

Agricultural Newsletter

UW-Madison College of Ag & Life Science
University of Wisconsin-Extension



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Upcoming Beginning Farmer Course Offered in Frederic

Otto Wiegand
Area Agricultural Agent
Burnett, Sawyer & Washburn Counties

The Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers course will be offered locally this fall and winter at the Frederic Village Hall. The course comes through the University of Wisconsin Farm and Industry Short Course and is co-hosted this year by the UW-Extension Ag Agents for Burnett, Washburn, Sawyer and Polk Counties. Delivery will be done through interactive video and audio. Most of the subject materials apply to both grass-based and conventional farming and cover dairy, beef, sheep and goats. An important aspect of the course is business planning. If desired, participants will be able to develop their own business plans by the end of the course. Since the course began in 1995, over 400 students have enrolled and a third have gone on to start their own farms.

There are 14 regular class sessions starting Nov. 10. The course is divided into three terms. Classes run from 11:00 AM to 1:30 PM on Thursdays except for one class on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. Participants who miss a class may catch it later on-line. The entire course can also be taken on line. Participants may opt to take individual class sessions. The cost of the entire course will be \$240 or \$15 per session. Sometimes scholarships are available.

Subjects may vary, but usually include starting a livestock business, whether confinement or grazing, grazing system layout, stray voltage, goal-setting, feeding on pasture, production and marketing of pasture-based beef, goat and sheep dairying, information on beginner loans, enterprise budgets, farm-driven marketing, business plan writing, successful models for business startups, bio-fuels and farm energy, organic farming, low-cost parlors, out-wintering and environmental stewardship. A brochure for the course will be available. Also watch for press releases in the papers. Additional afternoon topics of interest may be added by local UW-Extension if requested. Bring your own lunch.

Please register by Nov. 4th if you plan to attend the entire course. To register or obtain further information, contact Otto Wiegand at UWEX Spooner at 715-635-3506, Jennifer Blazek at UWEX Balsam Lake, 715-485-8600, or Dick Cates in Madison, 608-265-6437. The course is a collaborative effort between the UW-Center for Integrated Agricultural Studies, UW Cooperative Extension, CALS, DATCP, the Technical Colleges and GrassWorks.

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Moving Hay to Texas or Other Drought States

Otto Wiegand
Area Agricultural Agent
Burnett, Sawyer & Washburn Counties

A number of calls have been received by UW-Extension in NW Wisconsin and other parts of the state about how to sell or donate hay to southern states affected by a severe drought and record-high temperatures.

There has been little or no rain in Texas and surrounding states since November of last year. Irrigation has saved a portion of crops in west Texas, but it cannot keep up with the extreme heat and evaporation, so some cropland had to be sacrificed. Dairy farmers and cow-calf operations are doing everything they can to keep their livelihood based on cows and heifers, but many beef and marginal animals are going to market. Larger farms, several over 100,000 acres, are able to move animals to leased land in Montana and other states with large areas of grazing land. Smaller farmers, many under 1,000 acres, cannot afford to move animals.

The cost of trucking is over \$2.00 per loaded mile one-way, or \$3.50-4.00 with an empty return. North Dakota truckers moving hay south are often able to bring back oil-drilling equipment for the shale fields. Some sweet corn has been moving north. It is more than 1,000 miles from Spoooner to Texas. A semi-load of hay weighing 20 tons transported 1,000 miles at \$2.00 per mile would cost \$100 per ton without the cost of hay. Realistically, many parts of Texas are 1,400 miles away and

trucking with an empty return could increase transport costs to over \$250 per ton. Much of the hay available is in the form of round bales which are less dense and harder to stack.

The Texas Department of Agriculture has been trying to cut a deal with the railroads. Railroads often need to adapt cars for hay, a process that could take considerable time. Railroads especially do not like round bales because they are hard to handle and need to be covered with special tarps because of the risk of fire from rail friction and locomotive sparks. Then there is the extra handling from farm to truck to rail and reverse. There appears to be no easy fix.

