FARMACIST

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NEWS

Jul/Aug 2022

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MAX

The world's first cane grub detection dog ... in training

Zoe Eagger, one of Farmacist's agronomists, is now teaching her 9month old Labrador to detect cane grubs. It is envisaged that once properly taught, "Max" will be able to detect cane grub populations underground and, more significantly, find select surviving populations in paddocks treated with Imidacloprid, which was a widespread problem in the Mackay region this year.

Finding these treated populations can indicate that there was a potential problem with the Imidacloprid's placement, rate or an applicator error.

Zoe's goal with Max is to improve the stewardship of cane grub management, which will give farmers better control over the grubs, increasing productivity and profitability while improving water quality.





Max is already reliably picking up the cane grub scent when it's hidden and in busy spaces after completing an official training workshop led by Australia's best scent detection trainer Ryan Tate from TATE Animal Training Services. Max's scent work will be advanced through regular expert training sessions at Mackay K9 training.

Max will require time to develop his training and to educate him to distinguish between different grub species. But keep an eye on this puppy, wish him luck and you may even see him out with the Farmacist team one day soon.

CRAIG DAY WORKSHOPS WRAP-UP

By Alice Moore & Mika Rowston

Last month, tea tree growers in northern NSW and sugarcane growers in the Mackay-Whitsunday and Burdekin regions were treated to a visit from Craig Day from Spray Safe & Save.





In collaboration with Farmacist agronomists, Craig held a variety of workshops over three weeks which were attended by growers from all over the Northern Rivers, central and northern Queensland. Craig spent time with the growers learning about their crop and the specific chemical issues they deal with in their day-to-day management. Craig's extensive experience and knowledge provided invaluable insight and a perspective that encouraged growers to think about the functional chemistry component of applying chemicals.

Take home points include:

- Always get your spray water tested for components including pH, bicarbonates and hardness. If these are less than ideal, it can lead to spray failures and resistance issues.
- When using rainwater to spray, be wary of adding acidifiers into the tank and dropping the pH too far below optimal levels.
- When calibrating your spray rig, invest in a good set of scales. A water jug could be out by 6% by reading the volume on the side of the jug. Instead, weigh the jug on the scales. Handy tip: to ensure your scales are reading correctly, a \$1 coin weighs 9 grams.
- When spraying a paddock, rotate your starting points so that you are not always hitting the plants from the same angle or entering/leaving the block at the same places you always do.
- Think about the nozzles you are using for each application. Do you want a large slow droplet to improve wettability? Consider a high-pressure air induction nozzle. Do you want a smaller droplet with a higher velocity for canopy penetration? Consider a pre-orifice nozzle. Do you want a nozzle that is a compromise between droplet size, penetration, and wettability? Consider a low-pressure air induction nozzle.

Craig brought along a demonstration spray rig which gave the growers an opportunity to feel the output from various types of spray nozzles and see how the nozzle's fan angle would collapse when they were not ran at their optimum pressure.

We received very positive feedback from all growers who attended the workshops, with one grower describing it as "the best chemical workshop he's been to in 20 years", and another saying, "further improving my knowledge in spraying will overall improve my farming practices, a great informative morning". In addition to the workshops, Craig also undertook several farm visits, conducting equipment assessments and assisting growers with some of their more complex sprayer issues.

Craig is planning to return in April & May 2023 for chemical accreditation training workshops and additional advanced spray application workshops, so any interested growers should keep an eye out for more information.







Craig's New South Wales tea tree workshops were funded by the Agrifutures project 'Enhanced Extension for the Australian Tea Tree Industry'.

Craig's Queensland sugarcane workshops were funded by the partnership between the Australian Government's Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation as a part of Farmacist's Project Bluewater.





Great Barrier Reef Foundation

FARMACIST

The Farmacist RTK Network

Farmacist has taken over the Mackay Sugar RTK base station Network.

By Mathew Davis

RTK can be considered the future of farming. It ensures improved safety, reduced cost, and higher accuracy signal which makes farming more precise than ever before.

The Farmacist RTK Network is being upgraded and all base stations are being surveyed in with AUSPOS so we can offer guidance line consistency over the coverage area.

