



# Farm & Field

Chippewa Valley Agriculture Newsletter

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August 2009

Volume 13 Issue 8

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Good Day!!

It's Eau Claire County Fair week as I write this month's column. I've been involved with fairs for over 55 years and look forward to the coming week of watching young people achieve and seeing the pride from their families and friends as they exhibit at the fair.

It appears that July will go on record as one of the coolest in recent times. In many parts of the area it will be one of the driest on record as well. It's really amazing to see how well most of the crops look for as little moisture as we have had. Timely rains will be needed to produce the bumper crops that are being talked about in the popular press daily.

Jerry Clark and I attended a 10 State Extension Nutrient Management Workshop in Des Moines, Iowa last week. Most of the crops appeared to be on a normal pace with over 99% of the corn tasseled and silked. Folks from Illinois and Indiana talked about late planting difficulties and short crops in their areas. We always need to remember that those areas normally benefit from later frosts than we normally experience.

Enjoy spending some time with family and friends in the coming days.

"Continue to Farm Smarter"

*Mahlon Peterson*

Mahlon Peterson  
 UW-Extension Agricultural Agent  
 Interim State Swine Specialist/Leader

## Calendar

### August

- 1 County Fair Livestock Auction - Expo Center
- 5 CVFC Board Meeting - Loopy's
- 7 Meat Animal Project Banquet - Augusta
- 18 Northern Wisconsin Beef Producers Meeting
- 29 Night on the Farm in the Augusta area

### September

- 2 Chippewa Valley Forage Field at D & D Hawkins Dairy - Chippewa Falls
- 3 Chippewa Valley Variety Trials - Chippewa County
- 7 **Labor Day—Office Closed**
- 22 Autumn Begins
- 26 Chippewa Valley Farm/City Day at D & D Hawkins Dairy - Chippewa Falls

Please call our office for more details, registration information, etc.

# Something To Chew On . . .



Mahlon Peterson Ag Agent  
Eau Claire County

## CHIPPEWA VALLEY FORAGE EXPO SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 2

The Chippewa Valley Forage Council has scheduled a Forage Expo for Wednesday, September 2 at the D & D Hawkins Farm west of Chippewa Falls starting at 9:30 AM. The show will conclude at 3 PM and food service will be available on site.

This producer-oriented event will focus on corn silage harvesting, hay baling, bunker silo management and cover crop establishment and management. The expo will combine educational presentations, agribusiness booths and field demonstrations. Morning field demonstrations will focus on silage harvest and bunker management while afternoon demonstrations will feature cover crop establishment and dry hay baling.

The Forage Expo is co-sponsored by the Midwest Forage Association and UW-Extension offices in Chippewa and Eau Claire counties. Speakers will be Extension specialists and agents.

Contact either the Chippewa County (715.726.7950) or Eau Claire County Extension Office (715.839.4712) for more details.

## Managing through Difficult Times: Health Care for Farmers-Finding Options that Work

Many Wisconsin farm families have found it difficult to obtain affordable and accessible health insurance. One farm family described the situation this way: "We have gone without health insurance for 12 years because decent health insurance is just too costly... This is money that is hard to

justify with all the bills and then living expenses. So, we take the risk of going without... that's one more worry on our shoulders, hoping that nothing serious happens to anyone in our family."

Going without health insurance is a significant risk. Fortunately, there are more options available to farm families now than in the past and Congress is working on federal health care reform legislation that could add still more options. Here are some of the health care options and resources currently available to Wisconsin farm families, along with basic information and ideas about how to access each program or service.

**Badger Care Plus for Children and Families** – is available to all Wisconsin children up to 19 years old—at all income levels—and to parents and caretakers of children with incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty level. The Badger Care Plus program has new guidelines which enable larger numbers of farm families and self-employed families to be eligible than under the Badger Care program that preceded it. The Standard Plan includes a range of services: primary and preventive care, hospitalization, physical and occupational therapy, outpatient mental health treatment, chiropractic services, dental care, pre-natal care, prescription drugs and medical supplies and equipment. Be aware that families must meet income guidelines and age restrictions of children on an annual basis. Thus, higher income in any given year or children who have outgrown the 19 year age restriction can make families ineligible for coverage.

