

## Local leaders prepare for large-scale animal production

By Jo Futrell



**Farm trend?** Concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) contain more than 1,000 "animal units" in a single location, and must seek a state Department of Natural Resources permit before being built. Wisconsin currently has roughly 110 permitted or pending CAFO farms.

Two University of Wisconsin-Extension self-directed teams are working to head off a rural land-use problem before it starts. The Nutrient Management Team and the Agriculture and Land Use Team are providing training for public officials to enable communities, townships and counties to better deal with proposals for large-scale animal production facilities.

The Local Government and Animal Feeding Operations Program brings the expertise of land-use planners, community development and nutrient management specialists to local leaders who want help sorting out the issues surrounding concentrated animal feeding operations, or CAFOs.

### Program encourages timely policymaking

"Too often communities wait until

they are faced with a controversial proposal for a large livestock facility before thinking through what kinds of policies they want to have," notes Douglas Jackson-Smith, UW-Madison rural sociologist and co-leader of the Agriculture and Land Use Team. "It is much easier to come to a consensus about the rules you want to live by when there isn't a particular project hanging over your head. This program is designed to help local leaders do just that."

The program highlights recent trends in livestock production in Wisconsin, environmental quality issues, effects on the local community and economy, and ways to develop sound land-use plans. This preparation can help communities put appropriate plans in place before they are faced with a CAFO proposal.

The first program was held Feb. 6 in Wausau. Leslie Cooperband, UW-Extension waste management specialist and member of the Nutrient Management Team says, "The Wausau program was a positive and interactive experience. The town and county officials who attended represented a range of farm backgrounds and perspectives about CAFOs in their community. The diversity of their opinions highlighted the complexity of this issue, particularly in a state like Wisconsin with such strong local governance." Additional programs are scheduled for March 6 in Kimberly and March 27 in Durand.

### Larger livestock farms raise varied concerns

While most Wisconsin livestock farms are still relatively moderate-sized operations, relying on the labor and management of family members, low profit margins in agriculture have encouraged a small but growing number of operators to dramatically increase the size of their farms. Concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) represent the largest of these farms.

A CAFO is defined as more than 1,000 "animal units" in a single location. Because a farm may have several kinds of livestock, animal units are used to calculate the size of an operation. For example, 1,000 animal units are equivalent to 1,000 slaughter and feeder

cattle, 700 mature dairy cattle, or 2,500 swine weighing over 55 pounds.

This concentration of animals, together with a shift towards a non-family work force, can raise concerns among traditional farmers, rural non-farm and urban residents. There are questions about proper manure handling, as well as management of air and water quality. There are potential impacts on the broader community, including the local labor force, agribusiness and farm infrastructure, roads, traffic, property values and future development opportunities.

### Preparation can aid decision making

As a result, local officials are frequently asked to decide whether or not to allow construction of a CAFO facility. If they haven't done their homework, communities are often unprepared to deal with the technical, socioeconomic and policy issues that arise. At a time when passions are often running high, local leaders must sort out state and federal regulations about livestock facility siting and environmental monitoring, examine whether any local laws and ordinances apply, and balance the competing interests of their constituents.

For more information: [Bill Bland](mailto:wbland@facstaff.wisc.edu), [wbland@facstaff.wisc.edu](mailto:wbland@facstaff.wisc.edu), [www.uwex.edu/ces/luag/CAFOLO.html](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/luag/CAFOLO.html)

### Extension faculty and staff's chance to be heard

## Internal communications survey online March 19 – April 13

With more than 1,600 faculty and staff, University of Wisconsin-Extension has a population similar to many of our state's towns and villages. But unlike those towns and villages, UW-Extension's

population is not neatly bound by geography.

Faculty and staff can be found in every county of the state and on the 26 UW System campuses. Because we're so widely scattered, we can't easily get together to celebrate the Fourth of July, attend town meetings or stop for a chat when we see each other on the street.

Instead of "face time," UW-Extension depends on three major forms of internal communication:

- *News and Ideas* (the newspaper you're reading);
- the Web site ([www.uwex.edu](http://www.uwex.edu));
- E-mails from Chancellor Kevin Reilly.