As our network gets upgraded there may be some line shift, but the outcome will provide much more accuracy going forward. Network upgrades include new Topcon and Novatel Base station units, Satel 35W Radios, and 4G routers for NTRIP.

A change in message type from CMR (think of this type of message as a dug-out canoe delivering your correction to your tractor) to RTCM (this is like getting your correction being delivered by a Bowing 787 - fast and accurate).

If you'd like to learn more about RTK and the network, speak with Farmacist Mackay. Together, we'll discuss the best fit for your farm and connect your current equipment to our independent RTK Network.





Glossary Terms

CMR - Compact Measurement Record developed by and initially used by Trimble in 1992.

RTCM - Radio Technical Commission for Maritime Services has become an industry standard for communication of correction information. **NTRIP** - (Network Transport of RTCM via Internet Protocol) and CORS (Continuously Operating Reference Station) are forms of RTK differential correction that are done using a cellular modem and base station network.

Far North Tea Tree Soil Moisture Monitoring Project

By Belinda Billing

Farmacist has been working with Far North Queensland Essential Oil (FNQEO) to showcase the benefits of soil moisture monitoring to tea tree farmers in Dimbulah, Mareeba and Atherton. FNQEO recently received funding through the Agrifutures Producer Technology Uptake Grants program and has engaged Farmacist to support the project, installing Green Brain soil moisture monitoring equipment and rain gauges on four properties and coordinating grower extension activities.

The team has installed four kits in four different situations.

- 1. Dimbulah: A three-year-old crop in a Dimbulah sand with solid set irrigation using long duration weekly irrigations
- 2. Dimbulah: A <12-month-old crop in a Dimbulah sand with solid set irrigation using shorter twice weekly irrigation
- 3. Mareeba: A five-year-old crop in on a cobra (sand-loam clay-loam) using responsive irrigation (changes with time of year, size of crop)
- 4. Atherton: A five-year-old crop in a Tolga (non-cracking clay loam) with subsurface drip irrigation
- The kit: 80 cm Enviropro soil moisture and temperature probe with sensors every 10cm



A Green Brain data logger (incorporating battery, solar and cellular capability)



A Green Brain tipping bucket rain gauge



Growers can log onto the Green Brain platform and view data across the four sites. Farmacist has been working with each grower to ensure they are comfortable using the platform and will run workshops on irrigation practice and efficiency. As the data set grows the group will come together to discuss the different approaches to irrigation and what this means for productivity and costs. All growers in the NQEO cooperative will have access to the Green Brain platform.

The main challenge to date has been ensuring reliable connectivity at the first Dimbulah site, however this was achieved through putting the data logger on a very tall mast!







Above: An installation in Atherton. The probe is buried 10cm below the surface between trees.

Left: A screenshot of the soil moisture and rainfall readings at this site. The graph is stacked so each sensor on the moisture probe reads from top to bottom.

Have your ratoons had a health check?

By Belinda Billing

With input prices in the stratosphere, it is more important than ever to keep your ratoon cane in good health to maintain strong yields beyond third and fourth ratoon, thereby reducing the need for

more expensive plant cane.

Our standard farming practice is to take a soil test prior to planting and, unless we see something out of the ordinary, to assume all is 'okay'. Ameliorants such as lime, gypsum, ash, or mud are applied prior to plant and from that point on we only consider macro nutrients based on the soil test taken prior to plant.



That soil test may have been taken five, six or more years ago. Have you ever considered what your pH might look like when approaching third ratoon? If your pH drops below 5.5, the ability of your crop to take up specific nutrients is reduced, meaning that expensive fertiliser you're applying is potentially being wasted (refer to image 1 below).

If aluminium saturation was high in the initial soil test it may be creeping back up over time. Cane can grow in soils with aluminium saturations of up to 30%, however after this point it becomes toxic to

Strong acid	Medium acid	Slightly acid	Very slightly acid	Very slightly alkaline	Slightly alkaline	Medium alkaline	Strongly alkaline
						-	
			ni	troger			
_	-		pl	nosph	orus		
			p	otassiu	ım		
			SI	llphur			
			Ca	alcium			
			m	agnes	ium		
	iron						
	mangar	iese					
	boron						
	copper	& zinc					
			m	olybde	enum		
4.5 5.0	5.5 6	5.0 6	.5 7	.0 7	.5 8	.0 8.5	9.0 9.5

Image 1. The effects of pH on soil nutrient availability.

