

Farm & Field

Chippewa Valley Agriculture Newsletter



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Good Day!!

This year's harvest season seems to be longer than most. I estimate we have just over 50% of the county's corn crop harvested as of November 21. Some of the delay has been caused by rainy cold conditions in recent weeks. Today's lower corn prices may have slowed harvest a bit as well hoping not to have to purchase any LP gas for grain drying.

If you are interested in the economics of crop production, try to attend the 2009 Crop Decisions Series that started on November 7. Upcoming sessions will focus on corn hybrids, nitrogen rates, insect management and other key topics. Call the office if you have questions.

Private Pesticide Applicator Training information is found in the newsletter as well as information on a number of other topics. Please take the time to read the information and attend educational programs that meet your needs.

Have a safe harvest season!!

"Continue to Farm Smarter"

Mahlon Peterson

Mahlon Peterson
UW-Extension Agricultural Agent

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Calendar

December

- 3 Corn Hybrid Selection Workshop
- 3 Nutrient Management session
- 4 UW-Extension Soil, Water and Nutrient Management Update - Expo Center
- 10 Nutrient Management session
- 11 Nutrient Management session
- 13 2009 County Fair Beef Weigh-in
- 17 Nutrient Management session
- 18 Nutrient Management session
- 19 Selecting Economical Nitrogen Rates
- 24 Christmas Eve—Office Closes at Noon**
- 25 Merry Christmas—Office Closed**

January

- 1 News Years Day—Office Closed**
- 7 Western Wisconsin Ag Lenders Conference - UW Stout
- 8 Agronomy Seed Update - Holiday Inn, Campus
- 10 PAT training session at Ag & Resource Center in Altoona
- 10 Chippewa Valley Forage Council Banquet at Connell's II — Chippewa Valley Airport
- 14 Dairy Road Show at 29 Pines
- 16-17 Wisconsin Outstanding Young Farmer Program at Downtown Ramada Inn
- 21 Holstein Steer Meeting at Ruby's in Bloomer
- 29 PAT training session at People's Bank - Bloomer

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



The staff of the Eau Claire County Extension Office wishes you and your family a safe and happy holiday and a prosperous New Year!

For more Extension Information go to our website:
www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/eauclaire/

Something To Chew On . . .



*Mahlon Peterson Ag Agent
Eau Claire County*

Midwest Manure Summit Scheduled for March at Lambeau Field

The 2009 Midwest Manure Summit is a conference for any agriculture producers or agri-business professionals interested in manure handling and storage. Dealing with manure is a challenge for any farming operation, and it's time to start using new technologies to best utilize and dispose of this waste. Experts from across the world will be with us to address manure handling challenges and alternatives.

UW-Extension invites you to join producers and professionals from across the Midwest on March 24 and 25 at the Lambeau Field Atrium, home of the legendary Green Bay Packers. These two days will be filled with speakers, discussions, and new ideas that can be adapted to farms of any size. More details will be available soon.

2009 Private Pesticide Applicator Training Sessions Start January 10

Five PAT sessions have been scheduled in the Chippewa-Eau Claire area for the season. Certification is required if you plan to purchase and use restricted use agricultural pesticides in 2009 and beyond.

There is a \$30 certification fee, which includes the cost of the materials and the training. Materials should be picked up at our office at least two weeks in advance of the session you plan to attend.

The dates and locations include:

Saturday, January 10 – Eau Claire County Ag & Resource Center in Altoona

Thursday, January 29 – People's State Bank in Bloomer

Thursday, February 5 – River Country Plaza in Cadott

Thursday, February 19 – Unity Bank in Augusta
Thursday, March 19 – Chippewa County Courthouse in Chippewa Falls

All meetings run from 9:30 am until 3:00 pm.
Lunch is on your own!

You can also take the test, without attending an educational session, by calling our office at least two days in advance to schedule an appointment. Special exams are also available for Greenhouse and Nursery and Fruit Crops, but those materials must be ordered through Madison at least one month in advance of the training date. Please call if you have any questions.

Chippewa Valley Forage Council Annual Meeting is January 10 at Connell's II

The Chippewa Valley Forage Council Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, January 10 at Connell's II at the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport. Social time will begin at 7:15 PM followed by the meal at 7:45 PM.

The annual business meeting will be held and new Board of Director members will be elected. The cost for the meal is \$20.00 per person. Reservations should be made prior to January 5 by calling our office at 715.839.4712.



Greenhouse Gossip . . .

Erin LaFaive

Eau Claire County Horticulture Educator



Poinsettia's

A brightly-colored poinsettia is one of the most brilliant decorations of the holiday season. With a little care, you can keep your poinsettia blooming well into the new year. Here's how ...

First, keep your poinsettia in a bright, sunny location. Without bright light, the colorful bracts and green leaves lose their luster and dry out quickly. In a good spot, they'll retain their color for months.

