

Agricultural Newsletter

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



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New hay and straw website offers help to producers

John Markus
Area Agricultural Agent
Ashland & Bayfield Counties

A new University of Wisconsin-Extension website titled "Buying and Selling Hay and Straw" is a pool of useful information for farmers when completing feed inventories for this winter season, and formulating strategies for buying and selling hay efficiently in the coming months.

The website at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/ag/haybuying.html> contains valuable tips for calculating feed inventories for the winter and spring seasons. It answers many common questions that arise during the inventory process like: "How long will my feed last?" "Will feed need to be purchased?" and "When is the best time to do a feed inventory?"

In addition to providing mathematical examples for projecting the time feed will last or the amount of feed to purchase at a given consumption rate, the site also has links to examples of feed management techniques and supplemental information through the UW-Extension, Michigan State University and Iowa State University Extension affiliates. Furthermore, information on calculating and entering feed data into spreadsheets is available through a UW-Extension link.

Established in part due to the recent drought and potential need for hay for Wisconsin farmers, the website has information on how to locate hay supplies and how to stretch hay supplies during exceptional weather conditions. Randy Shaver, UW-Extension Dairy Scientist, discusses feeding strategies when alfalfa supplies are short due to exceptional weather conditions like limited snow cover and very cold winters.

For farmers who have hay to sell, the website provides an in-depth look at how bringing factors other than price into the market such as forage quality, consideration of customer needs, prompt delivery, steady supply, and appreciation of business can significantly increase the value and salability of your products. This website will also help individuals who have hay to sell by providing an indication of going price and how to sell.

A link to "Buying Hay for Horses" describes the importance of buying high quality hay for horses, how much hay you will need, and a detailed checklist guide to use when contacting hay sellers.

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Representing Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties:

Kevin Schoessow
Area Ag Development Agent
715-635-3506 or 800-528-1914

Bill Saumer
Area Ag Agent
715-635-3506 or 800-528-1914

Yves Berger
Spooner Ag Research Station
Superintendent & Sheep
Researcher
715-635-3735

Phil Holman
Spooner Ag Research Station
Asst. Superintendent
715-635-3735

Representing Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, and Iron Counties:

John Markus
Area Agricultural Agent
715-373-6104

Tom Syverud
Extension & Outreach Educator
715-682-7268

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Research Station, W6646 Highway 70,
Spooner, WI 54801 or UWEX Area
Agricultural Agent, Ashland Ag Research
Station, 68760 State Farm Road, Ashland, WI
54806.

(cont.)

Finally, for those curious about current prices for hay and straw, or where to buy hay or straw, the website contains helpful links to sites like the *Weekly Hay Market Demand and Price Report for Upper Midwest, Moran Hay Price Reports, Midwest Haylist* and the *Internet Hay Exchange*.

The hay price information is updated weekly by an individual who is familiar with the industry, checks hay markets across the Midwest, and summarizes the pricing information.

Mad cows?

Bill Saumer
Area Agricultural Agent
Burnett, Washburn, & Sawyer Counties

What a way to bring in the New Year with the news of a sick Washington state cow that was processed and distributed to many states and then found out to be Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) positive. The brain and spinal cord, which are the most infectious parts, never made it into the human food chain, but obviously many people are concerned about this incident. Generally speaking, we have the world's safest meat and with all of our safeguards in place with our Department of Agriculture and other agencies, this one cow or any others should be of little concern to us as consumers. Many consumers have already been purchasing their meat directly from farmers and this trend will likely increase because people will want to know where their meat has come from and know of the quality of the cuts as well. Consumers can also visit the farm ahead of time to identify their animals and see the condition of the farm so that they feel good about their purchases.

Since the reports on this cow are continuously coming in, anything I put into this news letter will be outdated by the time you see it, so I will just put in a few of these facts regarding BSE and additional websites to obtain current news and facts. Here are some places for the latest information:

<http://www.iowabeefcenter.org/default.htm>

<http://www.econ.iastate.edu/faculty/lawrence/>

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/ag>

www.mnbeef.org or www.bseinfo.org

www.BSEInfo.org

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/issues/bse/bseum.pdf>

We're on the Web!