We'd like to learn more about where, when and how we can provide you with the information

most useful to you, our colleagues. Hence, our online internal communications survey will be held March 19 through April 13.

"When the UW-Extension communications team came to me and Extension's Executive Council, we immediately indicated that we would support the survey," says UW-Extension Chancellor Kevin Reilly. "The council and I look at this as an opportunity to learn how we can improve organization-wide communications. I sincerely hope that all faculty and staff will take the time to let us know their views."

UW-Extension Director of Public Information David Giroux adds, "In an organization like ours, with employees across the state and in various divisions, internal communications play a critical role. We are conducting this survey to give all UW-Extension employees the

opportunity for honest feedback. We will use that information to improve communications with faculty and staff, which can ultimately enhance our efforts to serve Wisconsin residents."

### Survey how-tos

- ✓ You'll receive an e-mail message that the survey is online.
- ✓ If you don't have Web access, call for a paper survey: Peg Davis, (608) 262-3253.
- ✓ When to answer the survey: **March 19 – April 13**

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[Message from the Chancellor](#)**Extension contributes to work-force development****Kevin P. Reilly**

I recently spoke before the Joint Legislative Council Special Committee on Labor Shortage, joining UW System president Katharine Lyall and others to discuss how the University is working to address Wisconsin's growing need for skilled workers.

I shared several examples of Continuing Education work and Small Business Development programs related to work-force and economic development. Another area, the work of our Community, Natural Resources and Economic Development (CNRED) educators on labor supply and demand surveys, generated significant discussion following our presentation.

Professor Gary Green, UW-Extension specialist and member of UW-Madison's Department of Rural Sociology, designed labor-force surveys that have been used in at least 45 counties. These yield significant insight into local labor issues, with community-based CNRED representatives providing the important local coordination and follow-through with government, business, educational institutions, chambers of commerce and economic development organizations.

This process has generated important outcomes, including better information about worker and employer needs and the ability to target educational programming on specific skill requirements.

We recommended using these customized analyses more extensively to map the changing needs of Wisconsin business and the availability of skilled workers.

This labor-force analysis work is only one example of how community-based educators team with campus-based specialists to

address work-force development issues. I offered several more examples of how other programs and divisions contribute to the development of new jobs and the advancement of individuals at various points in their careers.

Following this presentation, I am more convinced than ever that applied research and outreach education must play a front-line role in the development of long-range economic strategies for Wisconsin. As we become increasingly engaged in statewide issues like this, we have the opportunity to demonstrate the real power of UW-Extension and our hands-on, high-tech approach.

For more information:  
[www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/](http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/)

Kevin P. Reilly  
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**ICS provides live Web conferencing**

University of Wisconsin-Extension faculty and staff have a new tool to make getting together for long-distance meetings and programs easier. Instructional Communications Systems (ICS), a provider of audio, data and video conferencing services, now offers live Web conferencing.

The new WisLine Web service combines real-time visual content, delivered through a Web browser, with an audio conference call. Joining a WisLine Web conference is as easy as visiting a Web site and dialing the telephone.

"UW-Extension faculty and staff, even when hundreds of miles

apart, can now meet and collaborate as readily as if they were sitting in the same conference room," explains Marcia Baird, ICS director. "They can share and annotate visuals online, brainstorm via an electronic whiteboard, tour Web sites, or conduct voting with multiple locations at the same time."

Faculty and staff can use WisLine Web to reach both large and small audiences, including virtual classes and work groups. "We've already supported Web conferences for project teams, master's students, state employees and more," says Baird. "We've also used WisLine Web to join Wiscon-

sin audiences with international guest speakers and groups from as far away as South Africa and Finland."