Originally a Mexican wildflower, poinsettias do best with temperatures in the sixties. Extended periods of higher temperatures will shorten the life of the bracts. Extended periods of cooler temperatures will encourage root rot. Don't let any part of the plant touch cold windows.

Poinsettias do not tolerate drafts so keep them away from radiators, air registers, fans, open windows and doorways. If possible, place your poinsettia in a cooler room at night to extend the blooming time. A nighttime temperature of 55 to 60 degrees is ideal.

Examine the soil regularly and water only when it feels dry. Always water enough to soak

the soil to the bottom of the pot and discard the excess water.

Don't let your poinsettia sit in water or it will suffer from root rot. Poke a few holes in the foil, if it came wrapped in foil, to avoid this problem.

Fertilize your poinsettia to keep it in good shape. Use a soluble houseplant fertilizer and feed the plant once or twice a month, following manufacturers' recommendations.

From late winter to early spring, sides shoots will develop below the bracts and grow above the old flowering stems. To have a well-shaped plant the following year, cut each of the old flowering stems and branches back to about 6 inches in height. Leave one to three leaves on each of the old stems or branches. Trimming the plant will stimulate new growth from the buds located at the base of each leaf stem. Trimming is usually done in March.

Keep the plant in a sunny window at room temperature. Water as needed and fertilize on a regular basis all spring.

If the plant is too large for the old pot, repot it in spring. After the danger of frost is over and night temperatures exceed 50 degrees, sink the poinsettia pot to the rim in the ground in a well-drained, slightly shaded spot outdoors.

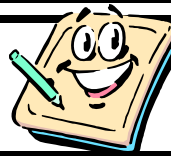
Between July 15 and August 1, prune the side shoots to about four inches, again leaving about one to three leaves on each shoot. Water and fertilize regularly.

Take your poinsettia plant indoors at night before night temperatures dip into the forties.



Randy's Rumors . . .

Randy Knapp, Chippewa County Agricultural Agent



Calf Management

With the weather turning cold, calf housing and maintaining calf body temperature is critical. Calf feeding, equipment sanitation, and housing require extra care and vigilance. The following article on environmental management and housing is taken from the publication "Raising Dairy Replacements". For further information on calf care and heifer raising, contact your local Extension Office.

Environmental

Keeping calves clean, dry and comfortable not only helps prevent disease, but it also helps maintain body temperature, which is critical for survival and growth. The ideal body temperature for calves is between 50 F and 78 F. When outdoor temperatures rise above or below this level, extra care is required to ensure calves' body temperatures stays within the ideal range. In addition to housing and nutrition, bedding management plays a crucial role in maintaining body temperature, considering that young calves spend 90 percent of their time during the first 5 week of life lying down (Table 5.1).

Factors to consider when bedding calves include:

- **Bedding Depth.** During periods of cold weather and night cooling, calves lie down to minimize surface area and then use the thermal-insulative capacity of bedding to minimize heat loss. Calf hutches are successful even in the harshest winter conditions because the bedded pack in the back of the hutch allows the calf to lie down and maintain body temperature. Bedding materials vary in thermal capacity-Table 5.2 contains the thermal resistance of many types of bedding-and the depth of material also affects the calf's ability to minimize heat. In general, cold-climate conditions require deeper bedding.

In addition to hutches, bedding management is also required inside barns. During cold conditions and when draft protection is limited, additional bedding should be provided. For example, calves housed in four-foot by eight-foot pen made of wire panels in a greenhouse barn may require deep bedding (See Figure 5.2)



Figure 5.2. Use ample bedding to help insulate the calf from cold temperatures and drafts.

Temperature (Fahrenheit)	Percent recumbent					
	1 to 7 Days			4 to 8 Weeks		
	Day	Night	24 hours	Day	Night	24 hours
0	-	-	-	5	100	60
50	90	90	90	55	95	70
60	90	90	90	65	90	70
70	70	70	70	70	65	70
80	85	85	85	80	65	70

As outdoor temperature decreases, calves housed in hutches lie down more.

Source: R.E. Brunsvold et al., "Behavior of dairy calves reared in hutches as affected by temperature." American Society of Agricultural Engineers, 1985.

- Moisture Absorption.** In addition to depth, consider how a bedding material keeps calves dry. In general, wood shavings or sawdust absorb more moisture than straws or hays, but wood shavings and sawdust lack depth. Using two bedding sources, one for absorption and one for depth, is an extremely effective bedding strategy for calves. For example, use two to four inches of wood shavings covered with four to eight inches of straw. Shredded paper, wood chips, or chopped corn stalks can be used as bedding for calves but require a higher level of management and may not meet the calves thermal requirements in all environments.

During periods of wet and humid weather, heifer raisers may need to frequently bed calves with a "thin layer" of bedding to keep the surface dry. Calves housed in hutches will frequently change their preferred resting area depending on environmental conditions, so maintaining or bedding all possible resting areas may be required (Table 5.3)

Non-insulative bedding, such as sand, can also be used for calves during summer conditions. Sand can actually help alleviate heat stress in calves and is excellent in aiding summer fly control measures. Like organic bedding, sand must be kept clean and dry and should not be used when temperatures fall below 60 F at night. Use caution when bedding calves with excessively dusty, moldy or finely-chopped bedding as these materials can cause lung irritations, which may complicate respiratory problems.

