



Holmes Agro-Nomic Newsletter

May • 2026

Keep Spring Safe!

As spring planting and preparation begin, farm safety should be top of mind for everyone working in and around agricultural operations. Take time to inspect equipment for worn parts, faulty guards, and proper lighting before heading to the field, and always shut machinery off before making adjustments. Be mindful of changing ground conditions—wet, uneven soil can increase the risk of slips, falls, and rollovers. Spring also brings increased use of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, so follow all label instructions, wear appropriate personal protective equipment, and store chemicals securely away from children, livestock, and water sources. Mix and apply chemicals only in well-ventilated areas, clean up spills immediately, and properly dispose of empty containers. With longer days and a faster pace, remember that fatigue can lead to accidents; take regular breaks, stay hydrated, and keep children and bystanders away from work areas to help ensure a productive and injury-free season!

Splitting Your Nitrogen Applications

With the wet conditions, the question arises: should I split my nitrogen, or do a single pass? While both application methods have advantages and disadvantages, there are many aspects to consider in terms of logistics, economics, and yield benefits. If stands and weather conditions don't indicate a risk of lodging, a single pass can save time and money and help ensure you get N on in time, but it may increase the risk of loss through volatilization or leaching. In more variable areas (which are increasingly common), split applications can offer benefits such as:

- An early application of N and S can stimulate tillering in late planted wheat, allowing you to save the rest of your N for later.
- Potential for better N use efficiency or rate adjustments based on forecasts.
- Allows you to apply more total-season N while reducing lodging risk - especially in early-planted wheat
- Research suggests improved protein in hard red winter wheat from split applied N.
- In terms of yield, whether or not you see a benefit is hard to predict and depends on weather, application timing, and soil moisture.

If you and your agronomist decide split N is a good fit for your wheat crop, timing and rates need to be considered. The first application should go on as soon as conditions allow - often between GS23 and GS32, depending on crop stage and field conditions. Stem elongation begins around GS30, and this is when N demand increases rapidly. Second pass can go on anytime between GS32 and GS40, but it is recommended to leave at least 1-3 weeks between applications to optimize N use efficiency. The rate split depends on your wheat growth and stand counts. If you need help deciding which method could fit your operation best this year, reach out to our agronomy team!

Critical weed free period: What is it and why does it matter?

Weeds in crop fields are a continual challenge for any crop producer, but did you know that the period of time when the crop is competing with the weeds matters too? Research has shown that all commonly produced crops have what is called a critical weed free period – the time in crop development when it is most important to control weeds to prevent competition with the crop. With intentional herbicide planning and application, growers can minimize the yield reductions that are a direct result of weeds competing with their crop. Weeds that emerge after the critical weed free period have a reduced effect on the crop and are of lower priority. Examples of critical weed-free periods for crops in our area include: field corn (3–10 leaf tips), soybean (V1–V3), spring cereals (1–3 leaf stage; Zadoks 10–13), and canola (emergence to 6-leaf). When making your herbicide plans for 2026 consider factoring in how you will provide your crop with a critical weed free period!

2026 Product Return Deadlines

Holmes Agro accepts returns of any unopened, undamaged seed, skids, bulk bags or unopened chemical jugs. We do ask the following:

1. If we are picking up returns at your site, we prefer it if you can be there to help load. If you cannot be, please leave returns out for us, and if required, we will ask for approval to use your equipment.
2. If you are bringing returns to any of our locations, please ensure all products are on a skid to help ease the unloading process. Please call ahead to let us know you are bringing back returns.
3. Cereal and forage returns are due back by June 1st and corn and soybean returns are due by June 26th. Unopened spring chemical must be returned as soon as you are finished with the product, or by July 31st. Unopened fall chemical must be returned by September 25th.



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

What Do 4R Practices Mean for Your Bottom Line?

An economic analysis of 4R Nutrient Stewardship practices looked at how different fertilizer and management strategies affect profitability on a typical Ontario grain farm—without assuming any yield increases. The model evaluated an 800-acre corn, soybean, and wheat operation across multiple regions of Ontario, focusing strictly on changes to fertilizer costs, operating expenses, equipment investments, and net income. The results show that the biggest economic drivers are practices that either maximize fertilizer use efficiency with confidence or lower machinery and operating costs. Reduced tillage consistently performed well due to fuel and labour savings, while practices like 2×2 fertilizer banding and variable rate application showed positive returns when equipment costs were spread over enough acres. Stacking multiple 4R practices delivered the strongest financial results, outperforming any single practice alone. Using these practices to increase your yields will also add to your profits. Speak with your Holmes Agro Agronomist to review your 4R strategies and how they can help your bottom line.

Which Practices Fit Your Farm?

Not every 4R practice works equally well on every operation. Some, like enhanced efficiency fertilizers, offer lower risk but modest savings, while others—such as split application or fall-to-spring timing—require careful consideration of labour, logistics, and spring workload. Equipment-based practices tend to favour larger farms, and cover crops depend heavily on consistent establishment to deliver nitrogen credits. The takeaway for growers is simple: you don't need to adopt everything. The best results come from choosing practices that fit your acres, equipment, soil, and management style, starting small, and building a system over time. When matched correctly to the farm, 4R practices can improve profitability while reducing fertilizer risk—without relying on yield gains. Speak with your Holmes Agro Agronomist to look at which practices best suit your operation.

Watch Us Grow

We're excited to introduce a few new faces who have joined the Holmes Agro team this spring. We also have several new and returning team members for the growing season. We're looking forward to working with them this spring and summer and to continuing to grow together in the years ahead. A warm welcome to:

Orangeville

- Michael Sherson has joined us as an operation manager in our Orangeville location. With well-rounded experience and a passion for agriculture, growing up in Grey County, Michael is excited for his first spring with us.
- Kaitlyn DeBoer is starting the season supporting operations and then moving into potato scouting and providing agronomy support in the Orangeville area.
- Mike Janssen is returning to support operations and then moving into crop scouting for the summer. He will be returning to Humber in the fall.
- Jake Taylor is starting the season supporting operations and then moving into potato scouting for the rest of the summer.

Redickville

- Paisley Bowman joins us supporting operations and crop scouting as co-op to finish her Agribusiness program with Olds College.
- Sydney Money joins us supporting customer service and crop scouting as co-op to finish her Agribusiness program with Olds College.
- Nolan Aldred has joined for the summer season with the application and operations team. Nolan brings experience as an equipment operator, along with a background in the agriculture industry.
- Mack Boudreau is returning full time, a graduate from Ridgetown and working with our application and operations team.

We also have several new and returning delivery drivers ramping up to get our products out to growers. Welcome and thank you to each of our drivers who ensure the fields have what they need to grow and stay healthy. Please take a moment to say hello to these individuals when you have the chance, and we look forward to having them grow with Holmes Agro!

Upcoming Dates

June 1st - Cereal and forage return deadline

June 26th - Corn and soybean return deadline

July 16th - Georgian Central OSCIA Compaction Day, Redickville

July 31st - Chemical return deadline

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