Learn more about the new WisLine Web tool by participating in a free desktop seminar highlighting the service's benefits and features. Seminar dates are:

**March 15, 21, 27**

**April 3, 11, 19, 25**

To register: [Carol Hillmann](mailto:Carol.Hillmann@ics.uwex.edu),  
(608) 262-7590,  
[WisLineWeb@ics.uwex.edu](mailto:WisLineWeb@ics.uwex.edu)

For more information:  
[www.uwex.edu/ics/wlweb](http://www.uwex.edu/ics/wlweb)



**Tom Blewett** has been appointed assistant program leader in the Community Natural Resource and

Economic Development (CNRED) program area. He will work in cooperation with the Department of Community Resource Development on development of newer faculty. Blewett was previously a county CNRED educator in Portage County and a specialist with the Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center (SHWEC), which he co-directed.

**Mary Grant** has been named associate director of Broadcasting and Media Innovations. She had served as interim associate director since June 2000. Grant continues in her position as associate dean of Continuing Education.



**Byron Knight** has been named director of Broadcasting and Media Innovations. He had served as interim director since

June 2000. Previously Knight was director of Wisconsin Public Television.

**University of Wisconsin Learning Innovations (UWLI)** is partnering with three major universities nationwide to facilitate development of their online distance learning capabilities. UWLI; University of California, Berkeley; University Extension; The Pennsylvania State University's World Campus; and University of Washington have agreed to work together to advance online learning practices at their institutions. The four institutions will also explore opportunities to share academic resources to offer collaborative online distance-education programs nationally and internationally. Together, the institutions offer 500 online distance education courses in a broad range of curricula.

The alliance initially will focus on four areas: benchmarking institutional practices and standards, assessing opportunities from the private sector, joint sales efforts, and exploring opportunities for collaborative program development. The alliance had an inaugural meeting in Berkeley in December 2000.

**UW Day****A celebration of higher education March 7 in Madison**

UW-Extension and other University of Wisconsin System institutions will participate in a celebration of public higher education on March 7 at the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center in Madison. The event, "UW Day: Building Wisconsin's Future," will involve all 15 institutions, the Board of Regents and more than 1,500 invited guests from across the state.

Guests will include local community leaders, alumni and other friends of the institutions. Many state legislators, county board members and other public officials will also attend.

The celebration, funded entirely by private contributions, will focus on the many ways in which the UW System benefits students, the public and the Wisconsin economy. Each institution will demonstrate innovative technology and educational partnerships. UW-Extension's exhibit will highlight interactive television, distance diagnosis applications, online learning, early childhood research and other demonstrations.

For more information: [www.wisconsin.edu](http://www.wisconsin.edu)

## Friedrick Center takes on a north woods lodge look

Starting this spring, visitors to The Friedrich Center Inn and Conference Center will be greeted by a black bear named Fred. The Friedrich Center is in phase one of being transformed into a north woods lodge featuring a fireplace, cozy furniture upholstered in nature-motif fabrics and Native American arts and crafts created or inspired by Wisconsin tribes.

Facilities manager Stephanie Sabo, who is overseeing the project, explains that back-to-nature theme fits well with conference center's location at the pastoral west end of campus, overlooking Lake Mendota and the Howard Temin Lakeshore Path. "We want people attending confer-

ences and events here to feel as though they really are at a retreat," she says.

The first phase of the project, which is scheduled for completion this spring, includes renovation of the reception/lounge area, dining room, the center's largest conference room and administrative offices, all on the first floor. The addition of an outdoor deck, located off the lounge area, will provide visitors with comfortable seating and a view of Lake Mendota.

Phase two, refurbishing the 75 guestrooms and baths on four floors, will begin next November. Sabo says, "Our challenge is to work on the project, yet remain open for business. We don't want to displace or inconvenience our guests with remodeling."

As much as Sabo strives to create the ambiance of a genuine north



Friedrick Center Inn and Conference Center  
1950 Willow Dr.  
UW-Madison Campus



Facilities manager Stephanie Sabo

woods lodge, she acknowledges that Fred is not a real bear. Fred, who stands about five feet tall and has a benevolent smile, was purchased at shop near the Wisconsin

Dells. He is, however, a real symbol of the relaxing environment and friendliness found at the Friedrich Center.