However, hay is moving and will move. The best way for farmers with hay to sell or donate is to post on hay-list websites and let the market work. Here are a number of hay websites:



Texas – Hay Hotline
(www.texas hay hotline.tda.state.tx.us/hayhotline/)

Oklahoma – Hay Directory
(www.oda.state.ok.us/mktdev.htm)

Wisconsin - Farmer-to-Farmer Hay, Forage and Corn List
(www.farmertofarmer.uwex.edu)

Minnesota/ Wisconsin - Upper Midwest Hay List
(www.haylist.umn.edu)

All USA – Hay Barn (office in Katy, Texas) (www.haybarn.com)

Donations – Family Farm Defenders/ Farm Aid (John Kinsmann, 608-986-3815 or John Peck, 608-260-0900.

Low-Cost Cattle Handling Facilities

*Lynn Johnson
NW Graziers Network*

*Otto Wiegand
Area Agricultural Agent
Burnett, Sawyer & Washburn Counties*

Lynn Johnson, a Polk County beef farmer and grazing planner for the NW Wisconsin Graziers Network, recently hosted a cattle-handling demonstration and pasture walk on his farm north of Range, near Turtle Lake. He showed how a practical cattle-handling facility can be constructed at low cost while still allowing him to do most management practices with his beef herd.

Cost of constructing a handling facility can often seem prohibitive, especially for the small producer. One can easily overspend on deluxe versions when used materials and a few innovations would be sufficient. Practical designs for facilities are available from your Extension office and from other sources.

Practices possible with well-designed beef-handling facilities include (1) visible animal identification, ie. ear tags, (2) body weight measurements, (3) vaccinations, (4) AI synchronization protocols, (5) AI services, (6) pregnancy testing, (7) pour-on treatments such as deworming, fly control and other parasites, (8) medical exams and treatments, (9) calving assistance, (10) weaning, (11) implants, (12) culling and sorting, (13) sorting of management groups, (14) loading trailers, and (15) quarantine of new animals. Safety for the producer and the animals is also an important

consideration. It doesn't take many trips to the hospital emergency room to exceed the cost of a safe cattle handling facility.

The selection of the site for the handling facility needs to be planned carefully. It needs to be accessible for easy loading of cattle by trailer. It must be strategically connected to fields and lanes. There should be access to water, feed and electricity. The area should be well drained and have good surface materials. Protection from weather or access to shelter and supplies are important considerations also.

The design of the facility should enable the operator to entice rather than force animals to move through it. Understand that animals usually want to escape, and will move toward their herd mates, feed or water. Animals will have less fear and improved disposition with proper handling. Alleys should be narrow, so animals can't run around you. The squeeze chute should be curved, so that animals think that they are returning from where they came, as circular movements are natural for cattle. The facility should be designed to minimize distractions and eliminate potential injury points.

Johnson's facility contains five holding pens. Working alleys are about 12 feet wide. The crowding tub has a 10 ft. diameter. The squeeze chute is about 26 inches wide for his cattle. Included are headlocks and a load-out area. Johnson recommends building for flexibility. Allow for extra gates and include many multi-functional components.

Construction and choice of building materials need to be appropriate for the kind of wear and tear or abuse that your cattle will inflict on the facilities. Extra heavy materials

are needed for bison or very excitable cattle, while lighter construction would be adequate for docile animals such as those handled in Johnson's facility.

Common facility problems include poor drainage or heavy organic soils. Lanes and sorting alleys are often too wide or have too many corners. Beef cattle are generally less tame than dairy cattle and would need to be trained to accept headlocks. Handling facilities can be made more durable and substantial with deeper posts and concrete, heavy gates and sidewalls, but may have to be adjusted later because of design flaws, efficiency or safety issues.

