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January - February 2008

A newsletter of:
UW
Extension

THE
CHAMBER
WAUSAU REGION
Partnership for Progressive Agriculture

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY

January 8 — Agronomy Update Meeting, 12:00 noon at the Best Western Midway Motor Lodge, Wausau. UW Agronomy staff will present the latest information on hybrid/variety performance, an analysis and discussion of the past growing season, and updated recommendations for field crop production. Pre-registration fee is \$25 per participant, including meal and materials. Contact Mike Wildeck at 261-1239 for details or check the UWEX web page.

January 16-17 — Gaining the Competitive Edge—A Dairy Seminar Series (*see article*)

January 29 — Exploring Digesters for Small and Medium Sized Farms (*see article*)

January 29 — Dairy Housing Tour runs from 1-2:30 pm. Enos Martin, 1169 West 20th Street, Edgar will host this tour of modernized dairy facilities. The program is sponsored by the Central WI River Graziers Network and. Contact Paul Daigle at 261-6006 for more information.

FEBRUARY

February 1 — "Dairy Facilities for Profit" Dairy Modernization Program (*see article*)

February 6-7 — PDPW Nutrition Innovation Seminars at Fond du Lac & Eau Claire, WI locations. A one-day seminar focused on new research and feeding strategies for the dairy cow. Contact PDPW at 800-947-7379 for more information

February 7 — Sheep Management Program is offered free to sheep producers and enthusiasts via the WisLine teleconferencing system. Marathon County UW-Extension is the local site and the program is hosted by Extension Sheep Specialist, Dave Thomas. Participants must pre-register with Marathon County UWEX by calling 261-1230.

February 14-16 —The 16th Annual Wisconsin Grazing Conference will be held at the Holiday Inn, Stevens Point. This conference is sponsored by GrassWorks, Incorporated. Program details and registration information can be found at www.grazingpays.com, or call 715-261-6009.

February 20 — Dairy Housing Tour runs from 1-2:30 pm. Greenberg Farms, EP852 State Hwy 153, Stratford will host this tour of modernized dairy facilities. The program is sponsored by the Central WI River Graziers Network. Contact Paul Daigle at 261-6006 for more information.

February (date to be determined) — Nutrient Management Refresher Course for producers who develop their own "qualified" nutrient management plan. A refresher course is required every four years to maintain their "qualified" plan status and comply with state law. Others are also welcome to participate as a good update on regulatory changes, new recommendations, and using SnapPlus computer software. Contact UW-Extension Dairy Agent, Mike Wildeck at 261-1239 to have registration info mailed directly.

Plan Now To Modernize Your Dairy in 2008

Is 2008 the year you plan to reinvest in your dairy farm? After a year of high milk prices, you may be feeling more financially secure. Since the outlook for milk prices looks very favorable in 2008 and increased milk income should be able to outweigh rising input costs, this may be an ideal time to reinvest in your dairy to increase overall profitability and labor efficiency of your operation.

Some of these projects may include a retrofit milking parlor to speed up milking time, a feedstrip and/or headlocks for ease of feeding and breeding, or a calf barn to improve operator comfort in the winter. You may also want to consider a new loose housing heifer barn, a transition cow facility or livestock handling facilities such as a tub and squeeze chute to effectively handle your cattle.

If you are not sure what to do with your current facilities and want input from our perspective, call Sam Zimmerman, UW Extension at 715-261-1250. He is available to visit your farm,

get information out to you or get you hooked up with local dairy producers that have just completed modernization projects of their own. Let us connect you with the resources of UW Extension to aid you in most decision-making processes. Make 2008 a year to mold your dairy into a family and employee friendly business that gives you the profitability and comfort you deserve.



Milk prices are looking good for 2008. Now may be the time to consider modernizing your dairy.

Conference to Explore Digesters for Small and Medium Farms

Do you think that manure digesters are only for large livestock farms? Do you think the only use for digesters is to make methane for electricity?

If you answered yes to either question, you need to attend the third annual manure bio-conversion technology conference, "Role of Methane Digesters on Small and Medium Sized Livestock Farms," Tuesday, January 29, Country Springs Conference and Convention Center, Stevens Point, Wis. "Quite simply, the conference focus is how to make money from manure," explained Timm Johnson, executive director, Wisconsin Agricultural Stewardship Initiative. "Attendees will learn how to convert manure into value-added products by digestion. This conference will explore other potential products like animal bedding, heat for buildings, and alternative fuels for vehicles, in addition to electricity," Johnson explained.

