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# Servi-Tech Review

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## Review Contributors

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Dodge City, Kansas

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Dodge City, Kansas

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Haxtun, Colorado

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Dodge City, Kansas

***Visit Servi-Tech Laboratories at the Nebraska Agri-Business Expo January 16-17 Omaha, NE Booth # 405***

## Servi-Tech's New Water Testing Lab In Seward, Nebraska

The new water testing laboratory is located approximately 80 miles east of Servi-Tech's Hastings Laboratory.

Our Servi-Tech Laboratory in Hastings, NE, announces a significant new development in the city of Seward, NE. After many months of research and development, Servi-Tech opened a new water testing lab in Seward, NE. The water laboratory opened for business November 5, 2007 and plans to service communities and municipalities between Hastings and Omaha and the surrounding area.

The objective of the new laboratory is to make it easier and more convenient for municipalities and others who may need water tested. EPA regulates that bacteria (i.e. fecal and e-coli) are required to be set up within six hours after sampling. Water testing customers will now have a local laboratory to send their samples. The Seward water laboratory has completed all the requirements needed for state certification in drinking waters. (cont'd on page 2)

In This Issue:

## Featured Crop Consultant

**Steve Kramer**

Technology Specialist

Stromsburg, NE

24 Years of Experience

Dordt College in
Sioux Center, Iowa.

**Why Steve chose Crop Consulting:**

*"I chose this job because I wanted something where I could work outdoors and something related with farming."*

**Favorite thing about his job:**

*"My favorite thing about this job is the working relationship I have with the growers, helping them to maximize their yields and their bottom line."*

**Hobbies:**

*Steve's hobbies include gardening, working with his sons, Dale and Paul on their 4-H projects, and attending his sons' sports activities. Steve and his family are kept busy with church activities throughout the year.*

## Servi-Tech's New Water Lab In Seward, NE (cont'd)

Teresa Andersen, from Lincoln, NE is a full-time employee in the laboratory. Teresa graduated from Colorado State University with a B.S. in Microbiology. She has over 20 years of experience in quality control.

As one of the largest agricultural testing laboratories in the nation, Servi-Tech has continued to expand their testing abilities to better serve its customers.

This new water laboratory will be a significant component for Servi-Tech operations, which have been serving the plains for 30 years. For more information about the new Seward water laboratory call 800.557.7509 ext. 2600.

It is located at the Seward Wastewater Treatment Facility at 1040 South Columbia, Seward, NE 68434.

## Servi-Tech's Fred Vocasek Receives The ICCA Outstanding Service Award

The International Certified Crop Adviser is a 16-year-old program of the American Society of Agronomy with nearly 14,000 certificants in the US and Canada. CCAs must complete two exams, verify work experience, sign a code of ethics, and maintain 40-hours of continuing education units (CEUs) every two years.

The CCA program works with many organizations on a state and national level, including the Cooperative Extension Service, National FFA Organization, USDA Risk Management Agency, state Departments of Agriculture, CropLife, TFI, Successful Farming Crop Tech Tour, and many others. Several state CCA Boards offer scholarships to promising college students, including a $1000 scholarship from the Kansas CCA Board.

Vocasek has served the program since 1992 as member and Chair of the Kansas CCA Board, as North Central Regional Representative, and as ICCA Chair. He has also made numerous presentations to CCAs at various educational events.

Fred Vocasek, Servi-Tech (right) receives the Outstanding Service Award from ICCA Chairman, Tom Kemp. Vocasek served as Chairman of the International Certified Crop Advisers in 2006. Vocasek, Servi-Tech's Environmental Manager, has been with Servi-Tech since 1983.

## Marlatt Promoted To Division Manager

by Kala Bogner
Marketing Coordinator, Dodge City, KS

James Marlatt, of Imperial, Nebraska, was recently promoted to Servi-Tech's Division Manager for the McCook division. Servi-Tech is one of the largest crop consulting firms in the nation and has over 70 full-time agronomists. Marlatt has been a Servi-Tech agronomist since 1997. Before joining Servi-Tech, Marlatt graduated from Colorado State University, where he received a BS in soil and crop science.

When asked what James likes about his job, he replied, "Every day is different (at Servi-Tech) and every year is different too. There are always new challenges to deal with and overcome. I also like the relationships that I have made with the producers I work with."

Marlatt and his wife, Amy, live just southwest of Imperial. He enjoys classic cars and watching a good football game, as well as spending time with his friends and family.

## No Magic In Banding

by Fred Vocasek
Ag/Environmental Service Manager, Dodge City, KS

Banding fertilizer has been a successful method to manage immobile soil nutrients, like phosphorus, potassium, and zinc. Placing these nutrients in a concentrated zone close to young root systems can improve nutrient uptake and early season growth. "Starter" or "pop-up" are terms used to describe this effect.

Many side-by-side experiments comparing broadcast to banded applications show that banded nutrient rates can be reduced by a $^1/_3$ or $^1/_2$ without affecting yield. Today's high fertilizer prices make banding especially attractive, but banding has limitations. Immobile nutrients move only short distances in the soil, typically ¼-inch or less from where they are placed. Root systems must grow outward and "bump into" these nutrients before they can be taken up. Placing a zone of concentrated nutrients near the young root system increases the chance that roots will make contact.

Banding works best when soil tests are in the "low" category and when growing conditions for young roots are marginal (early planting in cool soil, very wet or very dry soil, etc.). Location and proximity are key factors for banding to be successful. Banding too close or too far away from the young root system can reduce it's effectiveness.