To apply for Badger Care Plus for Children and Families, go to

[www.access.wi.gov](http://www.access.wi.gov) and click on *Apply for Benefits*. You will need to create a Wisconsin User ID and password to initiate an account and apply for services. If you do not have access to the Internet or if you have questions, call Member Services at 800-362-3002.

**Badger Care Plus Core Plan** – provides access to basic health care services for long-term uninsured adults. Recipients must meet certain eligibility requirements: 1) their income must be at or below 200% of the federal guidelines for poverty; 2) they must be between the ages of 19 and 64 who do not have dependent children under the age of 19 living with them; and 3) they must not have private health insurance when they request coverage or in the 12 months before they request coverage. The Core Plan covers basic health care services, including primary and preventive care as well as generic drugs, hospital services, emergency room visits, physical therapy, chiropractic services plus medical supplies and equipment. This is a new program (made available on July 15, 2009) that could be very helpful for Wisconsin farm families who have been uninsured for some time. But, be aware that families must meet income guidelines and age restrictions on an annual basis. So, higher income in any given year or family member age changes (recipients being over the age of 64 or having children under the age of 19 living with them) can make families ineligible for coverage.

To apply for the Badger Care Plus Core Plan, go to [www.access.wi.gov](http://www.access.wi.gov) and click on *Apply for Benefits*. You will be asked to complete a short survey about your health and mail or fax proof of your income and other about

To apply for the Badger Care Plus Core Plan, go to [www.access.wi.gov](http://www.access.wi.gov) and click on *Apply for Benefits*. You will be asked to complete a short survey about your health and mail or fax proof of your income and other information. Call 800-291-2002 for further information about the program.

### Farmers' Health Cooperative of Wisconsin

-- is a cooperative health care service developed specifically for Wisconsin farmers and agribusinesses by the Wisconsin Federation of Cooperatives. As a cooperative, it is designed and managed by and for the members to provide group purchasing power for people involved in the field of agriculture. It offers a choice of doctors, 24 hour/7 days-week coverage, first dollar preventive care, prescription drug coverage, dental care (a new benefit), a 24-hour nurse hotline, and coverage for work-related injuries. Health care coverage is provided by Aetna, one of the nation's top five insurance companies. The program states they provide "predictable, stabilized rates;" this will be the key challenge since their rates, over time, will be dependent on the costs incurred by those who are members of the cooperative. Adults enrolling in the cooperative must participate in a free personal Health Risk Assessment as a requirement for entry into the program.

You can obtain a health insurance quote as well as information on benefits and an application packet at [www.farmershealthcooperative.com](http://www.farmershealthcooperative.com) or you can call 800-539-9370 for more information.

### Health Insurance Risk Sharing Program (HIRSP)

- HIRSP offers health insurance to Wisconsin residents who are unable to find adequate health care coverage in the private market due to their medical conditions or due to lost employee-sponsored group health insurance. HIRSP is sometimes referred to as Wisconsin's "high risk

pool" or insurance of last resort. Applicants to the HIRSP program must meet the following requirements: 1) resident of Wisconsin, 2) under age 65, 3) not eligible for employer-offered group health care insurance, and 4) not eligible for Wisconsin Medicaid services or Badger Care Plus. In addition, applicants must be eligible because of preexisting medical conditions or because they have lost employer-offered group health insurance. HIRSP covers major medical and prescription drug expenses, subject to pre-existing condition limitations. Policy-holders are responsible for paying premiums, deductible and co-insurance amounts as outlined in their HIRSP policy. Enrollment in HIRSP is not dependent on income or assets, so it can be helpful to farm families who have significant income yet have problems obtaining coverage due to medical conditions (it is generally used to cover individuals with significant preexisting conditions).