Housing Climate

Watch calves closely to see how they adapt to their housing. Within the housing system, a calf may select a sub-climate-or smaller region of the housing area-to actually spend its time. For example, Table 5.3 shows how calves spend the majority of their time in different region of a calf hutch, depending on the outdoor temperature. Other housing facilities, such as crates, bedded-pack pens, counter slope barns and free-stall barns, all offer sub-climates that calves may prefer. This may be a seasonal occurrence or suggest management changes that need to be made.

Table 5.2. Effective thermal resistances of floors.

Beddings with higher levels of thermal resistance provide more insulative capacity.	
Floor Surface	Thermal Resistance
38 millimeter wood chips	0.71
17 millimeter straw	0.46
17 millimeter wet straw	0.23
Wood slats*	0.23
Wet pasture grass	0.13
Expanded metal	0.12
Metal slats	0.067
Concrete slats	0.055
Muddy ground	0.044
Dry concrete	0.039
Concrete, cow manure	0.031

Degrees (Fahrenheit)	Percent of time that calves occupy different hutch locations.			
	Percent of 24-hour day			
	Rear	Front	Door	Pen
0	80	10	5	5
50	80	15	5	0
60	60	25	5	10
70	70	15	5	10
80	70	5	5	20

Jerry Jargon

Jerry Clark

Chippewa County Soil & Crops Educator



USE COST OF PRODUCTION AND MARKET INFO TO PRICE CROPS

Today's volatile markets have brought increased interest to following markets and marketing commodities like corn and soybean. The key to any marketing strategy is discovering what the cost of production is and determining what a profitable or, at the very least, a 'break even' price is. Once cost of production is found, then the marketing tools can be used.

As this year's harvest wraps up, now is a good time to find what this year's cost of production is and do some prediction of next year's. Cost of production can be arrived at in a number of ways. It can be done on a piece of scrap paper, use of schedule F tax forms, or computer programs.

The key to cost of production discovery is to use your actual costs. If costs need to be estimated, then these costs should be as close to the farm level as possible such as a statewide average rather than a nationwide average. Costs of production should include all variable and fixed costs. The fixed costs need to be spread across all acres, as these typically represent the DIRT I five: Depreciation, Interest, Repairs, Taxes, and Insurance.

Variable costs need to include all other expenses such as seed, chemicals, fertilizer, labor, and tillage used to grow the crop. Spreadsheets are available from a number of sources. UW-Extension has some simple computer spreadsheets to help determine cost of production for a number of crops. These can be easily e-mailed to be used on any computer. Example crop budgets are also available from UW-Extension to give an estimate of cost of production.

The one variable cost that can be difficult to nail down is machinery costs. How much fuel and labor should be assigned to each crop? is a question that is often asked. A good resource for estimating the variable cost for machinery use is the Minnesota Machinery Cost Estimates Guide. This guide estimates the operational costs of many types of tractors and implements. The guide is available online at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/businessmanagement/DF6696.pdf> from UW-Extension county offices.

Once the cost of production is known, then the marketing and pricing of the crop can begin.

Marketing can be as simple as taking a cash price each time the crop is sold or use of more sophisticated strategies such as forward contracting, hedging, or basis contracting. Whatever strategy is used, knowing that the price taken is covering a solid cost of production is a profitable feeling. Good information also needs to be used when pricing the crop. Predicting what the market will do in the future was difficult before the markets became super volatile, and now it is even more important to have good information when pricing.

A place to start gathering information on grain markets is the World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates or WASDE. The WASDE report provides USDA's comprehensive forecasts of supply and demand for major U.S. and global crops and U.S. livestock. The report gathers information from a number of statistical reports published by USDA and other government agencies. The monthly WASDE report can be found on the Internet at <http://www.usda.gov/oce/commodity/wasde/> or can be e-mailed to you the date it is released, which is generally the second week of each month.

Another good report to use for pricing is the USDA Crop Production and Crop Acreage Reports. These reports give estimates of current yield prediction and planting intentions across the country. Reports are available at <http://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/> and can also be e-mailed to you on the date of release.

Gathering information from many sources is the best way to make decisions in the marketing arena. University economists who have websites regarding grain marketing are Ed Usset and Darrel Good. Edward Usset is the Grain Marketing Specialist for the Center for Farm Financial Management at the University of Minnesota and the coordinator of the Minnesota Master Marketer Program. Usset's website is <http://edsworld.wordpress.com>. Darrell Good, Ag Economist, University of Illinois, has a weekly outlook on the Internet at <http://www.farmdoc.uiuc.edu/marketing/index.asp>.

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*A newsletter designed to meet the needs of farmers and agribusiness professionals
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