Johnson owns 70 head of docile Red Angus cattle and could handle more with his facility. He estimated his cash costs at about \$1,500 for the used items such as AI chute and head gate, corral panels or gates, cattle panels, headlocks, and T-posts and miscellaneous materials. Johnson was patient and accumulated these recycled and used items over time from auctions and other local sources. You may have to spend more. Remember that each facility must be designed and constructed to meet your specific needs and should account for local site conditions and cattle behavior.

Most well-designed handling facilities will pay for themselves in a short time, even if they cost a little more. One needs to consider the value of the services or management practices applied to your beef herd and what they would cost you if not done at all or attempted without a facility. The value of these good management practices have been shown to contribute greatly towards beef herd profitability.

Dealing With Frost Damage to Corn & Soybeans

*Kevin Schoessow
Area Agricultural Development Agent
Burnett, Washburn & Sawyer Counties*

Adapted from Lauer and Conley

A killing frost occurred on Sept 15 across NW Wisconsin. Due to the cool start to the growing season and in some areas late spring planting, many growers were hoping for an extended growing season to finish out their crops. Unfortunately this did not happen and depending on your crops stage of maturity on Sept 15, there may be yield and quality losses.

Freezing temperatures before physiological maturity will damage corn and soybeans. Maturity in corn occurs when kernels form a black layer at the kernel tip; grain will be at approximately 30 to 35 percent moisture.

Maturity in soybeans occurs when beans in pods turn yellow and are no longer green (R7). After maturity, no additional dry matter will be accumulated in the seed.

In addition to creating quality problems, premature frost will reduce the yield of dry grain.

Research has shown that yield losses of 40% can be expected if corn was in the dent stage (R5) when killed. A 12% yield lost was reported when corn was killed by frost at the 50% kernel milk stage (R5.5).

Research by Saliba et al. (1982) has found that the latest growth stage at which significant

yield loss occurred due to freeze injury (80% leaf loss) in soybean ranged from R6.0 to R7.2 with an average growth stage of R6. Soybean yield loss from frost is due to a reduction in seed size and not seed abortion. Lastly, research suggests no impact on seed protein or oil content when freeze injury occurred after R6.3.

If you suspect frost damage corn or soybeans below are some things to think about. Also keep in mind that if you suspect yield loss due to frost to make sure and consult your crop insurance adjuster for proper harvest procedures.

Characteristics of Frost-damaged Corn

- Small, misshapen, soft kernels
- Undeveloped starch structure; pithy kernels
- Test weights progressively below 52 lb./bu., depending on maturity (in 1993, some corn was less than 40 lb./bu.)
- Average protein (7.5 to 8.0 percent) in corn heavier than 45 lb./bu., lower protein in corn lighter than 45 lb./bu.
- High breakage susceptibility; many fines generated in handling
- Lower digestibility compared with normal corn, especially for test weights below 45 lb./bu.
- Little or no increase in test weight after drying
- Variable amino acid levels
- Moisture meters generally read low in immature corn

Uses for Frost-damaged Corn

Animal feed is the best use for frost-damaged corn. Low test weight

corn used for large animal feed is only slightly less valuable (2 to 5 percent) than normal corn on a per-pound basis. Poultry, however, with limited volumetric capacity, may be more sensitive to frost-damaged corn than larger livestock. Before feeding, test light corn for protein level, amino acid level, and mycotoxins (especially fumonisin and vomitoxin).

Composition will vary. Be aware that fungi invade stressed corn more readily than they do normal corn. Wet, dry milling and dry grind ethanol operations will not want frost-damaged corn. Using frost-damaged corn in wet milling causes low starch yields, and the separation of starch and protein cannot be clean. In dry milling, frost damaged corn sharply reduces yields of dry mill grits. Processors will discount light corn more heavily than its reduction in feed value. Fermentation will be more variable in ethanol production, with lower yields and less predictable distillers grain quality.

Handling and Storage

Frost-damaged corn breaks easily and goes out of condition quickly, even at low moisture levels.