To apply for HIRSP coverage, go to the HIRSP Website: [www.hirsp.org](http://www.hirsp.org), call HIRSP Customer Service at 800-828-4777 or contact an insurance agent licensed in Wisconsin.

### Community Health Centers

- Seventeen Community Health Centers (CHCs) exist in 33 medically underserved communities (including rural areas) across Wisconsin. This network of CHCs is federally-funded; each is a non-profit corporation that delivers primary medical, dental and mental health services in medically underserved areas. They operate on a sliding fee scale basis and most accept all kinds of insurance, including Medicare, Medicaid and Badger Care. This is not a form of health insurance, but farmers living within the service area of a CHC may benefit from its services. CHCs' sliding fee scales and their ability to accept all kinds of insurance are powerful advantages. The biggest disadvantage is that CHCs

are currently only located in 33 communities across the state (see attached [map](#) and [list](#) of Wisconsin Community Health Centers).

For further information, contact the Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association, 4600 American Parkway, Suite 204, Madison, WI 53718; or you can call 608-277-7477 or check their Website: [www.wphca.org](http://www.wphca.org).

**Free Health Care Clinics** - Thirty-two free health care clinics exist in Wisconsin, with several serving rural areas of the state. Most are community-based clinics, and some are affiliated with religious organizations. The services offered differ from clinic to clinic. The St. Clare Health Mission in La Crosse, for example, is open two nights a week, making it more accessible for farm families. This clinic offers primary health care and a pharmacy that provides medications at reduced cost. Volunteers provide the health care services, and services are free unless patients are in a position to pay (on a sliding fee scale basis). Some clinics do not offer services to persons with health insurance; so they would only be a resource for uninsured farm families.

For further information, check the attached [list of free clinics](#) or contact Susan Strom, Chippewa Valley Free Clinic, P. O. Box 231, Eau Claire, WI 54702; call (715) 839-8477.

**Parish Nurse Programs** - More than 400 churches throughout Wisconsin have Parish Nurse Programs that provide a range of prevention and early intervention programs including blood pressure screening, bone density screening, information about nutrition and exercise, weight loss, smoking cessation, grief counseling/support and other programs, which vary by location. Parish Nurse Programs bring a holistic approach to health care, integrating the physical,

the Seeds of Hope P emotional, social, environmental and spiritual aspects of health. Some programs are run by volunteers and others employ paid Parish Nurses. While Parish Nurse Programs are not able to provide a full array of health care services, they can be a helpful resource for low-cost prevention and early intervention services in many communities across Wisconsin. They can also help link people with other health resources in the community or region.

Check with churches in your community or area to see if they have Parish Nurse Programs that could be helpful to you.

To access more information and/or tools to help analyze your situation, link to the Extension Responds web page at: [www.uwex.edu/ces/ag/farmingindifficulttimes.html](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/ag/farmingindifficulttimes.html)

For assistance in making these tough decisions, contact your UW-Extension county agent, your Farm Business and Production Management Instructor in the Technical College or the DATCP Farm Center at 1-800-942-2474.

### **MANAGING THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES: SOWING THE SEEDS OF HOPE- PROGRAMS RESPONDING TO WISCONSIN FARM FAMILY DISTRESS**

Many Wisconsin farm families have experienced financial distress for the past 25 years. They have struggled with plummeting land values in the mid-1980s and a host of other stressors since then: severe drought, floods, wet springs, major feed shortages, low milk prices at various times, low prices for other commodities (beef, hogs, corn, soybeans) at times and escalating costs for farm inputs (fuel, seed, fertilizer, herbicides).

The "Sowing the Seeds of Hope" project is a seven-state, grant-funded project to help farm families respond to stress. In Wisconsin, the project offers the following targeted services to ease the

chronic, prolonged stress facing Wisconsin farm families.