You may find this newsletter, our gardener's newsletter, and additional information on our upcoming events by visiting the websites of the **Spooner Agricultural Research Station:**

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/sars/index.htm>

and the **Ashland Agricultural Research Station:**

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/aars/>

Calving system helps reduce calf scours

John Markus
Area Agricultural Agent
Ashland & Bayfield Counties

Scours, or diarrhea, is a leading cause of calf illness and death and can be a calving-season nightmare. In some herds, nearly all young calves get scours, and up to 10 percent die.

The Sandhills Calving System, developed by University of Nebraska veterinary scientists, helps ranchers reduce calf scours, says veterinary scientist David Smith, who headed this Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources research.

The system reduces calf exposure to germs that cause scours by keeping older and younger calves in separate pastures and moving pregnant cows so their calves are born in pastures free of germs that cause scours.

“We’re convinced the system works,” Mr. Smith says. “Not only do you save on production costs, ranchers are able to wean more calves and have fewer expenses due to sick calves.”

Tests on Sandhills ranches under different calving schemes found this system significantly reduces calf illness, treatment costs, labor and medication costs, and the need for antibiotics.

A three-year study on a 900-head ranch showed the system eliminated scours deaths and cut associated costs 24-fold on this ranch, Mr. Smith says. Before adopting NU’s system, the ranch typically lost 7 to 14 percent of its

calves to scours. After adopting it, no scours deaths occurred.

“We’re convinced the system works. Not only do you save on production costs, ranchers are able to wean more calves and have fewer expenses due to sick calves.”

The rancher estimates he has saved \$40,000 to \$50,000 annually since implementing this system, thanks to having more calves to sell, improved calf performance and greatly reduced treatment costs.

This system can be adapted to different calving and grazing situations elsewhere in Nebraska and beyond, Mr. Smith says.

Source: Drovers

Sign up for EQIP funding

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

Each year farmers and rural property owners have the opportunity to receive cost-share or incentive payments for approved conservation practices through the Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP). These funds are distributed to each county by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and will help offset the cost of certain approved practices such as Nutrient Management Planning, conservation tillage, managed rotational grazing, stream buffers and other conservation practices. The sign up period is expected to take place early this spring. For more information, contact your local NRCS Office in Ashland, Ladysmith or Spooner.

Conservation tillage means higher farm profits

Bill Saumer
Area Agricultural Agent
Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties

The 2003 growing season illustrates the many advantages of conservation tillage, says George Rehm, soil scientist with the University of Minnesota Extension Service.

Conservation tillage leaves crop residues on the soil, thus conserving soil moisture. “The positive effects of moisture conservation were very evident this year,” Rehm says. “Ridge-till farmers reported an advantage of four to 10 bushels per acre, compared to soybeans grown without conservation tillage. The extra bushels are attributed to more stored soil moisture in the ridge-till systems.”

The additional soil moisture in conservation tillage systems can be attributed to more surface residue and less water loss, compared to conventional tillage operations. “There are good estimates that say each secondary tillage operation results in a loss of about one-fourth inch of usable moisture,” Rehm says.

Farmers who use conservation tillage also recognize that they save soil and reduce the amount of fuel needed for crop production, Rehm says. “Usually, inputs can be reduced without reducing yields. And reduced inputs translate into lower production costs and good potential for higher farm profits,” he says.

First year transition to organic corn date of planting and plant population results

*Phil Holman
Asst. Superintendent
Spooner Ag Research Station*

Approximately two acres of corn was grown organically at the Spooner Ag Research Station in 2003. Typically organic producers plant corn a little later and at lower populations than University research has shown to be economic optimal corn production practices.

A certified organic corn variety of 85 day relative maturity (NC+0850) was planted on April 29th, May 13th, May 27th, and June 9th. Planter seeding rate was approximately 40,000 kernels per acre. Four randomized replications (passes) were planted for each date. At each planting a 6 row planter was used with 4 rows seeding the organic corn variety (untreated) and two rows a conventional variety (NK 21-V6) which was treated with Maxim and Nugro seed treatments.

Plant populations of 18,000, 24,000, 30,000 and 36,000 were hand thinned when the corn was approximately at the V8 growth stage. Populations were also replicated four times.

