Brown Growers Farm Walk

On Thursday 30th August a brown growers farm walk was held at M & G Mushrooms in Keady, Co.Armagh. The event was well attended and some very interesting discussions on the day. The aim of the farm walk was to transfer knowledge of growing Heirloom spawn and how to maximise yield. Some of the key points talked about on the day was:

- **Optimum fill rates** – Not to go under 82 kg/m² as mushroom quality and compost activity will significantly reduce in 2nd and 3rd flushes. Have compost up to the top of the shelf to get even ruffling.

- **Casing management** – Discussion on depth of casing and what finish to the bed to give best results for growers.

- **CAC** – Best to pull up CAC at filling to have natural growth. At ruffling, turn this growth at the interface and mix through casing which will result in stronger mycelium growing through casing.

- **Watering schedule during case run** – For compost under 64% moisture with good structure and colour growers should be applying 4 L/m² on the filling machine. Wet, short, dark compost should be assessed at filling whether to apply water or not. Heirloom Spawn does not require large volumes of water during case run, roughly 16 L/m² in total should be sufficient.
• Breaking pattern – Grow mycelium up to surface and have a gentle breaking pattern to not damage mycelium. Air temperature, humidity and CO² set points also discussed.

• Growing blueprint – Try to standardised the growing process and if growing on two different composts, two separate blueprints are needed with the same end goal of maximising mushroom output and quality.

Brown Growers who Attended the farm walk on 30th August at M & G Mushrooms

The farm walk was very positive and I believe there was learning’s for everyone involved. It’s hoped that growers will be more open to holding farm walks in the future as everyone benefits from these events and valuable knowledge was shared that could make a real impact on farms.

Technical Update – Sodium Hypochlorite

The product Hypoclear (PCS No.92354) has was revoked from the PCS list on the 30th of June as no companies supported its review in EU. The product may continue to be sold until 31st December 2018 and use on farm may continue until 31st December 2019. This means that after this period has lapse, there will be no plant protection product available for
the control of bacterial blotch.

This product being revoked will not effect growers who treat water which is sourced from borehole as there is a separate biocide list that contains sodium hypochlorite products. It’s important to note that any grower treating water with sodium hypochlorite must use a Type 5 biocide product (*Products used for the disinfection of drinking water for both humans and animals*). It’s important that growers clearly state that this product is only used for treating water rather that stating that it is used for control of bacterial blotch as an auditor will note that it is being used as a plant protection product which would result in a non-conformance.

To find products in the Type 5 category follow the following link:

This link brings you to a search engine where you can check is an active substance name approved. See picture below example I used:

As you can see the substance name is available. When you click into the substance name there will be a tab which indicates all ‘Trade names’ which is where you will find the list of products available.

Sodium Hypochlorite can also still be used as a disinfectant for empty tunnels and other farm equipment as long as the product is registered as a type 2 (*disinfectants and algaeicides not intended for direct application to humans or animals*). If you require further
information on this, feel free to contact me.

**Bacterial Blotch Control**

There have been many cases of Bacterial Blotch being reported on farms over the past month. With very warm humid weather this is expected. An area which growers should be focusing on is strengthening mycelium growth by not over compressing at filling. Assessing compost at filling is vital and applying water to compost accordingly based on structure and moisture.

Focus on getting compost temperature up to 24-26 °C during case run. Keep a close eye on casing structure throughout case run, ensuring casing doesn’t get too creamy/muddy. Casing needs to have stiffness/structure on the day of ruffle to ensure the correct particle size, structure and finish is achieved. After ruffling the bed needs to be open to allow compost to breath.

Do not break too dark as mushrooms growing from deep are more prone to blotching. As the majority of blotch occurs on top shelves due to lack of evaporation and poor air movement, growers should reduce watering, ruffle faster (need casing to stay open to allow easier evaporation) and CAC heavier/ Level better to avoid mushrooms coming from deep.

Aim to break tunnels with a compost temperature in the 25.5-26.5 range which will result in a calmer environment with less drying of casing layer and less stressed mycelium during
pinheading. Use cold water humidification instead of steam if possible. Keep a very close eye on moisture sitting on the beds when mushrooms are pinning, if moisture is there you need to get it dried up by increasing fan speed and reducing RH slightly. Also raise air temperature by 0.5-1°C for a period if compost temperature is under control.

Harvesting can have a big influence on avoiding the occurrence of blotch and reducing it if present. First of try avoid overpinning and focus on separation during day 1 and 2 of picking. If weather is still warm and humid outside you may need to picked tighter and pick off top shelves earlier.

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**Event: Transforming your business with renewable heat**

FEC Energy, EbTech Solutions, Teagasc and WoodCo invite you to their “Transforming your business with renewable heat” event on the 25 September in Ashtown, Ireland. It has been announced that Ireland’s renewable heat support scheme is due to start in autumn/winter 2018. The scheme called Support Scheme for Renewable Heat will be similar in concept to the GB’s Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) and is designed to financially support the replacement of fossil fuel heating systems, with renewable energy, for large heat demand non-domestic users.

In a press release on 07 December 2017, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Denis Naughten TD stated that: “The Support Scheme for Renewable Heat is a tangible and viable measure that will kick-start the biomass and biogas sectors. Crucially, it will provide the basis to create new commercial opportunities for farmers in heat technologies, including biomass boiler installations, and new opportunities for foresters. It will also contribute to meeting Ireland’s 2020 renewable energy and emission reduction targets”.

In advance of the Scheme commencing, WoodCo, EbTech Solutions, Teagasc and FEC Energy have put together this one-day event to demonstrate how biomass can benefit the horticultural industry and provide delegates with knowledge and experience gained by working within the RHI scheme of England, Scotland and Wales. As well as how FEC Energy’s new RHI HealthCheck Service will help you remain compliant. The event will also include a visit to a local grower.
DATE: Tuesday, 25TH September

Booking Required: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/transforming-your-business-with-renewable-heat-tickets-48329633234

Contact

Please get in touch if you would like further information, if you have any issues you would like to discuss or topics you would like to hear more about.

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