

In the Field



SOUTHERN REGION

JUNE 2015

Deep in the Heart of Claims Country

One thing you can always count on in Dennis Whitley's territory—variety.

That applies to both crops and weather as Dennis serves as the regional claims manager for Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. He's well suited to the job and the area, since his career path has prepared him for the diversity he encounters every working day.

"I initially got into the crop insurance business because I was ready for a change," Dennis recalls. "I'd managed a ranch for 15 years and worked in the feedyard business for eight. When a friend advised me that crop insurance was something I might be interested in, I had absolutely no idea what crop insurance was."

Dennis jumped into the business as a trainee per-diem adjuster in 1994, and after having worked as a claims manager for four different companies and managing his own agency for five years, he's got a pretty good idea what crop insurance is now. He came to work for ProAg® in 2010.

"Because of my experience, I can understand both sides of the equation—the agent's perspective and ProAg's position," he notes, "and that's certainly helpful."

Training and support

Dennis oversees five area claims supervisors and a small army of adjusters who handle claims in his region. "I spend most of my time supporting the supervisors, helping them with any issues that arise with adjuster staffing, specialty crops, and training," he says. "My supervisors are all good, with lots of experience. That makes my job much easier."

According to Dennis, some of the keys to doing his job well include experience, good communication, practical training, and a good team.

"I have adjusted for years, and I also was an agent, so I understand the agent's concerns and the hope that they get a good adjusting crew. We've got some of the best agents you could want in terms of taking care of their customers. Communicating clearly with them and keeping them informed is key."

A strong training program and a good team go hand in hand, in Dennis's opinion.

"We have frequent training sessions, but we keep them short and we keep them

small so we can spend time with each adjuster," Dennis notes. "We tell them if they follow procedure, use good common sense, and maintain a professional attitude, we will back them to the hilt. That helps them face the tough situations with a minimum of stress."

"Our area supervisors have developed a really good, young adjusting staff," he continues. "We have the perfect mix of older, experienced adjusters and sharp young adjusters, and they do a tremendous job. Our adjusters in Oklahoma and Texas worked almost half the claims companywide for the past two years. It's all about maintaining a positive attitude when you're facing a down-and-out farmer with a claim. All the credit goes to them."

Ultimately, it's the team approach that gets Dennis excited. "The main thing that's exciting about ProAg is the support of the people I answer to," he stresses. "They've provided me with the resources I need to serve our customers. And down here, we all kick in to help one another. That's the ProAg difference—our people in the field." 🌾



ProAg® is a wholly owned subsidiary of HCC Insurance Holdings, Inc. ProAg is an equal opportunity provider.



WWW.PROAG.COM

Hail Coverage That Works for You

By Rick Warner, Senior Sales Manager

Hail season is upon us, and a question we often receive from agents and others is how best to combine crop hail and named-peril products to their clients' multi-peril policies to maximize coverage.

As we head into the planting season, we want to ensure that agents and producers are doing so with their coverage complete.

For insureds that elected EU on their MPCI, elevated spot hail/wind risk is a concern compared to OU policies. An excellent solution would be to add a basic or companion hail policy. The Companion 2 Plus product from ProAg® is a top performer and exceptional value in this regard. Adding a wind endorsement to the hail policy would further enhance the coverage.

While this is a very basic concept to consider, we have many other advanced strategies utilizing crop hail and named-peril products that we can help you tailor to fit the particular needs of your insureds.

Speak with your ProAg marketing representative today for more

suggestions that will work specifically for your regional needs.

Preparing for 2016

We've made the decision to offer Price Flex™ for 2016 beginning immediately. This gives our agents a powerful tool that they can use now to get their producers thinking about their risk management plan for 2016.

This big-picture concept adds value to the relationship between agents and producers by establishing a longer-term view of risk management planning. It escalates it by moving insurance from a once-a-year decision toward a year-round risk management discussion. Looking at Price Flex already for 2016 allows agents and their producers to take the first step in that direction.

