

March 2008

Calendar of Events:

March

- 19 MSTC Farmers Club Tour, Seehafer Acres & Mara-Wood Farms, 9:30 a.m.
- 20 Central WI Forage Council Seminar, Abby Travel Plaza, Curtiss, 11 am
- 24 Is Organic Farming in your Future?, Normal Bldg, Phillips, 7 pm
- 26 Farm Transfer Workshop, Country Aire, Stratford, 9:45 am
- 27 Dairy Promotion Annual Meeting, Chelsea's Supper Club, Greenwood, 8 pm
- 27 WI Cattlemen's Assoc. Beef Meeting, Medford Ext Office, 6:30 pm

April

- 17 WI Cattlemen's Assoc Beef Meetings, Medford, Ext Office, 6:30 pm

Think Spring!



Maria Bendixen,
Dairy & Livestock Agent
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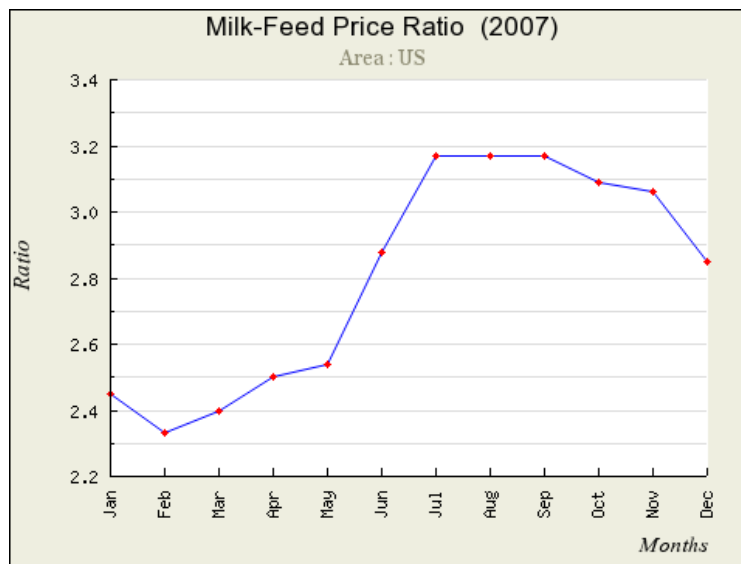
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Extension Views

What's Up or Down With Milk and Feed Prices?

Maria Bendixen, Clark County Dairy & Livestock Agent

Lately it seems like I get more and more calls from farmers about the possibility of using an alternative feed to lower their feed cost. It seems that with the almost \$5.00 corn and the \$13.00 soybeans many farmers are suffering from sticker shock. While lowering feed costs and maintaining performance is always a good idea since feed is generally the largest cash expense on the farm. The milk to feed price ratio suggests that giving up production to lower the feed cost is not a profitable decision.

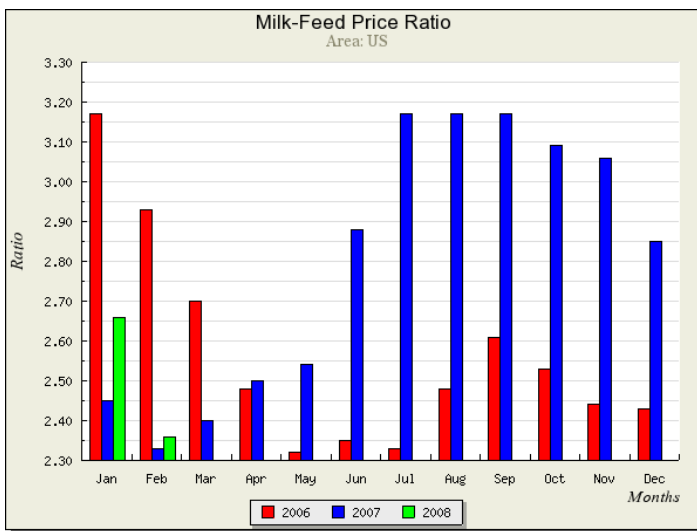


USDA agricultural economists use the term milk to feed price ratio to get a handle on the general profitability of dairying the US. It is designed to reflect the price of milk relative to the price of feed. To calculate it they take the price of a pound of milk divided by the price of a pound of a 16% protein ration composed of corn, soybean meal, and alfalfa hay. None of these are the alternative least cost ration feeds many farmers are looking into. In fact they are using the priciest feeds that are out there. Why? Because we know that cows do well on them and they have very little risk associated with them. The ratio is typically around 2.5 to 3.0 in very poor profitability years or months it is lower in very high profitability years it is higher. This past year we have seen both sides of that coin. It has as you all know been a very volatile year for the dairy industry. Taking a look at the chart you can see that the ratio was very high this summer despite the high feed prices granted the ratio in February of this year was back to 2.33 so we are below that 2.5 that is considered to be a sort of comfort zone.