Image from: Roques, Susie & Kendall, Sarah & Smith, K.A. & Newell Price, Paul & Berry, P.. (2013). Review of the non-NPKS nutrient requirements of UK cereals and oilseed rape.

the roots, and takes up precious space that could be occupied by essential nutrients such as calcium and magnesium. Calcium, an important macro nutrient, is unlikely to have been applied

> If you applied phosphorus at planting and have not reapplied for three years, it is possible that your soil needs a top up going into the fourth year (third ratoon).

The only way to assess these potential issues is to take a soil test. This does not have to be a complete soil analysis (E43).

since prior to planting.

A health check could include pH, cations (calcium, magnesium, potassium, salt and aluminium), phosphorus (if required on your soil) and potential issues specific to your situation. For example, consider elements such as zinc or copper if the planting soil test indicated it was marginal or close to marginal at plant.

Many of these issues can be addressed through banding of ameliorants such as lime, with results that may keep your ratoons strong for the next few years and save you money and time.

> If you are involved in Precision to Decision in the Far North and the Burdekin, or Point of Difference in Mackay and have a block you'd like to check up on, please contact your Farmacist advisor to arrange an appointment.



Precision to Decision and Point of Difference are funded by the partnership between the Australian Government's Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation and Farmacist





RP161 Project Wrap-Up

By the RP161 Teams

Through the Farmacist managed RP161 projects, over \$2.2 million worth of fertiliser input costs were saved across 561 farms without compromising yield or sugar production. These projects were focused on working one-on-one with growers to develop tailored nutrient management plans that maximised tonnes and sugar production. A key aim of the projects was to work with growers to provide on-farm agronomy advice to assist with improving or maintaining yields.

Initially, nutrient plans were developed to bring fertiliser applications in-line with industry standard SIX EASY STEPS recommendations. During the second year of working with growers, further refined plans were developed which investigated suitable blocks for reduced fertiliser applications. This was particularly relevant for blocks following mill mud application or legume crops, where reduced fertiliser inputs would not negatively impact on yield.

The RP161 projects were supported by the Queensland Government's Reef Water Quality Program and the Australian Government's Reef Trust. The project operated in the Burdekin since 2016; in the Mackay Whitsunday region since 2018; and in Far North Queensland during the 2020-21 seasons. During this time, many positive outcomes were achieved across all regions in terms of reducing fertiliser costs while maintaining crop yields as can be seen in the summary graphics.

By working together we were able to achieve significant savings which will benefit farm input costs as well as water quality outcomes. Farmacist would like to sincerely thank all growers who were involved in the project.

Burdekin Region

<image><text><text><text><text><text><text><text><text>

Mackay/Central Region

Cairns/FNQ Region (RP223c)



Drone Imagery Gap Analysis in Northern NSW Tea Tree Oil Plantations

By Alice Moore

The Northern Rivers area located in the north eastern part of NSW is home to one of the largest Tea Tree Oil growing regions in Australia. It is here in Casino that Farmacist Agronomist Alice Moore is working on an Agrifutures funded project called "Enhanced Extension in the Australian Tea Tree Oil Industry". As part of this role, several field demonstrations are conducted each year to look at emerging issues for the Tea Tree oil industry. The following is a series of questions and answers to get an update on the latest field demonstration looking at gap analysis in Tea Tree plantations.

Where did the idea come from for the gap analysis field demonstration?

In my role talking to growers in the tea tree industry it became apparent that there is a condition present within the crop, referred to as 'stump death', that is affecting the industry. Many plantations are affected by stump death but there were no hard figures on the economic impact of the condition. Gap analysis is something that I've been interested in for a long time, but the technology wasn't quite there yet. After stumbling across the Agremo[™] software, I thought it would be a valuable exercise to test the software before recommending it to the farmers.

What did the field demonstration involve?

The field demonstration involved selecting some paddocks that were severely affected by 'stump death' and mapping them using a DJI Mavic Pro[™] drone. This is a relatively easy process that most growers could do themselves, or could get a drone contractor to do quite cheaply. There are a few factors that need to be considered for the imagery to be suitable for the gap analysis – that there are no shadows present within the imagery (mapping on a cloudy day), and that the ground sampling distance (GSD) is less than 2.5cm/pixel.