We stand ready to serve as your partner in the process of risk management planning, so don't hesitate to ask us how we can help. 🍷

Ben Latham – A Lifetime of Achievement

When Ben Latham received a Crop Insurance Industry Lifetime Achievement Award during the 2015 Crop Insurance Industry Annual Convention, it was a fitting recognition of what has truly been a life dedicated to the crop insurance industry.

Jess "Ben" Latham III was literally born to write crop insurance. His grandfather, Jess Latham Sr., began selling crop insurance on horseback in the 1910s and in 1927 founded what became ProAg® in Amarillo, TX, where Mr. Latham was born. After college and a stint trading commodities, he entered the family business in 1973. As the dominant crop hail writer in a state known for violent hailstorms, Mr. Latham became the pre-eminent authority in the world on Texas crop hail. He was joined later in the decade by his brother, Larry, and began to build the family company with the goal of a national presence.

Mr. Latham understood the value of industry relationships and leadership. Early in his career he brought his expertise to CHIAA and the actuarial committee and various industry committees until 1997, when he was elected to the NCIS Board of Directors. Twice during his many years of service, he was elected to hold the position as Chairman of the NCIS Board. During his tenure, he participated in four Standard Reinsurance Agreement negotiations, numerous committees, and gave his time to other industry board organizations. He also lent his considerable knowledge to international crop hail organizations and served four years as a board member. In his effort to bring understanding and credibility to this insurance industry, he has traveled extensively—not just in this country, but in Europe and Africa as well.

In 2003, Mr. Latham became CEO of ProAg. Over the next several years, he oversaw the fastest-growing crop insurance company in the industry. What was a regional hail company had now grown to more than 480 employees and was spread over 40



states. He doubled the premium of ProAg three times during his seven-year stint as CEO. However, because of SRA changes during the 2008 timeframe, it became apparent to Mr. Latham that ProAg was no longer best served by family ownership and needed an institutional parent. In 2009, ProAg was sold to CUNA Mutual, ending Latham family ownership of the company after 83 years.

"ProAg as an organization still reflects Ben's character as a person and a leader," states Kendall Jones, ProAg Chief Operations Officer. "Integrity, doing whatever it takes to get the job done, the focus on family, that's Ben. He's a warm man with a great sense of humor, and his belief in our abilities has been a great encouragement."

Mr. Latham ended his career in 2012 having seen and been a part of changes that would have been unimaginable to his grandfather in the 1920s. He served on the Board of Directors of ProAg until 2014 and now spends his time playing bogey golf (oftentimes with many friends made in the industry) and traveling to visit his children and grandchildren. 🍷

Mapping System Ready for Rollout

By Mike Weber, Product Specialist

Over the past few years, the RMA has made a concerted effort to incorporate CLUs into their reporting systems to better track the operations taking place on every field. Our challenge at ProAg® is to align the grower information we receive with the CLUs the government has created. That is the motivation behind our mapping system.

The mapping system, which we rolled out in pilot form last year, enables us to address several of our reporting requirements simultaneously. In years past, producers and agents would have to report acreage as part of the system requirements for eligibility, then come back later to certify the operation at the CLU level. Now that is one step, making it more efficient for everyone while also reducing the opportunity for errors.

We learned some valuable lessons from our pilot program, and our development focus over the past six months has been on creating a more efficient and user-friendly mapping program. We're now rolling out a mapping program that will be easier to use and fully support all standard MP crops we insure.

The delivery of the CLU data into the policy system has been streamlined, enabling users to do their acreage reporting in either the policy or the mapping system and have the data appear in both. Improved program functions include an integrated panel

rather than a pop-up window, making the program easier to use in conjunction with the map imagery. Reporting will also be more flexible in terms of working on CLUs individually or mass reporting acreage and planting date information to several CLUs at once.

Agent advantage

Additional benefits which add value for our agents include generating a variety of printed reports that our agents can use as sales tools. We've enhanced the formatting, created new options to account for regional and state differences, and generally made these reports more useful for our agents and their insureds.

