

In the Field



WESTERN 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 Tyffany Basila, Western Claims Manager, tell you a little about herself and share some of her thoughts on her new position.

Tyffany Basila

In my 20 years in the crop insurance business, I've never lost my passion for claims. I started out as a claims processor, worked in underwriting, moved up to compliance review and became a compliance and claims supervisor before

coming to ProAg eight years ago. I was an area claims supervisor here before taking on my new role.

I'm very familiar with western agriculture, having family who farmed and raised livestock, and having worked for a cotton gin as well a raisin processor in my professional past. It's always been ag for me.

In my new position I'm excited to work not only with the people I've worked with previously, but also with the other new claims managers. We all seem to have similar ideas about the future and to work well together. Having Darci running this is definitely a positive, too. Communication is a huge key to doing this job well, and we have the right people in place who communicate well with each other.

My favorite part of the job has always been working with the adjusters on a day-to-day basis. Watching a claim come in, get processed and seeing the insured be happy with the outcome makes it all worthwhile. 🐾



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. 🍌



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Rain Is a Good Thing

Bill Haar, Regional Vice President – Western Region



There's been a tremendous amount of talk about El Niño, California and the drought, but very little attention paid to the drought Washington has been experiencing.

Though the rains have come to California, the political undercurrent remains strong. Instead of taking advantage of the early rainfall and storing it, most of that water ran right on out to the ocean. In many ways this is a political drought. While on the other side, there is a movement to make the farmers look like villains when they're simply trying to survive.

Given the environmental overreach of the government, we'll still need a good two to three years of substantial rains to get out of the drought in California.

Organizational shift

As we mentioned in a previous newsletter, we've shifted our field reps to account reps. As such, they're working directly with agencies and managing their business. We have a great, experienced underwriting staff to help the account reps transition, and while it hasn't gone without bumps, we're trending in the right direction. I want to thank our agents for your patience as we make the transition.

Business-wise, the Farm Bill changes continue to work their way across the country. Whole-farm is starting to take off in California and Washington, and we're seeing some interest in SCO among our perennial crop producers.

Our role remains the same—to put our knowledge and experience to work helping our agents serve their customers more efficiently and effectively. 🌱