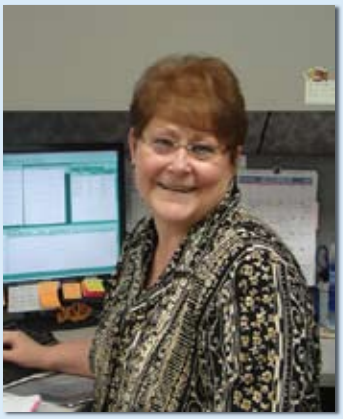
Not every crop or hybrid responds equally well to banding. Minnesota ridge-till research showed that "root architecture" can be important. Different corn varieties responded differently to banded potassium depending on whether root systems first grew outward, then downward (in an "umbrella" pattern) or grew mainly downward.

Banding is not magical. It does not cause nutrient molecules to clone themselves, where one molecule suddenly becomes as two or three molecules. A crop at a given yield level will remove a set amount of nutrient from the soil, regardless of whether the nutrient is from natural, banded, or broadcast fertilizer.

Banding low rates over the long-term can result in a drawdown of the soil test level, especially in marginal soil conditions. It may be necessary to routinely make broadcast applications to maintain soil test levels, but banding may be the best choice for short-term leases.

There is no single answer to decide whether to band or broadcast. "Both" may be the right answer depending on the field situation, crop management, and economics. Current soil tests and a history of soil fertility is essential as a planning and monitoring tool to manage fertilizer costs and make sound application decisions.

## Meet our Staff: Cindy Byer



- **Title And Job Description:** Soils Customer Service Representative-*Cindy works in the Dodge City Laboratory. She is in charge of processing all the soil reports and answers questions concerning soil samples and reports.*
- **Favorite Thing About Working At Servi-Tech:** *"Always the people. We have a great bunch to work with here in the lab. I always enjoy talking to our customers and helping them solve their sample questions."*
- **What Co-workers Say About Cindy:** *"Cindy is always eager to try new things. She is very helpful, pleasant and has a great sense of humor. She is an all around great person."*
- **Something Interesting About Cindy:** Cindy has been with Servi-Tech since 2000. She enjoys challenges and working in agricultural is always challenging. She enjoys baking, reading, gardening, and taking care of her family in her free time.

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## Servi-Tech Review

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# Fertilizer Recommendation Tools

by Dave Green
Regional Manager, Haxtun, CO

The substantial increase in no-till and especially strip-till crop production has brought up a lot of questions about what tools to use to make fertilizer recommendations.

Historically when most fields had tillage on a regular basis even if fertilizer was applied in bands, fertility would even back out over time. When tillage is largely eliminated and most nutrients are banded, there can be stratification both vertically and horizontally. In this environment some may ask if soil samples still have a place.

Soil samples still answer the need of determining what the background fertility level is. It usually is best to avoid the most recent band if possible when sampling, but there has been some research done on adding a certain amount of cores per sample in the banded area to try to balance it. This data is not very uniform and assumes one can reliably find the band. There is always the chance of hitting bands from previous cropping seasons especially if row position is changed, but there is no way to avoid those bands if the position is unknown.

We need to look at the full list of tools available to make fertilizer recommendations and that includes more than just soil samples. Other factors include crop yield and or crop removal, previous fertilizer applications, previous soil sample data, and any other in-season tissue testing that may be done. Crop yield will give us an idea of crop nutrient removal. Previous fertilizer applications will show if we are meeting crop needs with applications. Soil samples, especially records of multiple years will allow tracking trends in soil fertility. All of these items used together can then be verified if needed by in-season tissue testing.

High yield crops have changed fertility needs and strip-till has changed how we apply fertilizer. These changes will push the production system in other places, and making fertilizer recommendations and soil sample interpretation are some of those areas. Your crop specialist can use all of these tools to get you the most efficient fertilizer recommendation for your yield goal.

# Words From The Manager

**Mitch Counce**

**General Manager**

mitchc@servi-techinc.com

As I'm writing this article for the Review, we are covered by a blanket of ice in much of southwest Kansas and the freezing drizzle continues. We definitely need the moisture. We had one of the driest falls in recent memory. We're just hoping our trees and power poles survive and we don't have a repeat similar to last year's ice storm. Most of the wheat was in bad shape going into the cold winter weather. Some of the planted wheat, didn't have enough moisture to sprout and emerge. Hopefully we will receive enough moisture for the wheat to survive.

Crop year 2007 was certainly a different year. Wheat yields varied from zero where we had too much rain, to areas where some producers experienced the best yields in their history of farming. Fall crop yields were generally good, but somewhat disappointing due to the heat that took its toll at the end of the growing season.

As predicted, we saw a big shift in the crop mix that we consult on. At the close of Servi-Tech's fiscal year, we had realized a 22% increase in corn acres compared to crop year 2006 and a 32% decrease in soybean acres. Limited service dryland wheat acres increased 50% and full service irrigated wheat acres increased 26%. Overall, acreage under contract increased 8%. Corn and soybean acres combined, made up 72% of the acres we had under contract in 2006 and 73% in 2007. With the current and future price of nitrogen, we most likely will see a shift back to more soybeans in 2008.

Servi-Tech's three laboratories had an overall increase in business of 14%. Soil testing increased 7.0%, feed testing, 12.6%, water and environmental testing 41.4%, and plant tissue testing increased 32.0%. As the price of inputs increase and water quantity and quality decline, we expect that testing will continue to become more important.

We appreciate our customers' business and continued trust in our services. Thank-You.