#### ***Weekend Getaways for Farm Couples***

Taking a weekend away from the farm is something people who milk cows two or three times a day seldom do. During these Weekend Getaways, farm couples learn to handle stress more effectively, to communicate more clearly with spouses and kids and to problem-solve and plan for the future. They also learn about helpful state and local resources and start to create a network with other farm families in similar situations. The project also offers Weekend Getaways for farm women, farm men and farm families, as funding allows. The project provides funds to help cover the cost of farm labor and child care to assist people in getting away from the farm for the weekend experiences.

#### ***Trainings for Professional and Natural Helpers***

Seeds of Hope offers training to sensitize both professionals and natural helpers (people who regularly work with farm families) to the farm culture, the stressors farm families face, signs and symptoms of distress, resources available to help farm families, and ways they can respond to farm families in distress. Professional helpers include health care, mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence prevention professionals; clergy; University of Wisconsin-Extension agents; and technical college instructors. Natural helpers include veterinarians, milk testers, milk haulers, cattle haulers, machinery dealers, feed and seed dealers and creditors. The training program fosters a network of "helpers" and informs them about resources available through the Wisconsin Farm Center, the Harvest of Hope Fund, UW-Extension, technical colleges, health agencies, food programs, winterization services and other resources for farm families.

#### ***Resources for Stressed-Out Farm Youth***

Farm financial and family stress has

unique effects on young people. A sample of Wisconsin farm teenagers said they are most stressed by three circumstances:

- Farm responsibilities in addition to church, school and extra-curricular activities.
- The stigma of being farm kids in communities where farm families are a minority.
- Their lack of money in comparison with urban and suburban kids in their communities.

Seeds of Hope project funds supported development and distribution of a guidebook called "It's All in The Farm Family". This booklet is packed with materials designed to strengthen communication and problem solving with youth in farm families.

#### ***Counseling Services***

Counseling programs for farmers have been helpful in other states, and farm families have increasingly requested counseling in Wisconsin as well. The Seeds of Hope project offers a voucher program so families without insurance or with inadequate coverage can get the counseling services they need. The project also created a database of almost 1,000 mental health and substance abuse counselors who are familiar with the farm culture and who want to work with farm families in distress. Counseling services are available in most Wisconsin counties. You can access the database and the counseling vouchers by contacting the Wisconsin Farm Center at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection; call: 800-942-2474.

#### ***Accessing Services***

For more information about any of the services offered through the Sowing project, please contact:

Kathy Schmitt  
Wisconsin Farm Center  
Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,  
Trade and Consumer Protection

P. O. Box 8911  
 Madison, WI 53708-8911  
 608-224-5048 or 800-942-2474  
[Kathy.Schmitt@wi.gov](mailto:Kathy.Schmitt@wi.gov)

Sowing The Seeds of Hope project is a seven-state, grant-funded project in the Midwest where each state has developed support services for farm families in need. Leaders from the seven states learn from each other through monthly teleconferences and occasional face-to-face meetings. The Wisconsin Farm Center at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection is the lead agency for Wisconsin's project. Other partners in the project are STAR Outreach, Wisconsin Rural Women's Initiative, Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation, Child and Family Therapeutic Systems, Harvest of Hope Fund, Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Wisconsin's Cooperative Extension Service, and the following individuals: Jeff Court, Mary Pribbernow, Lori Walsh and Roger Williams.

### **Managing through Difficult Times: Staying Up in a Down Economy: Farming in a Depressed Environment Without Getting Depressed**

The past 25 years – with low commodity prices, rapidly escalating farm expenses, shifting global markets, and extreme climatic problems including drought, floods, cold springs, hot summers -- have been challenging for Wisconsin farmers. Gross farm income has been down and farm expenses have escalated. Many farmers have struggled "to stay up in a down economy" and "to farm in a depressed environment without getting depressed."

You can use a number of approaches to stay up in a down economy, including the following eight strategies. Try one or two strategies today...the more you use, the greater your likelihood of dealing with stress.

