

2006
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UW — EXTENSION — LANGLADE COUNTY

Langlade Ag-Letter

Got Milk? No Money? Get Milk Money!



Wisconsin dairy producers continue to benefit from participation in Milk Money, the popular team-based milk quality improvement program offered through UW-Extension in cooperation with the UW-Madison Department of Dairy Science, and the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board.

Recent analysis of 113 herds completing the Milk Money program reveals an average added \$1,033 per month increase per farm in quality incentive income from the time herds begin Milk Money until they complete the program. The 113 Wisconsin dairy herds completing Milk Money averaged 265 cows covering 29,835 cows. At \$1,033 herd/month, Milk Money participation is returning a total average of \$116,727 per month to the participants.

That means that if the improvements hold for a year, an average Milk Money herd of 265 cows

sees another \$12,396 in income related to milk quality incentives alone. Pooled together, the 113 herds can reel in an additional \$13,190,151 over the year if the improvements seen during the four-month program continue. At the start of the program, the 113 herds were getting an average of seven cents per hundredweight (CWT) in quality premium incentive. By the end of the program, the herds had increased their incentives to an average of 27 cents per CWT.

Income improvement from milk quality comes from three areas for Wisconsin dairy producers: increased milk production, improved ability to capture quality incentives from milk buyers, and reduced costs associated with mastitis.

Data from farms that enrolled in the program beginning in Fall 2001

and continuing through spring of 2004 were included in this analysis. Most of the teams (78 percent) included an extension agent.

The formation of milk quality teams resulted in positive changes of herd performance. Most of the standard measurements of milk quality improved during the program. Overall, bulk milk somatic cell counts, an indicator of quality, and standard plate count were reduced by 20.2 percent and 28.4 percent compared to the first meeting. Individual cow indices of clinical and sub-clinical mastitis were significantly improved. Cull rates decreased by the end of the program.

Many teams continue to meet after the program has formally ended. Please call the Extension Office (Alex Crockford) at 715-627-6313 with questions or to enroll.

Inside this issue:

Beef Cattle Guide Updated	2
Keep An Eye On Pests	2
UWEX Diagnostics in Antigo	3
Farm Labor Update	3

Langlade County Youth Fair
JULY 26 - 30

Too Big to Miss in 2006

Dates to Remember:

August 7
Hancock Agricultural Research
Station Field Day
August 9
Langlade County Research Farm
Field Day 1:30 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
August 17
Central WI Graziers Bus Tour to
Charlie Opitz farm

OK State Beef Cattle Guide

Oklahoma State University released their updated Beef Cattle Manual, publication number E-913, last year.

“This a very nice updated resource that you may wish to consider for updating your livestock farm’s resource guides,” says Jeff Lehmkuhler, UW

Extension Beef Specialist.

The manual is currently available at no cost through the OK Extension service.

For on-line ordering go here: <http://www.agecon.okstate.edu/cattleman/>

Or contact David Lalman, OSU Beef Specialist at 405-744-9825.



Keep A Watchful Eye on Pests

Around the state this year there has been significant insect potential building from early on. Our mild winter and early spring may increase pressures in local fields at the same time dry conditions stress plants. There are three bugs in particular I hear people give a lot of lipservice to.



The **Soybean aphid** (*Aphis glycines*) is a recently introduced pest of soybean. Buckthorn (*Rhamnus spp.*) is the only known overwintering host, and as is true of other aphids in the temperate zones, the aphid can survive winter only in the egg stage. The egg is very winter hardy and can survive prolonged periods of low temperatures.

Soybean aphids cause damage by sucking plant sap and transmitting viruses during the

feeding process. Although experience with the soybean aphid is limited, symptoms of direct feeding damage may include plant stunting, reduced pod and seed counts, puckering and yellowing of leaves. Various plant stresses, including nutrient deficiencies, may intensify these symptoms. Soybean aphids excrete a sugary substance called honeydew while they are feeding. When aphid populations are heavy, the plants will be coated with honeydew and will turn black as a result of sooty mold growing on the honeydew. This can reduce photosynthesis and contribute to yield loss.



