

In the Field



NORTHERN REGION

MARCH 2016

Regional Claims Managers Bring New Perspective

By Darci Simonsen, National Claims Manager

Adding structure to the claims reporting process, balancing the reporting workload more efficiently, and generating new ideas—all among the reasons that Matt King, Tyffany Basila and Glenn Anderson were recently named regional claims managers for ProAg®. In the process we have positioned our company to better handle future business.

Tyffany, Glenn and Matt have all worked in the crop insurance industry for some time, and they bring diverse experience in loss adjusting, underwriting, claims processing, compliance and information technology. That mix of experience was intentional, since they will be working together and using their talents to create more uniform processes throughout the claims department.

This is also a group that will bring fresh ideas and is in tune with technology.

Impact in the field

One goal associated with this change is to work smarter and more effectively, which will benefit our agents and insureds by further stepping up the efficiency of our claims processing. We're already seeing service improvements as we work to streamline processes and allow our people to concentrate their time on customer service.

Technology is playing an ever-greater role in our business, both at ProAg, with our agents, and also with our insureds. Finding new ways to utilize technology to improve accuracy and efficiency will be a continuing emphasis for us, while at the same time making sure we don't lose the face-to-face presence that sets us apart from others in the field. Technology can never replace good communication and direct human contact.

Ultimately, we want to eliminate barriers that can hinder productivity, share resources and take advantage of the strengths of each of our team members. Our claims processing department is already known for its efficiency. Our new claims managers are committed to bringing new approaches and tools into play to build on that tradition.

I'll let Glenn Anderson, Central Claims Manager, tell you a little about himself and share some of his thoughts on his new position.

Glenn Anderson

As a lifelong North Dakota rancher, wide-open spaces are nothing new to me. But as the new Central Claims Manager, I'll be covering an area extending from Canada to Texas. That's a lot of space, but I'm ready to take on the challenge. Fortunately, technology allows us to do more without

traveling more, so we spend more time working and less time on the move.

I'm excited to explore new crops, work with people across the country and figure out what we can do to be of more value to our agents across the region. I'm looking forward to meeting people I haven't had the chance to work with before.



I'm a 15-year crop industry veteran, and I got my start in the business as a contract adjuster working for, as fate would have it, Darci Simonsen. I joined the ProAg team five years ago as an adjuster, then moved to claims supervisor for two years prior to becoming Central Claims Manager.

At this point, I'm still settling into the new position, but I see my role as providing guidance to all the claims supervisors throughout my area and working on efficiencies. Our business is built on taking care of our agents, so the goal is to be proactive when issues do arise, work to provide quicker responses to policy questions and maintain our high level of service." 🌾

New Group Multiplies Individual Impact

By Jamie Hageman, Customer Account Services Manager

Improving processes and gaining efficiency—all for the benefit of our customers—was the impetus behind the creation of the Customer Account Services group last spring. Customer Account Services brought the crop accounting, claims processing and training departments together under one banner.

Crop accounting and claims processing have natural connections, but their workloads peak at different times. By bringing them together, we can take advantage of down times within each group, which helps speed up our claims and accounting processes.

How does the training department fit in? First, we're able to draw on the experience of the crop accounting and

claims processing experts to improve our agent and employee training. In addition, we're also conducting cross training within the Customer Account Services group to expand their knowledge base and make each team member more versatile and useful during slower periods.

Though the departments have come together, key points of contact remain the same. Jeanie Bonewitz is still the crop accounting manager, and Derek Eltiste still manages the claims processing department. If you have a question for the training department, the best way to connect is to send an email to training@proag.com. The team member most qualified to answer your particular question will get back to you. 🍌

On-Demand Training Resources

Looking for easy-to-access training on a variety of relevant topics? Look no further than ProAgPortal® intranet. We have a variety of video and audio resources there to make your job easier. Some provide a greater understanding of crop insurance and procedures, while others offer guidance on how to process business in the various ProAg systems. Most are found under the Systems tab in ProAgPortal with the exception of the Crop Insurance Basics series, which is found under Quick Links, then Video Recordings.

We also offer courses that qualify for CE hours, such as our APH course. Contact your ProAg account representative to access these trainings.

Process Perfection the Goal of TOPE Team

By Terri Sell, Senior Vice President of Operations

If there was ever a business that lives and dies by process, crop insurance is that business. Since we understand the importance of uniform, efficient processes to the success of ProAg® and our ability to accommodate growth in the future, we formed TOPE in 2013. TOPE stands for Team of Process Experts, and the team is composed of one representative from each ProAg department.

Our goal is to create and maintain uniform, national processes that make sense for our end users. This is an ongoing assignment as we receive new directives from the RMA and feedback from agents, adjusters, and other team members. TOPE meets quarterly, with an annual face-to-face meeting in Kansas City.

The TOPE processes are designed to work smoothly with our ProAgWorks® processing system. Whenever a user has

questions about any of our procedures, they can refer to these processes through ProAgPortal under the Processes tab.

Not only does the TOPE effort improve our processes and increase efficiency and accuracy, but it is also extremely helpful when the RMA conducts its national operation reviews. For example, when we are asked about our added land process, RMA can look at all of our customers with an added-land policy and determine how well we followed our procedure on those policies.

Constant improvement

Once processes have been written, TOPE re-evaluates them on a regular basis to ensure that they are up to date, that they work, and that they are as easy to follow as possible. When updating our processes we

use the Six Sigma process, a methodology that originated in the manufacturing sector and has now made its way into the business world.

Following this methodology helps us to analyze our processes with the goal of eliminating the waste. The result is an elimination of extra steps, increased efficiency, cost savings and a happier end user. The TOPE members are trained in the Six Sigma process, and each team member meets with their department regularly to analyze all the processes that impact them specifically.

Efficient, effective, streamlined and understandable processes are important to our office staff, our force in the field and our agents. That's why our TOPE team will continue to focus their efforts on process development, analysis and refinement. 🍌



7950 MAIN STREET N.
SUITE 230
MAPLE GROVE, MN 55369

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Decision Time

Diane Stinson, Regional Vice President – Northern Region

As our main sales closing date approaches every year, I think about how everyone—both the insured and the agent—has that one final chance to make a decision. For the insured, it's a question of coverage. For the agent, it can be a matter of which AIP they choose to do the bulk of their business with for the coming year. Once the date passes, it's a decision everyone has to live with for 12 months.

At ProAg®, it is our ongoing goal to make that decision easier. We continue to focus time, resources and attention on improving customer service. We want to exceed expectations to the point that there is no question when it comes to decision time.

You'll read elsewhere in the newsletter about organizational changes that will create efficiencies, improve communication and boost service—all while maintaining our presence in the field that has set us apart for some time.

When you have a staff as experienced as ours, you have a great asset. Years spent in the crop insurance business have given them insights and a diverse skill set that you simply don't find in every organization. We've learned what agents need and what their customers are looking for and we've designed our processes to efficiently deliver the results they expect.



The changes we've made, and will continue to make, were executed to help us make the best use of our resources and people. If you're already a customer, we expect you to see continued service improvement. If you're looking for a company that focuses on your needs first, consider ProAg. We'd love to talk with you and make your March 15 decisions easier. 🌻