The actual mapping itself only took about an hour and was roughly 30ha, so it's quite quick. Once the mapping was completed, the photos were brought back to the computer for the first round of processing through Pix4dFields[™]. This takes all the individual pictures from the drone and stitches them together into one big image. Once this was finished, we could then upload it into the Agremo[™] software and complete the gap analysis.

What were the results?

I ran a few different analyses in the Agremo [™] software because it wasn't clear which would be the best fit for the Tea Tree crop. The two analyses that were compared included the Stand Count and the Canopy Cover analysis. The stand count proved to be the better of the two because the canopy wasn't fully covered in at that point. The stand count was able to give us exact figures on the plant density per hectare, the total number of plants counted and the percentage under the normal plant population, which in our case was upwards of 23%.

What can I do with the results?

Once a figure is placed on the percent of yield decrease from 'stump death', management decisions can be discussed. For example, a 23% decrease in plant population is equivalent to a 23% yield reduction each year from that paddock. So, by finding out how much that paddock is producing currently, an estimation on the dollar value lost from stump death can be found and used to decide whether it is in the best interest to replant the crop now or in the future (when yield is likely to decrease more). The software also provides GIS files which can allow you to manage the gaps (for example, with variable rate fertiliser and chemical application) to ensure money is not wasted where there is no crop.

What was the cost of the software?

It costs \$5/ha/analysis plus the cost of the initial drone imagery.

Can it be used on other crops?

Yes, the software will work for most row crops including sugarcane. More details are provided on the Agremo[™] website.

Would you recommend this software?

Yes, there is a benefit to using this software if you are looking at making management decisions with your crop. To have hard numbers is invaluable for making farming decisions and this software helps to provide us with another layer of information.

For more details about this field demonstration please call Alice Moore on 0402 924 955.

Calibrate with ease this season using the Farmacist App!

By Nikala Passaris

Calibrating your fertiliser box before starting any nutrient application is considered good practice to maximise input use efficiencies across your farm. Managing inputs in this way also ensures your business remains in line with government regulations. Unfortunately, cog-driven systems can be time consuming to calibrate and require a fair bit of trial and error to achieve desired product rates.

In response to this problem, Farmacist has designed a free mobile app - Farmacist Connect.

The cog calculator function within the app simplifies the calibration process by quickly calculating the current application rate and suggesting what cog is required to achieve the target rate. It is quick and easy to use, provides accurate cog recommendations and can be utilised for suSCon calibrations too.

Out on farm, the app has received some great feedback! After using Farmacist's cog calculator to calibrate his planting brew, Mr Davenport said **"The app is a great tool to have in your toolbox, its easy to use and I'm really happy with it"**. Mr Davenport runs a cog-lead side dresser. In the past his box would take a bit of time to calibrate, but with the help of the app and his Farmacist agronomist, Mr Davenport has been able to get his fertiliser out of the shed and on to the paddock within the hour.

Download the Farmacist App today at either the Apple Store (https://bit.ly/Farmacistapp) or Google play (https://bit.ly/FarmacistappGoogle).

Fertiliser and suSCon calibrations are just one of services provided to growers as part of Precision to Decision (P2D), Point of Difference (POD), and Project Bluewater.

Contact your local Farmacist agronomist if you need any assistance.

PROJECT P.O.D POINT OF DIFFERENCE

These projects are funded by the partnership between the Australian Government's Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, and Farmacist Pty Ltd.







Nitrification Inhibitors

By Nick Hill

With the crush underway and fertiliser being applied, don't forget that Nitrification Inhibitors (NIs) may be a way to reduce nitrogen fertiliser inputs. Doing so could not only save money but also provide an opportunity to move nitrogen around the farm while maintaining yield and complying with Queensland state government nutrient regulations.

Nitrification Inhibitors (NIs) are liquid products that are added to nitrogen fertiliser such as UAN (liquid urea-ammonium nitrate) or granular urea prior to the point of sale and can reduce nitrogen loss via the different loss pathways. Most commonly encountered NIs within the Queensland sugarcane industry are Entec® Entrench ® and N-Protect ®.