Potato leaf hoppers do not overwinter here in Langlade but are blown in to the county in late spring and populations develop in the field through June and July. These “sap suckers” damage the

plant through sap removal and cause symptoms of leaf yellowing known as ‘hopperburn’ in alfalfa. The impact of feeding at above threshold levels causes significant slower maturity and lower levels of carbohydrates going into winter (affecting stand longevity.)



First discovered in WI in 1966, the **Alfalfa weevil** has it’s 40th anniversary this year. If conditions cooperate the Alfalfa weevil could ring in it’s anniversary in great proportions. Overwintering primarily as an adult, egg laying can begin early with a warm and early spring.

Farm Labor Update



New Minimum Wage Rate

Wisconsin has raised its minimum wage rates effective June 1, 2006. For all agricultural employees the new minimum wage is \$5.15 for adults and \$4.25 for minors. For a free new Minimum Wage poster for your farm go to the Department of Workforce Development website at <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/er/>

Working Hard vs. Working Smart

Your employees work hard but do not understand the science of the operation? This causes inefficiency? Lack of teamwork?

- Educate: employees who know the impact of their tasks perform better.
- Make teamwork profitable: set up teamwork systems that lead to productivity.
- Ease Financial Worries: many times, workers feel that helping others doesn't pay; make sure that team-work systems that result in greater productivity end up in greater pay than when compared to individual work.

Source: Carlos Conejo

Successful Team Meetings

Use the following ideas to make your team meetings successful:

Identify stakeholders who need to be present for each meeting. These might include the veterinarian, nutritionist and herdsman. You also may want to enlist the help of an outside resource person, such as a management consultant or extension agent, to sit in on a few meetings to help guide the process.

Set ground rules for the meetings. This allows the meeting facilitator to step in and stop discussion if some-

...Continued page 4

Langlade UW Extension Offers Diagnostics

The Langlade County UW Extension Office is offering same day diagnosis of Early and Late Blight spores using microscopy at the Langlade County Resource Center.

Our normal office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Please call ahead to allow the support staff to track me down if I am in the field (627-6236.)

We also do insect, other plant disease diagnostics, and weed identification.

For plant diseases it's best to call ahead to determine how best to pack a sample, in the case we need to send the item down to UW Madison some charges can apply.

Insect samples are preferably frozen to kill them or in the case of soft bodied insects treated with alcohol in an airtight Ziploc



bag or empty film canister.

Weeds can also be brought for identification but measures must also be taken to preserve the plant from drying up, such as

wrapping in moist paper towels.

In each instance, please indicate where the pest/disease was found when the sample is brought in (ie. on potatoes, in green beans, a lawn, in a house.) This can expedite problem identification.

Finally, indicate seriousness or urgency of the problem in regard to the diagnostics, we will accommodate this as much as we are able in time pressure situations.

In situations where I am unable to accurately diagnose the problem, we have e-mailed a digital photograph to specialists in Madison, and if necessary by US Postal Service.

Labor Update continued...



Langlade County

Phone: (715)627-6313
Fax: (715) 627-6260
Email: alex.crockford@ces.uwex.edu
<http://langlade.uwex.edu>

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one is talking too much or making personal attacks rather than focusing on the issue.

Assign roles for the meeting, including facilitator, note-taker and timekeeper. The facilitator is responsible for keeping discussion moving and stepping in when someone gets out of line. A timekeeper helps to keep the meeting moving, and the note-taker provides a written record of discussions and actions that need to be taken.

Make an agenda available


prior to the meeting. "An agenda lets participants know when they're going to be responsible for participating and helps them prepare," says Don Tyler, management consultant in Clarks Hill, Ind. Once you've established an agenda, keep it fairly consistent from meeting to meeting.

Include some shared performance goals on the agenda.

From: Make Meetings Matter
By Kim Watson *Dairy Herd Management*

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Learning for life
837 Clermont Street
PO Box 460
Antigo, WI 54409-0460