The field was alfalfa in 2002 and had sheep manure applied in the spring of 2003. No other nutrients were applied to the corn. The alfalfa was sprayed in the fall of 2002 with Roundup which is not allowed by organic standards; however, the field area was managed organically in 2003. The field was a sandy loam soil that was irrigated as needed.

The field was moldboard plowed and disked twice prior to the first planting date. All unplanted areas were field cultivated prior to each successive planting. Thus, each later planting date had one more tillage operation to control newly emerged seedling weeds than the previous planting date. The corn was cultivated as needed by planting date. The last three planting dates were also hilled on the last cultivation using a disk hiller to throw soil next to the stalks. The results are as follows:

Plant Population by Date

	Organic NC+0850	Conv. NK 21-V6
April 29	33,000	37,000
May 13	30,000	34,000
May 27	36,000	37,000
June 9	39,000	39,000

Prior to thinning to desired plant populations (@V8 corn growth stage), stand population was counted to determine the effect of planting date on plant emergence and early survival. Populations were counted for the organic corn variety that had no seed treatment and for the conventional corn variety that had seed treatment.

The first two planting dates, April 29th and May 13th, generally had lower plant populations than the later planting dates of May 27th and June 9th. This is probably due to the higher soil temperature later in the growing season.

Additionally, the organic variety had similar populations to the conventional variety in the later two plantings, but approximately 10% fewer plants in the organic variety than in the conventional variety in the early plantings.

Weed Biomass Yields

	<u>Lbs. Dry Matter/Acre</u>
April 29	2,463
May 13	1,420
May 27	995
June 9	378

On August 29th, weeds were harvested by hand from two row lengths 25 feet long and replicated four times for each planting date.

Early planting of corn contained over one ton of weed dry matter per acre which is comparable to a moderate late (third) cutting of hay. Later corn plantings had less weed competition. Each extra tillage pass had killed a new growth of weeds.

Organic Corn Grain Yield, Moisture, and Test Weight by Planting Date

	Yield	Moisture	Test Wt.
April 29	88 bu/A	16.1%	55 lbs/bu
May 13	105	16.1	55
May 27	98	19.6	53
June 9	85	27.8	46

The organic corn plot was harvested on November 3, 2003. The dry fall provided excellent conditions for grain dry down.

Corn grain yields were highest with the May 13th planting even though this planting date had the 2nd highest amount of weed competition. The May 27th planting date had the next highest yield. The early and late plantings had the lowest corn yields.

Moisture levels for the April 29th and May 13th planting dates averaged 16.1%. The late May planting date averaged 19.6% moisture; however, the June 9th planting date was still very wet at 27.8% moisture. Lack of reaching physiological maturity is further evidenced by the low test weight of the June 9th planting.

Corn Grain Yield and Moisture by Population

	Yield	Moisture
18,000	81 bu/A	19.7%
24,000	86	19.2
30,000	91	19.4
36,000	100	20.0
as planted	94	20.5

Corn grain yields increased with increased harvest plant populations up to 36,000 plants per acre.

Grain moistures did not show any consistent trend or pattern with the increasing harvest plant populations.

SUMMARY:

- ◆ Greatest corn yields in organic production were in corn planted in Mid May and at plant populations of greater than 30,000.
- ◆ In this study, irrigation and a previous Roundup application may have helped reduce the impact of weed competition on harvest grain yields.
- ◆ These are one year, one location results.

Techniques for freezing colostrum

*Tom Syverud
Extension and Outreach Educator
Ashland Ag Research Station*

Notes from Dairy-L

The question: We are in the habit of collecting good colostrum from older dams and freezing it. We use it for a calf's first feeding if the dam doesn't produce enough colostrum (we like to feed four quarts) or if the dam is a heifer. Has anyone found a good container for freezing? We have tried Ziplock freezer bags, but they are spring holes when submerged in hot water for thawing.

The answers: We also freeze colostrum in Ziplock or Glad disposable plastic food containers. They are stackable in the freezer and

the lids fit snugly. We use pint or quart size and float them in lukewarm water to thaw. There haven't been any problems, just don't overfill the container.

We freeze a half gallon in one gallon bags. This allows them to be flat in the freezer but makes it so there is enough surface area that they thaw more quickly than a larger amount. Double bag them when thawing.