Dry frost-damaged corn at reduced air temperatures (below 160°F) and store at 14 percent (or lower) moisture. Expect storage life to be about half as long as that of normal corn. Do not harvest through low-lying frost damaged areas. The mixture will be a high storage risk. Harvest and handle them separately. Because immature corn kernels dry on the surface, expect the moisture level of stored corn to be higher than test results.

Expect to aerate the stored corn frequently. Move immature corn to

market before summer. Store only clean corn and pull out the fines-laden center core of grain in bins.

Characteristics of Frost-damaged Soybeans

- Green or elongated yellow soybeans that shrink to smaller than normal size after drying
- Reduced extractable oil content (below 16 percent), difficult extraction of oil, and poor oil quality
- Higher moisture level (by 1 to 2 percent) than indicated by moisture meters
- Slower field drydown. Beans often lose their green color within two weeks of maturity, so allow field drydown if at all possible. This same statement is true of plants that were only partially frosted (generally on upper leaves).

Uses for Frost-damaged Soybeans

Processors will discount green soybeans based on the color definition in the U.S. Grades. The greenness of immature soybeans must be refined out of the oil. Oil from immature beans often contains high levels of free fatty acids, which are causes of rancidity. Meal from immature soybeans will contain more residual oil than the normal 0.5 to 1.0 percent.

Storage and Handling

Because immature soybeans are deceptively wet, condition problems often occur. Clean soybeans before storage to remove wetter weed seeds and plant parts. Two to four weeks of steady aeration will both reduce moisture levels and cause greenness to partially subside. Check the condition of stored soybeans frequently. You can artificially dry soybeans, but use temperatures of

less than 130°F, which are considerably lower than temperatures used for corn drying. Direct marketing from the field will probably create the highest discounts for green soybeans; the market often overreacts to stress situations.

For more information, see:

<http://corn.agronomy.wisc.edu/Management/L041.aspx>

http://soybean.uwex.edu/database/PubDetail.cfm?pub_id=121.

Heart of the Farm Women in Agriculture Conference

*Otto Wiegand
Area Agricultural Agent
Burnett, Sawyer & Washburn Counties*

A second Heart of the Farm-Women in Agriculture Conference will be held in the area, probably in February. Watch for details in the December Newsletter and in the newspapers in January.

Heart of the Farm Conference is a UW-Extension program committed to addressing the needs of farm women by providing education on farm business topics, connecting them with agricultural resources and creating support networks. As a result of past programs, participants have improved their record keeping skills, made changes to insurance coverage, implemented production changes, made decision on retirement needs and plans and more!

If you would like to be part of the planning committee for the conference, please contact either Otto Wiegand or Kevin Schoessow at 800-528-1914 or 715-635-3506. For additional information, contact Jenny Vanderlin at jmvander@wisc.edu, or 608-263-7795.

Dates to Remember in Douglas County

*Jane Anklam
Agricultural Agent
Douglas County*

With the harvest in full swing, remember to add fall soil testing and forage testing to your to do list. As we discussed in last winter's "Hay for Profit" series, good representative forage tests for baled hay and silage will give you the information you need to make storage decisions and ration adjustments for your operation.

Coming up:

Douglas County Dairy Farmers will meet November 10th, 8:15 pm at Rapids Riverside in South Range to discuss the specific needs for our operations. This is a follow-up to the Dairy Summit held in Mason last spring. How Douglas County's infrastructure and market, research needs, and good dairy practices impact our livelihood will be on the agenda. If you want to talk about a June Dairy Breakfast, we can do that too. Please contact Jane Anklam for more information (715-395-1515).