What's Up or Down With Milk and Feed Prices? (Continued)

The next question is does this compare to other years and other times in dairy farming? The answer is that even in January and February of 2008 we are still higher than at this time last year. It is hard to believe but the problem becomes that people get very used to their standard of living at the higher milk price and then when it drops it takes some adjusting. Bottom line is though that if you made it through last year this year was better. It will be interesting to see what

happens in 2008 but as of right now it still makes good economic sense to get milk production and pay the higher feed prices. One of the best tools a dairy producer has is to monitor these prices for their own ration and to know when it stops paying for itself. Gaining feed efficiency is one way to beat the feed to milk price ratio. There are several ways to do this and some of them are to improve cow health including reproductive health, to improve cow comfort, and to improve forage quality.



If you are starting to feel the pinch of the feed to milk price ratio another option is to contract feed at prices you can live with so you don't have to deal with the price volatility in the milk and feed markets. In the chart above you can see that this ratio can, has and will jump around a lot. Risk management must be done to control that. This can include contracting or saving money in the high ratio months to pay for things later. For more information on milk pricing you can visit the UW-Madison Understanding Dairy Markets web site at <http://future.aae.wisc.edu> or you can always call the Clark County UW-Extension office at 743-5121.

Funding Available for Nutrient Management Implementation

As discussed in previous newsletters, the Land Conservation Department has received funding that can be used to assist farmers with the implementation of a nutrient management plan (NMP). Remember: as of January 1st, 2008, all farms are required to begin progressing toward NMP implementation. The funding rate will be at the \$28/ac level and is available to all farms in Clark County. The funding for 2008 has been completely allocated, but you can still get your name on a list to receive funding in 2009 or 2010. Currently, we have more than 10,000 acres of interest in Clark County for 2009 and the list is still growing. Give us a call if you are interested in receiving funding for NMP implementation. Don't wait too long: The funding may not be available in the future.

Farm Transfer and Succession Workshop

Wednesday, March 26
Country Aire Banquet Hall
Stratford, WI
9:45 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

Agenda

- 9:45 am Registration
- 10:00 am Effective Communication of Personal and Business Goals
- 10:40 am Financial Planning for Farm Transfer
- 11:30 am Can You Afford to Own all Your Farmland?
- 12:15 Lunch
- 1:00 pm Selecting a Farm Business Arrangement that Works for You
- 2:00 pm Break
- 2:15 pm Tax Considerations in the Farm Transfer Process

- 2:45 pm Questions, Evaluation, Wrap up
- 3:00 pm Adjourn

Retirement, succession and estate planning are inherently linked together when you are planning for a family farm.

A balance of personal, family and business goals is important for a succession plan to work.

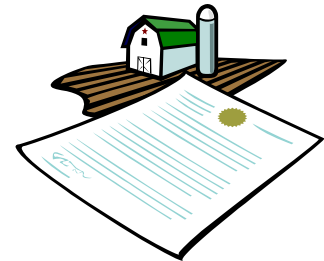
This workshop will help you consider your goals, and learn about business arrangement options and tax issues.

Participants will leave the workshop with an idea of their living expenses before and after retirement, and the beginning pieces of a working succession plan.

Cost for this workshop is \$15 per person and includes educational materials and meal. Late and walk-in registrations will be \$20.

Registration deadline:

March 21



Farm Transfer & Succession Workshop Registration

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email address _____

Phone _____

attending _____

Make check payable to: UW-Extension

Mail to: Marathon County UW-Extension, Mike Wildeck, 212 River Drive, STE 3, Wausau WI 54403

Secretary Nilsestuen announces program to help boost cattle

Secretary Rod Nilsestuen, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, announced today a statewide program designed to add value to feeder calves and help improve beef industry profits. Named **Badger Vac 45**, the program verifies that calves meet certain criteria sought-after in the marketplace. Qualified calves will wear a purple ear tag.