### **Watch what you ingest**

Farmers don't always eat right, especially during spring planting season and harvest times when they are in a hurry to get the work done...while the sun is shining or before the snow flies. Coffee and rolls or soda and candy bars frequently become the norm during these crunch times. A diet of empty calories like this can result in caffeine and sugar "highs" and the "lows" that follow. If you find that you need more and more coffee, donuts, soda, candy bars and chips to "keep your energy up" you are probably addicted to these empty calories. You should consider a major change in your diet. Some simple guidelines are in order: get a good breakfast and at least one other balanced meal each day, cut back on caffeine and highly refined carbohydrates, cut back on saturated fats, get plenty of fruit and vegetables and include fiber in your diet. This diet will result in sustainable energy levels rather than the "peaks and valleys" that will eventually cause "energy crashes" and depressed moods.

### **Get regular exercise**

Farmers frequently say "I get plenty of exercise on the farm," and there was a time when farmers did get plenty of exercise. But today, farmers use barn cleaners, silo unloaders, mechanical feeding equipment, gravity-fed grain handling equipment, and tractors for moving large hay bales. In short, a lot of the backbreaking exercise that was a normal part of farm life has been replaced by mechanized technology. A lack of exercise can cause headaches, backaches, depressed moods, anxiety attacks and insomnia. Fortunately, there are fairly simple ways to get more exercise:

- Walk whenever you can. Walk from the farmstead to the field and from the far end of a parking lot to your church or implement dealer's door. Take a walk with your spouse in the early morning or after lunch.
- Do stretching exercises to stretch

out all of the muscles between your head, neck, shoulders and lower back. Tense muscles cause many headaches and backaches and stretching exercises can prevent this problem.

- Jog, swim, go for a bike ride, shoot buckets, or do other kinds of exercise that help you keep your body fit and your mind sharp.

### **Use positive self-talk**

When we find ourselves in difficult or stressful situations, negative self-talk or chatter usually kicks in immediately. Mastering the fine art of transforming negative self-talk into positive self-talk can be one of the most powerful strategies we have for staying up in a down economy. The first step is to recognize the negative self-talk when it occurs. Five of the most common forms of negative self-talk are using four-letter words, "shoulds" and "oughts," catastrophizing, putting yourself down and blaming others. If you hear any of these things going through your head, say: "STOP!" Then reframe the self-talk using more positive language. When you use positive self-talk, you allow yourself to accept the situation (you don't have to like it!), nurture yourself, view the situation as a challenge, and act with courage. Positive self-talk might sound like this: "This is part of the challenge of farming...but I don't have to worry. I'm a skilled person and I can rise to the challenge. If I do \_\_\_\_\_, I'll be on my way to dealing with the situation."

### **Practice the art of relaxation**

When we are stressed out, our blood pressure rises, our heart rate accelerates, our metabolism speeds up, our muscles tense up, and our breathing becomes fast and shallow. In short, we are experiencing the "fight or flight" response: our bodies are gearing up to fight or to flee the situation. In addition, we often freeze: we become paralyzed or immobilized and simply can't act. Practicing the relaxation response on a regular basis can help

farm family members get past the fight, flight or freeze response. The relaxation response requires four things: a quiet environment, a comfortable position, a passive attitude and a mental device. In practice, it amounts to getting comfortable in a peaceful, quiet setting; closing your eyes; taking a few deep breaths; letting your muscles relax completely; and then visualizing yourself in a peaceful, relaxed setting for a brief period of time. This activity, if practiced daily, can help farm family members feel more relaxed and centered—better able to take action, rather than being immobilized by stressful situations. Try to find a time—early morning, lunchtime, before bed at night—when you can take five minutes to find the peace relaxation can bring.

### **Talk with family members**

When we experience stress, we often “clam-up” and fail to talk with the most important people in our lives. It happens for many reasons: we may be embarrassed by the situation; we may feel we have failed as family “providers;” or it may be we simply don’t know what to say or how to say it. But chances are family members already know there are problems...the tension tells them so. It’s better to talk openly with family members: it will help you get concerns/frustrations off your chest and you may be able to solicit their help in resolving issues. Your children can assist by pitching in to help with the work or by cutting back on family expenses (fewer or less expensive purchases). Adult brothers and sisters can assist by providing labor, offering an operating loan or extending the provisions of a farm purchase agreement. Parents can also help if they know the situation you are facing. So, summon your courage and share your situation in an honest way that is sensitive to the concerns family members may have. It could be one of the most helpful conversations you can have.