How do they work? When urea is applied to a soil it is transformed by soil microbes to ammonium then nitrate. Nitrate can be lost from the paddock by moving up into the atmosphere (denitrification), moving down through the soil with water movement (leaching), or transported out of the paddock either by irrigation or high rainfall (runoff). NIs keep nitrogen in the ammonium form for longer - it can still be taken up by the crop but is less likely to be lost as denitrification. Because less nitrogen is being lost, it means that you don't have to put as much on.

This could work for the grower in a number of ways. Firstly, the Queensland Government now requires all sugarcane enterprises to have a nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) budget (N&P budget), meaning that there is a defined amount of N and P you can apply over the entire farm. Notably, you can move N and P around to where ever you like on the farm. Therefore, in areas that are susceptible to N loss such as water logging areas, sandy soil types, or late cut blocks, NI products can safely be applied at 20% less than the "Six Easy Steps" recommended N rate without a yield penalty, and the 20% that wasn't used in these areas can be transferred and applied to other higher yielding blocks. Another option could be to apply NI fertilisers at a reduced amount (maximum 20%) across the entire farm with an associated reduction in fertiliser input.

Does it sound a bit tricky? Farmacist is experienced in assisting you with these nutrient decision-making processes. Contact us at either the Burdekin, Mackay or Gordonvale offices and we can get the conversation started.

FARMACIST



ENERGY SAVINGS

Did you know that from 1st July 2022, electricity prices will rise by up to 13%? Did you also know the Australian Government has made a website that can help you choose a better tariff for your home and business?

And it's so easy! Take 5 minutes and see what you can save... All you need is your NMI (National Metering Identifier) which is found on all your energy bills (Ergon is lower right hand corner).



Alternative residual herbicide options at the out-of-hand stage in plant sugarcane and a comparison of their risk to waterways

By Michael Macpherson & Jess Bennett

A commercial strip plot trial to compare the weed control provided by alternative pre-emergent herbicide products in outof-hand plant sugarcane was conducted in Mackay, QLD. Runoff samples were also taken to measure the amount of herbicide that left the paddock in each runoff event. The trial was applied with a commercial spray rig applying a water rate of 250 L/ha.

Treatment	Application rate	Active
	(g/ha)	Ingredient
Palmero 750 +	100 +	Isoxaflutole
Mentor	1500	Metribuzin
Robert Mary SC	EOO	Hexazinone
BODCAL IIVIAXX 20	500	Imazapic
Palmero 750	125	Isoxaflutole
Palmero 750 +	100 +	Isoxaflutole
Valor	400	Flumioxazin

The trial found that all treatments containing Isoxaflutole (Palmero 750) had better control of grasses and sedges compared to Bobcat iMaxx (Hexazinone + Imazapic). Broadleaf control was best when either Mentor (Metribuzin) or Valor (Flumioxazin) was added to the Isoxaflutole. There was the occasional vine escape in all treatments.



Treatment 2 – 500 g/ha Bobcat iMaxx



Over the course of the trial, all herbicides were similar in the amount of product that left the paddock in runoff water (presented as the dots in the graph). The total amount each herbicide that was recorded in the runoff water was put into the Waterway Risk Unit Model to determine the actual risk of that product doing damage to waterways (Presented as the bars in the graph).

Treatment 3 – 125 g/ha Palmero 750

Treatment 4 - 100 g/ha Palmero 750 + 400 g/ha Valor





The Waterway Risk Unit Model showed that Hexazinone (part of Bobcat iMaxx) presented the greatest risk to waterways by many orders of magnitude compared to any other herbicide in the trial. Metribuzin posed the next highest level of risk, followed by Imazapic (other part of Bobcat iMaxx) and Isoxaflutole, however these all posed a very minor risk in relation to Hexazinone.(*Note: Valor (Flumioxazin) concentration cannot be tested as the laboratory does not have a method to do so.*)

Project Bluewater – Grower Testimonal Reducing crop damage with chemical choice

By Jess Bennett with grower Travis Andrew

Travis Andrew grew up his family's farm in the Baker Creek area and has since taken over operation after completing his boiler maker trade. Travis farms on approximately 140ha of mostly sandy soils located in the Balbera area south of Mackay. Despite being in the industry for several years, Travis looked to Farmacist for independent pesticide advice after previously having poor results and crop damage from his pesticide practices.