“Wisconsin’s meat industry generates \$12 billion and 88,000 jobs for the state,” said Nilsestuen. “Cattlemen must make a profit to stay in business. There’s an opportunity here to add value to Wisconsin-raised calves and improve the bottom line. **Badger Vac 45** can help producers diversify, distinguish their product and compete at the high end.”

The market is demanding healthier, better performing calves that have been weaned, vaccinated and know how to eat from a feed bunk and drink from a tank. Calves pre-conditioned to meet the demands of the marketplace often get top dollar.

The new statewide program will verify calves as pre-conditioned according to specific protocols. Wisconsin is among the first to introduce a pre-conditioned calf program after Kentucky, Tennessee and Iowa.

Secretary Nilsestuen spoke to about 300 people attending the Wisconsin Cattlemen’s Association 2008 Winter Conference on Friday afternoon.

At 10 a.m., Saturday, DATCP livestock specialist Jeff Swensen will conduct an in-depth workshop at the cattlemen’s conference to introduce the program’s protocols. Jeff Lehmkuler, University of Wisconsin Extension beef specialist and Bill Haufman, Monroe County UW-Extension agent will join him. **Badger Vac 45** pre-conditioned calf program is a collaboration of DATCP and UW Extension.

For more information about **Badger Vac 45** protocols visit the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Web site, www.datcp.state.wi.us search word ‘beef’ or call Jeff Swenson at 608-224-5082.

North Central Wisconsin Cattlemen’s Association Beef Meetings

Area beef farmers are welcome to join the North Central Wisconsin Cattlemen’s Association. Increasing costs of production and specialty markets have prompted the need for sharing information among producers. Market demand and the need for producer/consumer education are critical for the future of the beef industry.

As of January 1, 2007, Wisconsin has 265,000 beef cows. This represents a 6% increase of 15,000 head. Farms with beef cows number 12,700. The average herd size is 21 head. Compare your herd size to these numbers. We can make a larger impact when we bring small producers together. This is the

intent of the NCWCA.

Specific programs and goals of NCWCA have yet to be finalized. This organization will be responsive to the needs of the members. We need your input. We need your opinions.

We are joining with UW-Extension to bring the following beef education seminars to our area:

- March 27—Estrus Synchronization Protocols
- April 17—Program Requirements for the State Precondition Feeder Calf Program



The programs will begin at 6:30 p.m. at the Medford Extension office. Jeff Lehmkuhler, Extension Beef Specialist will join us via teleconference. Discussion will follow the educational program.

For more information, contact Sandy Stuttgart, Taylor County Agriculture Educator at 715-748-3327.



Wisconsin Grazing Schools 2008

River Falls — June 10-11
Gleason — June 24-25
Fond du Lac — July 22 (one day)
Richland Center — TBA

The Wisconsin Grazing Schools are designed to teach producers, educators, and agency staff the basics of management intensive grazing with a hands-on approach. This two-day, intensive workshop will provide opportunities for in-depth discussions, field exercises, and reference materials that cover both livestock and agronomic topics related to grazing.

For more information contact Dennis Cosgrove, 715-425-3345

Topics:

- Introduction to Management Intensive Grazing
- Economic Considerations in Grazing Systems
- Agronomics; Plant growth, forage quality, species selection, fertilization
- Soil fertility and management on pasture in pasture system
- Forage Quality Clipping, Exercise & Pasture Allocation
- Pasture monitoring, pasture stock, species identification
- Real World Aspects of Grazing
- Grazing Systems Layout & Design Water Requirements & Availability
- Livestock Nutrition on pasture
- Animal Health concerns on pasture
- Building & Using Fences for Management Intensive Grazing
- Pasture Establishment and improvement

Central Wisconsin Forage Council Winter Seminar and Luncheon

Thursday, March 20th
11:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Abby Travel Plaza, Curtiss



Topics:

- **GMO Systems in Corn: Sorting out which traits are right for your farm**
Nick Schneider, Winnebago County Crops & Soils Agent
- **Economic Comparisons of Forage Harvesting and Storage Systems**
Gregg Hadley, Farm Financial Management Specialist
- **Placing a Value on Standing Crops**
Local Agent

Cost for lunch is \$5.00

Please pre-register by Monday, March 17th.