### **Build a positive support system**

One of the most common responses

when farm families find themselves in long-term stressful situations is to withdraw or pull back from their social support system—family, friends, neighbors, church, school, and farm organizations. This is a common response but it’s not a healthy one. Family, friends, neighbors and other people or organizations provide us with one of the best buffers for stress. They allow us to vent feelings or get things off our chests, to solve problems and explore options and to identify resources that can be helpful in difficult situations. You don’t want to share your problems with everyone you meet (the grapevine works quite well in rural communities!) but it can be helpful to share problems and concerns with people in a position to be helpful: a trusted friend, your pastor, your veterinarian, your University of Wisconsin-Extension agent or technical college farm training specialist, your DHI representative, your artificial inseminator or your local feed dealer. Build a support system that works for you by building a trusting relationship with people who are in a position to help you succeed in farming.

### **Learn to deal with conflict**

Farmers can find themselves in conflict with creditors, farm inspectors, power plant representatives, state food safety staff, natural resources staff, and any number of other people. If a farmer responds in a heated, off-the-cuff way to creditors or regulatory staff, the sparks can fly and the farmer may later regret his impulsive action. A few guidelines are in order for dealing with conflict:

- Talk directly with the other person. Don’t avoid or go around the person you are in conflict with or it will make the situation worse. If you have overdue bills, talk to your creditors, share your situation with them and offer to work out a repayment plan.
- Choose a time that works for both of you. Be considerate of the other person’s schedule and find a time

when you can truly focus on the issues to be discussed.

- Take a listening stance into the conversation. The other person will be more likely to listen to you when you have demonstrated that you’ve heard what he/she has said.
- Be assertive but not aggressive. Make sure you help the other person understand your perspective on the issue and assert your needs in the situation.
- Talk it all through. Don’t avoid the big, uncomfortable issues or they will come back to haunt you.
- Identify mutually agreeable solutions. Strive for win/win solutions and keep talking about options until you find one that will work for both of you.
- Reach out for help if you need it—there are mediators available to help settle difficult conflicts so seek out help if you reach an impasse with the other person.

### **Take time to laugh and play**

When times get tough, farm families tend to work harder—they farm more acreage, add more livestock, start a new enterprise/business, seek an off-farm job or do all of these things. When they do this, they may become exhausted and lose their sense of humor and perspective. It’s important to take time to laugh, to play, and to engage in fun activities or recreation. Fun activities don’t need to be expensive. It can be as simple as getting together with other farm families for a meal, a movie or a rousing game of cards. By getting together with other farm families you are also strengthening your support system. Both things are important during tough times!



# Greenhouse Gossip . . .

**Erin LaFaive**

**Eau Claire County Horticulture Educator**



## Edible Wild Fruit

Isn't the best type of gardening the type where all you do is pick the harvest? I think it's very enjoyable to pick edible wild fruits that nature has taken care of. On my walks I've noticed many wild fruit plants producing. Unfortunately, most of the fruit listed in this article are tart, sour, or bitter and need lots of sugar to enjoy their true flavor. This quality makes them excellent candidates for jams, jellies, and syrups.



Wild grapes (*Vitis riparia*) are seen climbing all over shrubs, trees, and along the ground. They produce dark blue berries that ripen in September or October. PICTURE

Mulberry trees (*Morus rubra, alba, and nigra*) are interesting because the fruit look similar to blackberries and some of the leaves are lobed and some are

not. Most often people bring this plant into my office because they want me to identify what weed it is and how to get rid of it. Although, some people purposefully plant it in their yard. The fruit ripens in June.

Highbush Cranberry (*Viburnum sp.*) is not a cranberry. It has yellow to dark red fruits that are round or oblong and ripen in September.