<p><b>Who can use the Friedrich Center</b> Anyone with an affiliation with the University of Wisconsin System or state of Wisconsin including departmental visitors, alumni, parents of students, campus visitors and state and U.S. government employees</p>
<p><b>Sampling of events</b> Seminars, conferences and workshops sponsored by the UW-Extension School for Workers, UW-Madison College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Department of Biochemistry</p>
<p><b>Number of programs held in 2000</b> 242</p>
<p><b>Number of overnight-guest stays in 2000</b> 12,892</p>
<p><b>Facilities</b> 8 classrooms, 1 dining room, 75 guestrooms, reception area</p>
<p><b>Technology</b> Wireless computer Intranet access</p>
<p><b>Transportation</b> A complimentary shuttle van transports guests to and from locations on campus and State Street. Free parking.</p>
<p><b>For more information</b> <a href="http://www.uwex.edu/ecc">www.uwex.edu/ecc</a></p>

## Hazardous materials incident training benefits company and county

By Charles Maas

SHEBOYGAN—A training program at the University of Wisconsin-Sheboygan has helped make the emergency response team from a local chemical company one of the top-rated teams in the county, according to UW-Sheboygan Continuing Education Program Manager Jeannie Roseberry and Randy Jacobs, a safety specialist at the Aldrich Chemical Co. Inc. Sheboygan Facility.

The 40-hour program "Responding to Hazardous Materials Incidents" trains emergency responders to safely deal with hazardous materials incidents. Participants learn the proper use of protective clothing and monitoring equipment, techniques for confining and cleaning up spilled chemicals, and how to develop an in-house emergency response team and build rapport with local responders and emergency government officials.

### Company and Extension partner for training

The class is a partnership between Aldrich Chemical Co. and the UW-Sheboygan Office of Continuing Education. According to Roseberry, "Aldrich wanted to partner with the UW System to get a high-quality program. We provide the course materials, facility and marketing. The instructors developed the course and obtained Environmental Protection Agency approval." Instructors for the course are Jacobs and Deborah Bond, an occupational health nurse at Aldrich.

So far, three 10-week training sessions have been offered on the UW-Sheboygan campus, attracting 55 Aldrich employees. Aldrich sponsors participation in the class

for anyone already on the response team or anyone who has indicated an interest. The next class is scheduled for fall 2001.

### Class has potential to expand

Roseberry sees a critical need for the training, and would like to expand it to include companies in addition to Aldrich. "Sheboygan County alone has 155 facilities that handle potentially hazardous waste, and there is a need for employees to learn the properties

### Expertise available to plant and county

Jacobs explains that while the Aldrich team is capable of responding to severe "level A" situations, even "terrorist-type" chemical emergencies, due to legal requirements it can respond only to incidents in its own plant. If an emergency occurred elsewhere in the county, the team couldn't provide staffing, but could supply equipment and expertise. To re-

*"Anybody who wants to make a living in the chemical industry should take this course to learn what can go wrong. Even a Ph.D. in chemistry would find this information helpful."*

— Ed Waech, "Responding to Hazardous Materials Incidents" graduate

of the materials they're working with," she explains. "Continuing Education Extension can play a significant role in helping to heighten the awareness of this need and bring it to other areas of the state."

In addition to safety concerns, Roseberry adds that another reason for companies to invest in the program is to decrease downtime in the event of an incident. "Without an on-site response team, the spilling of a single drop of a substance like mercury would result in the required closing of the plant by a responding fire department until the situation was resolved," she says.

main prepared, team members participate in monthly on-site training.

Ed Waech, a packaging specialist at Aldrich who recently completed the training, says the class gave him information on how to make good decisions and where to look for more information. Waech adds that he feels more confident in handling chemicals now that he knows what he's doing is correct.

For more information:  
[www.Sheboygan.uwc.edu/CE/hazardous/index.htm](http://www.Sheboygan.uwc.edu/CE/hazardous/index.htm)

# Educational programs and testing help keep well water safe

By Pamela Seelman

Many of us assume our drinking water is safe and clean. But for people who rely on well water for drinking, cooking, bathing and cleaning, assuming well water is safe without testing could cause problems.