Contact the Clark County UW-Extension Office at 715-743-5121 to register.

2008 MSTC Farmers Club Tour

March 19, 2008

9:30 a.m.—3:45 p.m.

Seehafer Acres Inc, Ken & Karen Seehafer

Mara-Wood Farms Inc, Steven & Dolores Sternweis

Tour new free stall barns, milking parlors, calf and heifer barns, and view unique manure handling systems. Lunch at KC Hall from 11:30-1:00 p.m. with guest speaker: Carl Babler of First Capitol AG, who will be talking on “Carbon Credits: What a Farmer needs to know about Carbon Trading Opportunities.”

Bus locations:

Marshfield Bus – meet at KC Hall 9:30

Auburndale Bus – meet at Pioneer Bank 9:30

Pittsville Bus – meet at Pittsville Bank 9:20 and Vesper Community Ctr. 9:40.

For more information or to register contact Phil Ely, Mid-State Technical College call 715-389-7032. Registration fee of \$3.00 per person.

Is Organic Farming in Your Future?

UW-Extension Taylor & Price Counties are sponsoring two workshops “Is Organic Farming in Your Future.”

Organic Crop Production

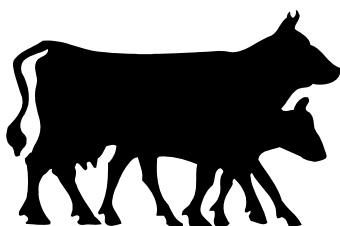
March 24, 2008

Normal Building, Phillips

7:00 p.m.

Topics:

- **Organic Crop Production,**
*Harriet Behar, Organic Outreach Coordinator,
Midwest Organic Sustainable Education Service*
- **Local Markets for Organic Crops,**
Art Scheele, American Organic Seed Company
- **Soil Fertility for Organic Crops,**
Mark Kopecky, Price County UW-Extension



Cost is \$5.00 per person per meeting due one week prior to each meeting. Registration at the door is \$10.00. Contact Mark Kopecky, Price County Ag & Natural Resource Agent at 715-339-2555 or Sandy Stuttgen, Taylor County Agriculture Educator at 715-748-3327.

Emergency Action for Manure Spills

Matt Zoschke, Clark County Land Conservationist

It'll never happen to you, will it? You're a good farmer and spills only happen to those who are negligent. Unfortunately, neither of those statements is true. No matter how "good" of a farmer you claim to be, no matter how conscientious you are about your operation, unforeseen events still happen. If I asked the half-dozen or so farmers in Clark County who I have worked with recently about manure runoff events, leaking/failing manure storages, and/or manure spills, I don't think any of them would have stated that they were trying to cause any of those activities to occur. In fact, the contrary exists; farmers are in the environmental business and do not wish for negative environmental impact. Yet, bad things can happen to good people. Even the best farmers should plan for potential manure spills and overflows.

An Emergency Action Plan for manure spills and runoff events should not be viewed as another cumbersome regulatory document. Think about it: if and when a manure spill occurs, **will you have the cool headedness to direct individuals during the clean-up operation or will you be frantically trying to organize individuals who may not even have the slightest understanding of the directions you are trying to convey to them?** In times of high stress and fast action, are you certain that all of the necessary information will be conveyed? If you do not currently have a manure spill emergency action plan, the Land Conservation

Department strongly encourages you to develop one.

What do you do if there is a manure spill or if there is a manure runoff event? The logical starting point is with a Manure Spill Emergency Response Plan. There are four "Cs" of manure spill emergency response actions (all are equally important components).

1. Control the source.
2. Contain the spill.
3. Comply with documentation requirements.
4. Clean-up and reassess the affected area.

Even before you implement your action and response plan, you should take the one minute needed to call and make the appropriate individuals aware of your manure incident. First, call the Land Conservation Department (715-743-5102) and the County Sheriff (911). If the spill/overflow is of a large quantity, other agencies may need to be involved. If the spill/overflow is large, immediately contact the WI-DNR 24 Hour Manure Spill Hotline (1-800-943-0003). The Land Conservation Department will assist you in making the other appropriate phone calls as needed and depending upon the situation others may or may not need to be involved. The key point is to let someone know you have had a manure spill. The Land Conservation Department (LCD), upon notification, will travel to the spill site and begin assisting with the clean-up.