Gooseberries (*Ribes hirtellum*) are a short, thorny shrub with fruit that is greenish to reddish-purple.

Its best found growing in moist areas. The berries ripen in July and August.



Elderberries are edible if you have the species *Sambucus canadensis*. A good way to determine if you have this species is by the fruit which is purple to black in color after it ripens in late summer to early fall. This shrub is found in moist soils along roadsides, ditches, and fields.



American plum (*Prunus americana and sp.*) is red or yellow and ½ to 1 inch in diameter and usually ripens in August and September.



Serviceberries (*Amelanchier sp.*) are also known as juneberry or saskatoon. These can be found on the edges of woods and moist ravines. People also plant these as interesting

landscape pieces and are known as Apple serviceberry (*Amelanchier x grandiflora*) and Allegheny serviceberry (*Amelanchier laevis*). The berry is reddish-purple when young and almost black when ripened in June and July.

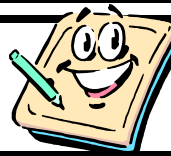
Chokecherries, pincherries, or sandcherries are edible but when extracting juice from the berry, DO NOT crush the seeds. These seeds contain a cyanide-forming compound which can cause illness or death if eaten in large amounts.



This website will take you to some recipes for these fruits <http://www.extension.umn.edu/>

# Randy's Rumors . . .

Randy Knapp, Chippewa County Agricultural Agent



## Be Careful What You Cut

As low milk prices put the squeeze on the dairy industry across the U.S., everyone is searching for ways to be less unprofitable. Even in good years, farm managers want to reduce excess cost and now in a really bad year there often isn't very much left to cut. The risk a business owner runs in this situation is cutting cost so deeply that the farm's ability to produce is hobbled.



Following the obvious scrutiny of labor and feed costs, that are often a target for the chopping block, cutting various technical services used by modern dairy operations is also considered to reduce operations. These may include things like DHIA testing or the use of services for sire selection, even manure hauling or crop management services.

These management tools were originally brought in to supplement or support the farm operations and they still may have significant value to the bottom line if they are being used effectively. Try this short three-step test to determine their value to management before you drop them.

### 1. **Why did you "hire" this service in the first place?**

Was the service brought in to replace time spent by the manager or to replace labor on the farm? If so, was this a cost-effective way to accomplish that management task or skill? And, if this service is dropped is there anyone on the farm with the time, expertise, and motivation to fill the void? An example of this would be a hiring out pesticide spraying. Perhaps the reason you originally contracted to have this done was because you did not want to be encumbered with maintaining a pesticide license or have to store chemicals on the farm.

### 2. **If this service were canceled, what would be the impact to the farm? What would be the impact on the cows?**

Would the farm lose an important skill set that will impact the profitability of the farm? For example, will breeding the cows yourself

instead of using a breeding service mean more days open and more services per conception and longer average days in milk? These things may have direct negative impacts on productivity and profit.

### 3. **Does this service provide you with an economic "edge" that can be exploited to enhance positive revenue generation and even profitability?**

With a service like DHIA records, are you using them to their best advantage on your farm? For example, if you are using a hoof trimmer, are you collecting the data they can generate on lesions and treatments and using it as a management tool to reduce lameness? Reducing lameness, in turn should be generating more revenue for the farm. Be sure you are fully exploiting the benefits of a service before you drop it.

In the recent past, the business of dairy farming has become a much more complicated and sophisticated management process. The use of specialized contractors and new technologies have helped shape the face of modern dairy industry. It may well be difficult to remain in a position of profitability in the future without them.

Source: Dean Ross, MSU Extension Dairy Educator, Michigan Dairy Review, July 2009

#### **Agricultural Employment Guidelines**

The Wisconsin minimum wage increased in July. The minimum rates for agricultural employment (effective 7/24/09) is \$7.25 per hour. The allowance for board and lodging, where meals or lodging (or both) are furnished by the agricultural employer, also changed. For your copy of the Agricultural Employment Guidelines, July 2009, listing these changes, contact your County Extension Office.