Travis' sandy soils caused issues in the past with chemical choices and a significant reduction in yield due to crop damage. By joining Project Bluewater, Travis has seen no crop damage and an improvement in weed control from his pesticide use.

"Adam has identified issues on my farm and suggested products that are appropriate to apply in each paddock", said Travis.

"The benefit of participating in the project is having an advisor who understands my soil type and farming practices, and who can assist me in selecting products that are suited to the location, soil type and weed problem in each block on my farm."



Fig 2: Clean Plant cane paddock great result from effective chemical selection.



Fig 1: Travis Andrew's upgraded boom.

Travis has been working with the Project Bluewater team to upgrade his boom so that he can get consistent and even coverage across the paddock. This allows him to be applying chemical more cost effectively as, with all farming inputs, pesticides too are ever increasing in cost.



Project Bluewater are funded by the partnership between the Australian Government's Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, and Farmacist Pty Ltd

STANDOVER

By Evan Shannon

Standover is a really difficult topic to discuss but one that needs to be addressed as we move into the latter months of 2022.

For most growers, the cane harvest season is well behind schedule and the harvest completion is likely to be well into December, and so if significant rainfall occurs in the next few months there is likely to be some standover cane. There are a few key points that need to be addressed. Many of us will recall the 2010 harvest season and then of course there was 1998.

The 2010/2011 variety profile was a little different from today, although the main difference for Burdekin growers is the uptake of Q240.

The take home message, however, is as follows:

- Ensure all KQ228 is harvested in 2022, it is not a variety to standover.
- Try and harvest the largest crops as soon as possible, as lower yielding crops this year are more likely to successfully standover.
- Data from NSW (where many crops are grown for 2 years) shows that Q240, Q208 and Q232 are all capable of performing as 2 year crops. Even though they have not been tested under North Qld conditions, it does provide a certain degree of confidence.
- Of all varieties grown in 2011, the Q183 CCS profile appears to be by far the best for standover. 🥠

Closing The Feed Gap

By Jess Bennett

Winter is gradually coming to an end, meaning warmer weather and hopefully some spring rain. While cane farmers are approaching their prime harvest time, for the area's graziers it means declining pasture quality and limited pasture availability. So, what options are on the table for graziers to combat these issues?

It's important to be assessing pasture now. In a normal year, useful grass-growing rainfall may not occur until November – December. If there is not enough available, accessible and quality pasture standing in the paddock now, graziers won't be able to maintain their cattle without supplementing or buying in feed. This is especially important if paddocks are subject to frost damage or rain over the winter period, both of which can greatly reduce pasture quality.

Current shorter-term options for managing this year's feed gap include:

- Rotating and resting paddocks
- Developing a Grazing Management Plan by assessing each paddock as to what it can carry and for how long
- · Destocking early
- Growing forage crops
- Supplementation based on feed and soil testing results and animal production goals.

Some of the long-term options available to manage and prepare for the feed gaps are:

- Soil testing and pasture analysis to enable plant and animal nutrient limitations to be addressed
- Planning summer and winter forage crops and pasture improvement activities
- Longer term grazing management planning based on seasonal averages.

Farmacist staff can provide a number of services that can aid in your grazing decision-making including:

- Soil and feed sampling and analysis
- Fertiliser recommendations for forage crops and high-yielding pasture
- Chemical application plans and weed management
- Mapping and measuring pasture and forage crop yields
- Grazing management planning.

Please contact your nearest Farmacist office for further information. 🥠

Photo: Oats crop planted on the 1st of April - ready to graze in August.





It's back on !!

Guest speakers include: Stuart Buck -DAF Rockhampton (Senior Agronomist - Sown Pastures) Desiree Jackson - DJLM Pty Ltd (Livestock Nutritionist) Farmacist Grazing Agronomists

Morning tea provided

Topics include:

- Pasture establishment
- Pasture species selection
- Management of new pastures
- Pasture dieback update - Soil sampling
- Fertiliser and ameliorants
- Feed quality and forage testing
 - Supplementation options

Please RSVP to Mandy (0408 849 902)







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