A more complicated system: I put four quarts of colostrum into two garbage liner bags, seal and knot the top. In the freezer they spread out flat and freeze. When I require colostrum, I take out a bag and soak in a sink of hot water. Because the colostrum freezes flat it thaws out quickly as compared to freezing in a solid mass such as a bottle. Test for the desired temperature with your hand. When the correct temperature is reached, simply hold the bag over a bucket and pinch a hole through a corner of the

plastic bags for easy dispensing into the bucket.

The alternative; We freeze colostrum in two-liter pop bottles. They take about a half hour to thaw and handle freezing temperatures and very hot water as well. The nicest part of using a two-liter pop bottle is that you can get nipples that will fit them. Thaw in hot water, put a nipple on, and feed.

We also store colostrum in two-liter soda bottles, although we do not freeze them. Take a soda bottle top and attach it to a regular esophageal feeder. Warm the bottles up, screw the feeder tube right to the bottle, use a nail to puncture an air bleed into the bottle near the top and feed.

Also, try plastic bottles in which roasted peanuts are sold. They are small--about a quart--but they stack nicely in the home freezer and thaw faster than larger containers.

Got grain?

Problems To Avoid When Marketing Grain

*Bill Saumer
Area Agricultural Agent
Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties*

Avoiding six common problems can help make grain marketing more profitable and also more enjoyable.

1. Producers who are too emotional won't sell when markets are going either up or down rapidly. They are most comfortable selling when markets are stable, which is common to markets with relatively low prices. However, farmers can remedy this problem by placing scale-up or scale-down sell orders with their grain buyers or commodity brokers.
2. Producers are more worried about the market going up than they are about it going down. They will buy call options after they sell so they don't miss the high. Instead, they should focus on buying put options to manage downside risk on unpriced grain.
3. Producers don't sell in a long enough marketing window. They tend to wait until after harvest and, in most cases, after Jan. 1 before they begin selling. They try to finish before the new harvest begins so they have room for the next crop, but this is only an eight-month marketing window.

Most successful marketing strategies involve multiple selling dates and options. Based upon seasonal fluctuations and other considerations, producers should work at selling increments before planting, after planting, after

harvest, and during the spring and summer storage season. Many times the best marketing opportunities are available before the crop is planted. Using a longer marketing window increases the chances of capturing good marketing opportunities. Of course, each producer must know their production costs and what selling prices are necessary to meet their profit goals.

4. Producers tend to sell when they need money. Too much of the crop is sold during the February-March time period when markets are historically low and cash flow needs are large. Producers need to plan ahead by selling in advance of this late winter period to provide for cash flow needs.
5. Producers tend to sell before harvest to make room for the new crop. Generally, in years of good crop prospects, the basis is widening and seasonal lows come at this time of year. Farmers need to provide for storage space before this time period.
6. Producers don't make storage pay because they don't sell the "carry" in the market. In times of low prices, markets tend to have a "carry," which means that price offerings for sales in the future are higher than for the present time. Producers with on-farm storage can capture these premiums by forward contracting their unharvested crop for the following spring or summer delivery.

Grain marketing is a very challenging part of farming, but having a good marketing plan is necessary in today's economy and avoiding some of these pitfalls can make grain farming much more profitable and fun.

Featured resources for producers

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

Corn and Soybean Variety Trial

The results of the 2003 Wisconsin corn and soybean variety trials are now available both electronically and in hard copy. Wisconsin results are available at <http://corn.agronomy.wisc.edu>, and <http://soybean.agronomy.wisc.edu>. For farmers without internet access, copies of both variety trials are available at the Spooner Area UW-Extension office or by calling 715-635-3506.

SavorWisconsin.com

If you have a business that sells agriculture-related products from Wisconsin, you now have another opportunity to get your business name and products listed online. This new FREE opportunity to market your business online is sponsored by Wisconsin Dept. of Ag, Trade, and Consumer Protection, UW-Extension and the Wisconsin Apple Growers Association. To register your business, go to www.SavorWisconsin.com and follow the instructions to register.