Because this is a new program, we still have a long wish list of enhancements we want to introduce. One of these that will be incorporated in time for acreage reporting season is a right-click menu. This will allow the user to easily access the 10-15 most common tasks faced when trying to edit and create a map, increasing the ease, efficiency, and accuracy of map creation and maintenance.

Our goal is to make the mapping program as usable and useful as possible for you. We welcome your continued input as you put it to the test in your real world. 🌾

Simplified Process Can Streamline Claims

By Rob Young, National Claims Manager

The Loss Adjustment Manual (LAM), written and published by the Risk Management Agency (RMA), permits AIPs and producers to voluntarily participate in the Simplified Claims Process (SCP). This is a service ProAg® now offers to our agents and policyholders. So, what is the SCP? Simply put, when certain claims qualify for the SCP, the LAM permits us to adjust the claim without conducting normally required field inspections. This results in quicker claims processing and less hassle for the insured.

What are the qualifications?

Production losses for eligible crops that are either sold or commercially stored and do not have any quality deficiencies qualify for SCP. Also, the gross indemnity must not exceed \$20,000 for any optional units and must not exceed \$40,000 for any basic,

whole farm, or enterprise unit. The LAM also excludes policyholders who have any conflict of interest and provides additional guidelines.

Eligible crops include almonds, buckwheat, barley, canning and processing sweet corn, canola, corn, cotton, dry beans, dry peas, flax, grain sorghum, green peas, oats, peanuts, popcorn, rapeseed, rice, rye, soybeans, sugar beets, sunflowers, and wheat.

How it works

When the notice of loss is filed via the ProAgWorks® system, the agent may select the SCP claim type. As usual, the simplified claim (SC) will be assigned to a ProAg adjuster. During the initial contact with the insured, the adjuster will ascertain whether or not the claim qualifies for the SCP. The adjuster will provide instructions

to the insured as to the claims documents that must be provided. These documents can be submitted via fax, email, or regular mail. The adjuster will then prepare the claims and necessary documents for the insured's signature, which can also be delivered via fax, email, or regular mail. Should the claim not qualify as an SC, then the adjuster will work the claim accordingly and make a field visit.

Adjusters are also encouraged to utilize the process when a claim qualifies, even though it may not have been initially reported as an SC. In these cases, adjusters will provide this option to the insured and work the claim accordingly. The claim type may change when the claim is being processed for payment.

Please contact a ProAg claims representative with any additional questions. 🌾

2025 S. HUGHES STREET
P.O. Box 229
AMARILLO, TX 79109

www.ProAg.com

Precision Pays

By Justin Madsen, Regional Vice President, Southern Region



This year has been one to remember, with the task of implementing Farm Bill changes being a primary focus for just about everyone in the crop insurance industry. The first wave of that effort has gone very well and is now largely behind us, with the exception of the June 1 deadline for conservation compliance signup.

That doesn't mean, however, that the Farm Bill is forgotten. Now we're moving into the season of production and acreage reporting when the spotlight shifts to the underwriters. With all the options introduced by the Farm Bill, it's very important this year to make sure that schedules are correct and that the information needed to complete our verification process is submitted in a timely fashion.

Our enhanced mapping software that's being rolled out this year will be a great tool to help increase the efficiency and

accuracy of that acreage reporting process. We've been doing some training on the mapping system and will be doing more going forward. Please know that you can call us with any questions at any time. You can find more information on the mapping system in this newsletter on page 3.

The most important step in ensuring accuracy at the end of the process is to do our very best to get all the needed information submitted as early as possible to ensure we hit our deadlines. It's also helpful if the insureds check their schedules to make sure they are correct so we can make any changes needed.

We can't do anything about Mother Nature, as we're floating in parts of our territory and bone dry in others. But if we control the variables we can manage, we'll create the best outcome possible for both our insureds and our team members. Our goal continues to be to provide the most accurate and timely service possible, and we have the people and tools in place to do that in 2015. 🌾