Local Food Initiative: After a summer of growing, marketing, attending local food sessions, it is time for the Locally Grown Food Initiative group to reconvene and share what has been learned. Join us at the Community Center in Solon Springs on October 24 at 6:30. Bring a story about what you have done or learned about the locally-grown market concept and a locally-grown food or recipe to share. New participants welcome. Call Jane Anklam for more information (715-395-1515)

Dairy Worker Skills Training Offered

*Adapted by Otto Wiegand
Area Agricultural Agent
Burnett, Sawyer & Washburn Counties*

*From Zen Miller & Tina Kohlman
Dairy & Livestock Agents
Outagamie & Sheboygan Counties*

Many dairy farms are expanding and adding cows to their operations and are requiring employees to be hired who can provide skills to complete the many tasks associated with the various aspects of the dairy operation. Some of these workers have very little or no training and may speak another language (predominately Spanish). University-based materials in both English and Spanish addressing specific dairy skills on the farm are limited. Focusing on these needs, the UW-Extension Dairy Team created six dairy worker training modules to help train and improve the skills of dairy workers. These include Milking Skills, Reproductive Skills, Calf Management Skills, Herdsmanship Skills, Feeding and Nutrition, and Handling Skills. The module series was designed to be easily tailored to fit specific training needs of dairy producers and to be easily replicated by educators/producers regardless of subject matter expertise or language barrier. Each module contains comprehensive materials to conduct a successful training.

The goals of the program are to (1) train dairy workers to perform their assigned tasks in a more skillful, effective, efficient and safe

manner, (2) improve the bottom line of dairy producers while increasing the skill level of dairy workers, and (3) increase profitability and competitiveness by improved worker performance. When adult learners understand why they do things, they comprehend how important the jobs are and how their actions affect productivity and health of the cows. These innovative modules have been designed to conduct and teach bilingual trainings. Nearly 50 trainings for over 1,250 dairy workers from over 125 dairy farms in eastern Wisconsin have been conducted on-site, in small groups, incorporating a lecture and hands-on training.

The teaching materials in each module include instructions on conducting a successful training session, a teaching outline, a self-playing PowerPoint Presentation with voice-over in English and/or Spanish describing the importance of the skill being trained, speaker notes, handouts and fact sheets to complement the presentation, additional resources to be used as a reference for educators or as additional fact sheets for participants, certificates of completion, and evaluation forms. All materials include both English and Spanish versions and can be tailored to your specific training needs. The materials are available in a three-ring binder format or on CD.

Another exciting piece of this training curriculum is a DVD which features Dr. Sheila McGuirk, UW-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine, using a step-by-step approach to conduct examinations of cows in the fresh pen. This includes selecting cows for examination based on behavior, calving history and observations, and conducting

diagnostic tests to arrive at an accurate diagnosis. This DVD, which includes both English and Spanish versions, is one tool that can assist with training farm personnel to become proficient conducting fresh cow exams. In addition, there is a set of laminated protocol cards in English and Spanish that are ready to be used anywhere on the farm. This set of 18 protocols is part of the calf management skills module and describes industry accepted protocols related to colostrum management, calf health, cleanliness and sanitation, and processing newborn calves. Each protocol provides descriptions as well as pictures to outline the process in a stepwise fashion.

Available shortly will be OSHA-approved safety training including skid steer operation. There is a minimal charge for the above items. If you have additional questions about the Dairy Workers' Training Modules please contact Otto Wiegand at UW-Extension Spooner, 715-635-3506, Zen Miller, 920-832-5119, or Tina Kohlman, 920-459-5902.

Did You Know?

Wisconsin ranks 1st in the US in dairy sheep, dairy goats, sheep milk, goat milk, cheese, mink, veal calves, oats, corn silage, cranberries, red kidney beans, snap beans, beets, cabbage kraut, horseradish and ginseng; 2nd in dairy cows, cow milk, butter, ducklings, and carrots; 3rd in sweet corn, green peas, spearmint, total vegetables, and alfalfa hay; 4th in meat goats, hides & skins, potatoes, and tart cherries; and 5th in maple syrup and peppermint.