Farmers Tax Guides Available

The Farmer's Tax Guide is available for use in preparing 2003 federal farm tax returns. This publication explains how the federal tax laws apply to farming. Use this publication as a guide to figure your taxes and complete your farm tax return. For a free copy of this guide (IRS publication no. 225) go to

www.irs.gov or contact your local UW-Extension Office.

Fresh Market Vegetable Resource CD

This new resource CD from the University of Wisconsin includes a host of materials that fresh market vegetable growers can use to help sharpen their production skills and become more profitable. Topics included on the CD are: transitioning to organic, growing salad greens in Wisconsin, integrated weed management, building soil organic matter, composting, and much more. To order copies of the CD or to download individual topics, visit the Fresh Market website at www.hort.wisc.edu/freshveg. Limited copies are also available by contacting Tom Syverud at the Ashland Ag Station at 715-682-8393 or Kevin Schoessow the Spooner Area Ag Agents Office at 1-800-528-1914 or 715-635-3506.

Burnett County Farmers Market to organize

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

In an effort to help support local growers and to provide consumers with healthy, fresh, locally grown food, the Burnett County Nutrition Coalition and the UW-Extension Spooner Area Ag Agents Office are holding an organizational meeting for the Burnett County Farmers Market. The purpose of this meeting is to seek input from potential vendors and other interested parties. The meeting will be held on January 13th at the Burnett County Government Center on Highway K North of Siren starting at 5:30 p.m.

If you would like to participate in this meeting or have any comments or suggestions about the organization of a Burnett County Farmers Market, please contact Kevin Schoessow, Area Ag Development Agent, at 715-635-3506 or 1-800-528-1914.

Private pesticide applicator trainings offered

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

UW-Extension will be offering private pesticide applicator trainings on Tuesday, March 16 at the Spooner Ag Research Station and Wednesday, March 17 at the Ashland Ag Research Station. Agricultural producers who wish to purchase, transport, or apply restricted use pesticides must be certified to do so. Registration for the March 16 & 17 sessions will begin at 9:00 a.m. with the training/testing program beginning promptly at 9:30 a.m. Sessions should be done by 3:00 p.m.

Registration and training materials for the General Farming category cost \$30.00 and can be purchased at the Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett and Sawyer county UW-Extension Offices or at the Spooner Ag Research Station. For private applicators specializing in fruit crops, greenhouses or nurseries, training materials and registration must be purchased through the Private Pesticide Applicators office in Madison. For more information, call Tom Syverud at 715-682-8393 or Kevin Schoessow at 635-3506 or 1-800-528-1914.

This Quarter's Events

January 13, 2004, Crop Care Clinic, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., Cumberland, 715-537-6250.

January 15, 2004, Dairy Cattle Hoof Care Clinic, 10 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., Schullo Valley Vu Farm, Cumberland, 715-537-6250.

January 20-22, 2004, WI Fertilizer, Aglime, & Pest Management Update, Madison.

January 27-28, 2004, Forage Council, Nutrient Applicators, Custom Operators Conference, Eau Claire, 715-726-7950.

January 29, 2004, Northwest Graziers Winter Update, 1 p.m. - 3 p.m., Cumberland.

January 29, 2004, WI Corn Conference, Chippewa Falls, 715-726-7950.

January 30-31, 2004, Midwest Value Added Conference, Eau Claire, 715-834-9672.

February 4, 2004, Fresh Market Vegetable Growers Training, Withee, 715-743-5121.

February 5 & March 4, 2004, Sheep Management Teleconference Discussions, 7:30 p.m. - 9 p.m., Local UWEX Offices.

February 5-6, 2004, Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference, St. Cloud, MN, 763-434-0400.

February 7, 2004, Shepherd's Clinic, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., WITC Rice Lake, 715-268-9190.

February 26-28, 2004, Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference, LaCrosse, 715-772-3153.

Inside

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2004

Avoid six common problems when marketing your grain

Check out the topics for this year's "Northern Safari of Ag Specialists"

Find out where to get the latest information on "Mad Cow" disease

Get your Private Pesticide Applicators License by attending our training

Kevin Schoessow
UWEX Area Agricultural Agent

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UW-Extension Spooner Area Office
Spooner Agricultural Research Station
W6646 Highway 70
Spooner, WI 54801

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