## How Important is the Extension Office to You?

Again this year, Eau Claire County is facing a major budget crisis. It is estimated there will be more than a 2 million dollar deficit for 2010.

The County is looking at a number of ways to address this budget crisis from reducing programs, freezing wages and/or eliminating positions just to name a few.

Starting on July 1, 2009, there will be an Internet accessible survey available to all county residents. The purpose of this survey is to apply a numerical ranking to all the department/programs within the County (both mandated and non-mandated). These rankings will indicate the importance of the department/programs to the residents of Eau Claire County. The rankings will then help the County Board determine which department/programs will receive available funding.

Your support of the Extension Office during this economic struggle is vitally important for the continuation of the programs and services provided to our clientele. Please take a few minutes to answer the survey and let the County Board know how important Extension programs and services are to you.

The survey can be accessed at <http://www.co.eau-claire.wi.us/>.

Thank you for your continued support of the Extension Office.



## Advise from the Old Farmer

- ☺ Forgive your enemies. It messes up their heads.
- ☺ Do not corner something that you know is meaner than you.
- ☺ It don't take a very big person to carry a grudge.
- ☺ You cannot unsay a cruel word.
- ☺ Every path has a few puddles.
- ☺ When you wallow with pigs, expect to get dirty.
- ☺ The best sermons are live, not preached.

## Jerry Jargon

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# USE SILKING DATE TO PREDICT HARVEST

Most of the corn crop in Chippewa County is at the silking or R1 stage. This stage is important, not only from a grain production standpoint, but also as a predictor of harvest date.

When a field enters the silking stage, take note of the date. Silking date is the first indicator for predicting date of harvest for grain or silage uses. It can be used to predict which fields are developing ahead of or behind schedule. Among corn hybrids, the grain filling period is rather consistent, regardless of maturity. Hybrids differ in maturity during the vegetative period of their development (planting to silking). Grain filling in Wisconsin usually lasts about 55-60 days after silking. The dent (R5) stage occurs 35-42 days after silking, and black layer formation (R6) occurs 55-60 days after silking. Usually, silage harvest begins shortly after half-milk line on the kernels. The half-milk line stage occurs about 13 days prior to black-layer. The predicted start date of silage harvest (half-milk line) occurs 42-47 days after silking.

Once the kernel milk line begins to move down the kernel following the dent stage (R5), the fields intended to be harvested for silage should be sampled for moisture. The "trigger" to start sampling for moisture depends upon the silage storage structure (Table 1). Once the moisture for the field is known, use a dry-down rate of 0.5% moisture loss per day to predict when the field will be ready for the storage structure. For example, a field of corn that will be stored in a concrete stave silo at 65% should be checked for moisture when kernel milk equals 60%. Let's say the forage moisture of this field was found to be 68%. This field should be harvested beginning  $[(68-65)/0.5 =]$  6 days after sampling.

**Table1. Kernel milk stage "trigger" to begin sampling for various silage structures**

Silo structure	Recommended moisture content for ensiling	Kernel milk stage "trigger"
	%	%
Horizontal bunker	70 to 65	80
Bag	70 to 60	80
Upright concrete stave	65 to 60	60
Upright oxygen limiting	60 to 50	60

Trigger: Kernel stage to begin checking silage moisture.  
 Silage moisture decreases at an average rate of 0.5% per day during September

### Harvest Season

As a final check, the field should be sampled 1-2 days prior to harvest to determine if the silage moisture is proper for the storage structure. Follow recommended theoretical length of cut guidelines and make sure that good packing takes place to ensure adequate fermentation and storage.



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## *Farm & Field Newsletter*

# *Chippewa Valley Agriculture Newsletter*

*A newsletter designed to meet the needs of farmers and agribusiness professionals  
in Eau Claire and Chippewa Counties.*

*Published monthly by the Eau Claire County Extension Office, Altoona, Wisconsin*

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