Wisconsin has between 750,000 to 1 million private wells, and most are not tested on the recommended annual basis, says Chris Mechenich, University of Wisconsin-Extension groundwater educator.

## Extension offers programs and water testing

Extension educators offer a variety of drinking-water educational programs and water testing to help Wisconsinites determine if their drinking water is safe and to learn more about keeping it safe.

In drinking-water education programs, residents of a rural or suburban area submit a sample of their drinking water to be tested for up to 20 minerals and common contaminants, explains Mechenich. "About a month later, county faculty and groundwater specialists team up for an education program on the health and aesthetic implications of the results, as well as strategies to protect groundwater at home and in the community," she adds.

Last year nearly 1,200 people in seven counties participated in the program. In addition, more than 30 county UW-Extension offices make available water-tests bottles from the UW-Stevens Point Environmental Task Force Lab.

## Nitrates can make water unsafe

More than 3,400 private well samples were tested at the Environmental Task Force Lab in 2000, Mechenich reports. Of those tested for nitrate, the most common chemical contaminant found in Wisconsin groundwater, seven percent exceeded the drinking water limit.

For women trying to conceive, or those who are pregnant or nursing, it's doubly important to test well water annually. High levels of nitrate in drinking water can cause blue baby syndrome, a disease in infants younger than six months of age.

"Women who are trying to conceive or who are pregnant should not drink water with high levels of nitrate," Mechenich explains. "Some researchers believe this increases the risk of birth defects or miscarriages."

Nitrate-nitrogen greater than 10 milligrams per liter of water is considered unsafe. Discovering high levels of nitrate in drinking water should prompt homeowners to search for and eliminate the sources of pollution in their well water, Mechenich adds. "In Wisconsin, about 70,000 private wells may contain unsafe levels of nitrate," she says.

One recent drinking-water testing program in St. Croix County revealed that nitrate levels in two homes exceeded safe limits. "In both cases, there were infants in the home and the parents were not aware of the potential health risks," says Community Resource Development (CRD) agent Jim Janke. Like many CRD agents, Janke offers educational drinking-water programs within his county.

## Number of private wells increasing

"With the vast amount of rural non-farm development throughout the state, an increasing number of families are getting their drinking water from private wells," Janke explains. "These families need to be aware that nitrates in drinking water from wells pose a health threat to infants and unborn children." Little is known about the long-term effects of high levels of nitrate on adults.

"Nitrate is an indicator of some cultural activity affecting the well water," Mechenich explains. Lawn and crop fertilizers, industrial chemicals, manure storage, compost piles, septic systems and feed lots can affect nitrate levels in drinking water. "It's important to try to discover where the contamination is coming from, and think about what other contaminants might be coming from that source as well."

## Testing should be done annually

But testing once is not enough. "A water test is like a snapshot," Mechenich adds. "If your child wanders off in the grocery store, and the only snapshot you have of



UW-Extension groundwater educator Chris Mechenich (right) works with Wisconsin residents to help them determine whether their well water is safe and what steps to take if it is contaminated.

him in your wallet is five or ten years old, it won't tell anyone much about what that child looks like today.

"Similarly, a water test done years ago won't tell you much about how local land-use practices are affecting your water today," Mechenich

says. Testing your water once a year will help you determine whether contaminant levels are acceptable and whether changes have occurred.

For information about testing well water: [Contact your local Community Resource Development agent.](#)

## State Parks, State Treasures

Serenity, retreat, renewal.

This nature trail weaves through sand dunes at Kohler-Andrae State Park on the shore of Lake Michigan. The park is featured in "State Parks, State Treasures," a new documentary from Wisconsin Public Television premiering Monday, **March 5, at 7 p.m.** The hour-long program takes viewers on a grand tour through many of our parks in each of the four seasons.



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*Extension News and Ideas* is a publication of the University of Wisconsin-Extension. It features articles and information about UW-Extension and extension activities carried out through the 26 UW System campuses and 72 counties. An EEO/Affirmative Action employer, UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements. If you would like this material in another format, please contact Margaret E. (Peg) Davis.

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*Extension News and Ideas* online:  
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