform well across all soil types.
Fuze (SRW) – Short, high yielding soft red winter wheat that is built for higher management systems. Carries the FHB1 gene for improved DON and Fusarium reduction.
Pro 81 (HRWW) – Very strong yield and class-topping protein. Medium height with great standability and good performance on all soils.
Adrianus (HRWW) – Perfect combo yield and protein, good disease package, great standability with a short-statured plant.
Calypso (Winter Barley) – 2 row winter barley with strong yield levels and straw quality, can be used for livestock as forage or grain.

The use of certified seed for your winter wheat crop can come with various benefits such as: seed quality – uniform seed size, germination tested, fewer damaged kernels; clean seed – free of weed seed; genetic purity; increased disease resistance and is typically treated which can help improve emergence and vigor.

The suggestion for most soils in Ontario when planting winter wheat is to seed 1.6 million seeds per acre when planting at the optimal time. If planting wheat past the optimal timing it is recommended that the seeding rate be increased by 100,000 seeds for every 7 days that pass. Speak to your agronomist today about your options for fall-seeded cereals.

********** *Check the website holmesagro.com for general information and upcoming important dates* **********

Important Notice – Offices Closed August 27th for Inventory

All Holmes Agro locations (Orangeville, Redickville, and Stayner) will be closed at 12pm (noon) on Wednesday, August 27th for inventory. We will be unable to ship or deliver any product (seed/fertilizer/chemical etc) during that afternoon. Regular hours will resume on Thursday, August 28th. Please work with your agronomists for preplanning to ensure you have what you need to keep rolling. Thank you, and we appreciate your understanding!

Clean Farms Obsolete Chemical Collection Day – September 26th, 2025

Holmes Agro is once again hosting an Obsolete Chemical Day with the Clean Farms Program on Friday September 26th, 2025, at our Orangeville location. Eligible materials are old, obsolete, or otherwise unwanted pesticides (anything with a Pest Control Product Number) and animal health medications (anything with a Drug Identification Number). Liquid fertilizers are ineligible for this program.

Please bring pesticide products **only on the day of the event. No early drop-offs will be accepted.** For more info check cleanfarms.ca or call the Orangeville Office (519) 941-0450.

Scouting Update – Soybean Insect Pressures

Two of the most common pests which appear in soybeans every year are aphids and spider mites. These pests are typically more prevalent on dry hot summers. Both pests can be high yield robbers if they are left uncontrolled, so it is important to get out and scout your fields and keep an eye on populations.

Soybean Aphids - Are typically found on the newest growth of a soybean plant, and will "pierce" the leaf, and suck the juices from it. This can result in the reduction of photosynthetic activity, which reduces yield. The soybean aphid is approximately 1.5mm with bodies that are pale green to yellow in colour with two black cornicles. Aphids can be winged or wing-less. The threshold for control is 250 aphids per plant and rising. Keep a look out for beneficial insects, such as ladybugs and spiders which are natural predators to aphids.

Spider Mites - Spider mites prefer to stay in crops other than soybeans (hay fields, permanent vegetation), however as those dry down in a drought, they begin to move into soybean fields in search of other food. They are barely visible to the naked eye and require a 10x lens to see. Two spotted spider mites are yellow brown with two dark spots on their abdomen or orange in colour. Eggs are found on the underside of bean leaves and are small, round and translucent. When scouting, pull a leaf off the plant and shake it over white paper to see the spider mites moving. Damage typically appears as yellow or white "stippling", sand blasting, or dusty on the underside of the leaves. As leaves become more damaged, they can turn a bronzy-brown and then drop off from the plant. From the road a soybean field may look grey if there is an infestation, or brown if the leaves are dropping off and the plants are shutting down prematurely.

Japanese Beetles - Japanese beetle is about ½" (13 mm) long and has metallic green- and bronze-coloured wings. Tufts of white hair are visible around its abdomen. The adult skeletonizes soybean leaves eating tissue between veins. You need 25% defoliation from insects to warrant control. They rarely reach the threshold for control in our area but can be seen in fields.

Did You Know?

Fun Fact – Did you know that Nitrogen (N) and Potassium (K) nutrient levels within the plant can affect your soybean aphid pressure? N and K are contributing factors to soybean aphid nutrition. Aphids feed from the phloem of the plant acquiring N for energy requirements. K deficient soybean plants lead to the increase in amino acids, and soluble N. K deficient plants more readily supply nutritional components for soybean aphids. Clearly, there is an additional benefit to ensuring proper crop nutrient requirements are being met to reduce the likelihood of an aphid infestation.

We Want to See Your Summer Pictures

It's never too early to send in pictures for next year's 2026 Holmes Agro calendar. We want to see your winter and spring scenes! Every year we are proud to be able to provide a calendar of grower pictures, all thanks to your great submissions. Send your calendar picture submissions to calendar@holmesagro.com.

********** ***Please email media@holmesagro.com to sign up for our e-newsletter*** **********

Jeff Bill James Taylor Greg Liz Scott John Lydia Brooklyn Claire