What You Should Know About Harvesting Alfalfa After Frost

Kevin Schoessow
Area Agricultural Development Agent
Burnett, Sawyer & Washburn Counties

Adapted from Dan Undersander
Extension & Research Forage Agronomist

Every fall our office receives calls about harvesting alfalfa after frost and what is the potential for winter injury. If you have a need to harvest alfalfa yet this fall keep the following in mind:

- √ Alfalfa does not accumulate any toxic compounds after frost, unlike sorghums. Therefore it can be cut immediately after frost or any time later.
- √ Cutting alfalfa between Sept 1 and Sept 21 provides the greatest risk for winter injury, because the plant will not have enough time to replenish root reserves.
- √ Cutting after Sept 21 reduces the likelihood that the plant will use up stored energy in the root by any regrowth
- √ Keep in mind a killing frost for alfalfa requires 4 or more hours at 24 degrees or less.
- √ Forage quality of alfalfa changes little during September, so decisions on when to harvest should be based on the likelihood of winter injury.

For more information do an Internet search on late *summer cutting management of alfalfa*, uwex or go to <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/forage/pubs/late-summer-cutting-management-of-alfalfa.pdf>.

Farm Service Agency Programs

Evie Moore
Farm Service Agency, Spooner

DCP and ACRE Sign-up for 2012 -

Producers are encouraged to sign up for the 2012 Average Crop Revenue Election Program (ACRE) and the Direct and Counter-cyclical Program (DCP) starting in late October. Producers need to sign a DCP or ACRE contract annually to be eligible to receive program benefits BY June 1, 2012.

Marketing Assistance Loans - 9-month commodity loans are available to producers on their 2011 crops at low interest rates. The grain must be stored on the farm or in an approved warehouse. Deadline to apply for small grain loans is March 31, 2012 and for corn or soybean loans is May 31, 2012.

FSFL Program - Producers who are in need of additional storage, need to make improvements to existing facilities, need a new grain dryer or new grain handling equipment or hay storage can apply for low interest loans. Terms vary from 7-12 years.

Contact the FSA Office in your county for any information on these programs

DATES TO REMEMBER:

October 1: DCP/ACRE sign up for 2012 begins

November 4: Committee Election Ballots mailed to eligible producers
December 5: Last day to return Committee election ballots

Continuous: CRP Continuous Signup & FSFL loans.

This Quarter's Events

Contacts: UW-Extension Ag Agents Otto Wiegand or Kevin Schoessow, Spooner Station, 715-635-3506, Jane Anklam, Douglas Co, 715-395-1363, or Jason Fischbach, Ashland & Bayfield Counties, 715-682-8393.

Oct 4-8, Tues-Sat – World Dairy Expo – Madison.

Oct 12, Tues, 6-9 PM – Beef Quality Assurance & Cattle Handling, Tony, Rusk County – Jim & Cindy Meng Farm, free, contact Ag Agent Rich Toebe, 715-532-2151 x4.

Oct 21-22, Fri-Sat – Focus on Goats Conference, Platteville – 2-day conference for producers, processors, educators, service providers, and others featuring information and advice for those experienced and beginning, contact Claire Mikolayunas at mikolayunas@wisc.edu or 608-890-3802.

Oct-April, May-Sept – Lake Superior Farm Beginnings Course, Esko, MN – The Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association is offering its fourth annual 2011-2012 Lake Superior Farm Beginnings program, starting Oct 29, register by Oct 10, contact Cree Bradley, 218-834-0846, Cree@lakesuperiorfarming.org.

Nov-Mar – Beginning Farmer Course, Frederic Village Hall - 14 sessions, 2-3 hours per session, \$240 for full course or \$15 per session, now in its 5th consecutive year in this region, contact Otto Wiegand, 715-635-3506 (See article).

Jan 12-14, Thurs-Sat – Grass-Works Grazing Conference, Wausau – Patriot Center, contact Bridget O'Meara 715-808-0060 or go to the GrassWorks website for information or to register.



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Kevin Schoessow
UWEX Area Agricultural Agent