While a spill may be new to you, it isn't to us. Let our experience help you in your time of need.

Controlling the source and containing the spill may or may not be easy depending upon the type of spill/runoff event occurring. If your manure storage is overflowing, the following activities may be acceptable practices to minimize any off-site risk and impact.

1. Stop adding manure and wastewater to the facility.
2. Pump manure and spread if weather conditions allow. Although, do not trade one risky situation for another by manure spreading on frozen or snow-covered ground thereby increasing the risk for a runoff event.
3. Transfer manure to another facility with more capacity.
4. Create a small impoundment to contain the manure near the base of the facility.
5. Add soil to the berm to temporarily increase capacity.

If manure is leaking out of the side of your storage facility from a

Emergency Action for Manure Spills (continued)

slurrystore/concrete panel seam or from seepage through the earthen liner, follow steps 1-3 outlined above. Furthermore, with an earthen storage you should try to place soil over the seepage point, being extremely careful that you do not drive over or compact the seepage point risking a complete berm failure.

Options 4 and 5 outlined above are only temporary fixes and are not permanently allowable under current local and State ordinances without prior approval. Although, by all means, use them as a temporary fix: you have permission. Please contact the LCD immediately, as problems with manure storage structures require the services of an individual experienced in manure storage design and installation.

If you are manure spreading and experience a runoff event or a manure tanker spill, immediately stop application. Incorporate as much manure as possible into the soil and create a temporary diversion or berm to contain manure on the field. If manure flows to a road ditch, find the culvert and plug it with sand or round bales. You may also try plowing/digging a diversion trench to direct the manure flow away from any streams or field drainage ditches and into a temporary containment area. Immediately call a septic hauler or anyone else who has the capacity to pump manure. Pump the manure back into the tanker and safely spread in another area.

Complying with documentation requirements is a very important step in reducing any perceived negligence and liability. The worse thing a farmer can do is to not report a spill or overflow. There is never a reason to give the impression that you are hiding something much worse than a manure spill/overflow. It is only manure and chances are someone has already seen it or reported it. Once the Land Conservation Department has been contacted, they can assist you by documenting the actions you have already taken or will be taking to minimize the environmental risks associated with manure spills/overflows. The LCD will assess the extent of the spill and make note of any obvious damages (property, personal, or environmental). The LCD will also verify whether or not manure can reach or has reached surface water or groundwater. Still pictures and video recordings also provide very good documentation. Any type of documentation is acceptable. Once again, it is of utmost importance that a farm develops a nutrient management plan (NMP) to assist with manure application and provide additional documentation that manure was being stored and/or land-applied in an approved manner. The NMP is your documentation that you are doing the right thing and something unforeseen has occurred to you. Without a NMP, how do we demonstrate that you were not negligent? A NMP provides documentation. Bottomline!

Cleaning up the affected area is a relatively straightforward process if the manure was contained in a field or road ditch. Call in a pump truck and pump it up. If manure has been impounded in a wetland, woodlot, or along a stream corridor, cleanup is more involved. Of course, if you are able to pump manure back into a holding tanker, do it! Realize that you will not be able to get all of manure cleaned up in these areas. Develop a plan to monitor the site in order to determine if site remediation is warranted. Also, take time to identify the flow paths through the landscape and what the final fate of the manure may be. The LCD will assist you with this process.

After the clean-up is finished, take time to **reassess your actions** and determine if there are any changes that need to be made to make the process less stressful and more efficient. Perform any needed repairs and take a breather. Spills are intense!

In short, develop a plan for your actions, so your actions don't plan you. You need to be in a position of action, not reaction during a manure spill. Future articles will outline the process of developing an actual emergency plan. In the meantime, think about your operation and identify any areas that may be a weak link when it comes to the storage and application of manure. Then, give the Land Conservation Department a call and work with us to develop your manure spill emergency action plan. Ask the farmer south of Greenwood if he sleeps better with one!

Winter Spreading Guidelines

Matt Zoschke, Clark County Land Conservationist

Recent events in Clark County have prompted the need for a quick review of winter manure application. A lot of snow cover still remains on the ground and in some places the snow cover equals about four inches of snow-water equivalent on the ground surface. This is the most water we have had sitting on the landscape for many years. Usually, at this time of the year, we only have about one inch or less of snow-water equivalent on the surface. We also are experiencing a lot of snow cover late into the season; the first day of spring is less than two weeks away. Manure storage structures designed to hold less than six months of manure are being filled to the brink of overflowing. One thing for sure is that it is very difficult and extremely risky to be applying manure at this time of the year. Many farmers had stopped applying manure a month or so ago, but this snow keeps hanging on, forcing some farmers to begin application or face a manure storage overflow! In fact, there are manure storages in Clark County overflowing right now!

The question remains: **Where should we apply manure?**

If your manure storage still has adequate capacity or if you have had the Land Conservation Department identify safe stacking sites on your farm, please continue to utilize these safe storage options. If you no longer have adequate storage capacity or safe stacking sites have never been identified, the following list will provide you with a way to identify the least risky fields for winter manure spreading.

If you must apply manure, find the fields with the following characteristics:

1. **High on the landscape**- fields

located the farthest from streams, ditches (road or otherwise), and other concentrated flow areas. Follow the statewide setbacks!

2. **No upslope runoff**- fields that do not have other fields draining across them will have less runoff water moving over them.

3. **Downslope buffers**- fields with buffer strips, including a hay field downslope, will filter runoff water.

4. **Grassed waterways, well casings, and tile inlets**- stay away from them!

5. **Rough surface**- fields that have been contour plowed in the fall will have a rough surface that will slow runoff water.

6. **High surface residue**- fields that have greater than 30% residue cover will slow runoff water and decrease soil erosion.

7. **Internally drained**- fields have more ponding/infiltration and less runoff.

8. **Slope less than 6%**- flatter fields may produce less runoff. Applying liquid manure on fields with a 3% or less slope is ideal in winter.

9. **Corn ground**- corn will utilize manure better than any other crop.

Low fertility ground- fields with less than 50ppm phosphorus

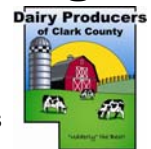
The least risky fields will have all of the above characteristics. A field appropriate for winter spreading will exhibit at least seven of the ten listed characteristics. If you absolutely have to spread, limit the application of liquid manure to less than one tanker load/acre or less than 5,000 gallons. Limit the application of solid manure to less than 10 tons/acre. Come back to the field in spring and reapply if necessary.

As always, implement a nutrient management plan, which may reduce your liability if a runoff event occurs. Recordkeeping is essential to provide

quick answers when the tough questions are asked. Without the appropriate documentation, any and all information is subject to scrutiny. Be prepared to outline your story in detail!

Worst case scenario- snow cover continues until the end of March and any thaw event happens fast and coupled with rain. A quicker melt means more surface-water runoff, even if the ground is frost-free. In situations like this, the rate of melt can quickly exceed the rate of infiltration, thereby producing large quantities of runoff. Best case scenario- several days of moderately warm weather (35-40 degrees) and slow melting that encourages infiltration and discourages runoff. Bottom line- a warm-up is on the way (it cannot stay snow covered forever) and the snow will melt and the ground will thaw. After the snow is gone, manure can fly onto the fields with limited risk of runoff.

Dairy Promotion Annual Meeting



The Clark County Dairy Promotion committee will hold its annual meeting on Thursday, March 27, 8 p.m. at Chelsea's in Greenwood. The Dairy Promotion Committee supports different activities throughout the year promoting dairy products. They get their funding from local businesses throughout Clark County. If interested in attending the annual meeting on March 27th, contact Theresa, UW-Extension at 715-743-5121 by March 24th.



CLARK COUNTY

517 Court Street, Room 104
Neillsville WI 54456

Phone: 715-743-5121
Fax: 715-743-5129



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Attention: Engineering Position in Land Conservation Department

The Land Conservation Department has an engineering position available to all whom may be interested. The position is fulltime with benefits. The main duties of the position will be assisting farmers with the engineering design of manure storage, barnyards, grassed waterways and other conservation practices. This position will also be assisting with the implementation of a countywide surface and groundwater monitoring program. Application materials can be obtained from the Land Conservation Department. The application materials will be accepted until March 21st. You do not need to be a registered engineer to apply. Please contact the Land Conservation Department at 715-743-5102 if you or anyone you know may be interested.