Conference speakers include:

- ♦ Jim Harsdorf, operator of a 250-cow dairy in River Falls, Wis. and former state agriculture secretary. Harsdorf will look at digesters from the producer viewpoint and how the digester should meet the "triple bottom line" aspects of regulatory standards, good neighbor standards and milk production.
- ♦ Brandon Moffat, with Conestoga-Rovers, Ontario, Canada. Moffat discusses the pros and cons of small digester projects and show a video of a 100-cow dairy farm

in Ontario, Canada that uses a digester.

- ♦ John Vrieze, Emerald and Baldwin Dairies, Baldwin, Wis. Vrieze and associates presents a panel discussion on a collaborative digester project using multiple dairies to pipe methane from individual farms to a central location.
- ♦ Rod Nilsestuen, Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection will offer closing remarks and discuss the opportunities that bio-energy offers Wisconsin agriculture and the Upper Midwest. Conference attendees can also select one of four breakout sessions:

- ♦ Using methane gas to produce electricity and use of micro-turbines.
- ♦ Using methane for heating greenhouses, homes, shops or drying wood.
- ♦ Alternative fuel-vehicles, powered by methane.
- ♦ More efficient separation of liquids and solids for use of bio-solids as animal bedding.

Register on-line or by mail. Visit www.datcp.state.wi.us/registration/wasi.jsp. Or call (608) 224-5041 to have registration materials sent to you. The conference fee is \$65 if you register by January 25, or \$75 after the 25th.. Lunch, a CD-ROM tool kit and conference material packet are included in the cost. The Wisconsin Agricultural Stewardship Initiative in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection sponsors the conference.



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Dairy Disaster Assistance Payment Program (DDAP-III)

This program is available for milk production losses. The eligible years due to drought are 2005 & 2006, but not 2007. To be eligible, dairy producers' herds must be at or below state rolling herd average of 18,500 lbs per cow for 2005 and 18,824 lbs per cow for 2006.

Producers will need to provide the following:

1. Cow numbers in herd for each month (January to December 2005 & 2006). Not including cows purchased to offset production for disaster related reasons.
2. Production information. Total commercially marketed pounds. You will need to contact their dairy plants directly for summary. Producers must provide whole years production, not just months of draught.
3. All persons who share in risk of dairy operation's total production must sign. (If husband & wife operation, husband can sign for wife)

For more information or to make an appointment, call the Marathon County FSA office at (715) 848-2330.

Livestock Disaster Programs

Are you a livestock producer? Did you suffer feed or livestock grazing losses because of natural disasters in recent years? If so, you may be eligible to receive benefits through a new disaster program currently offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Sign-up is underway. USDA's Livestock Compensation Program compensates producers for feed losses between January 1st, 2005, and February 28th, 2007. Only producers in primary or contiguous secretarial disaster counties or presidential disaster counties are eligible.

Sign-up for USDA's new livestock disaster programs by visiting the Marathon County Farm Service Agency. Learn more at www.FSA.USDA.gov.

Crop Disaster Program (Low-Yield Losses)

Farmers, if you suffered crop losses because of natural disasters in 2005, 2006 or 2007, you may be eligible to receive benefits through the new Crop Disaster Program (CDP). Sign-up has already begun for low yield losses at your local USDA Farm Service Agency.

You may be eligible for Crop Disaster Program (CDP) benefits if you suffered losses from natural disasters that occurred in 2005 or 2006. 2007 crops that were planted or prevented from being planted before February 28, 2007 may also qualify. You will be filing for loss benefits for only one of the three years. (2005, 2006 or 2007) Producers must have suffered losses in excess of 35 percent, and must have had crop insurance coverage or a NAP policy coverage for the loss year. You do not need to have filed a claim under your policy to qualify for the Crop Disaster Program (CDP).

Call the Marathon County Farm Service Agency office at (715) 848-2330 for an appointment and more information.

Planning Begins for Hosting 2011 WI Farm Technology Days

It may seem a long way off, but plans to host the 2011 Wisconsin Farm Technology Days (formerly known as Farm Progress Days) in Marathon County have begun. After The Wausau Region Chamber of Commerce Partnership for Progressive Agriculture committee expressed an interest in late summer, discussions with the show planners revealed an opportunity to host in July, 2011.

An important step in bidding for a future show is the approval of financial support from the host county. At their December 12th Meeting, the Marathon County Board of Supervisors approved a resolution specifying financial support in coming years, along with a \$5,000 commitment in 2008.

Building additional local support will be helpful in formalizing a bid to host the 2011 show at the Wisconsin Farm Technology Days, Board Meeting in Madison this coming April. The three day show features equipment demonstrations, educational exhibits, and 600+ commercial exhibits on a 60 acre "tent city" situated on the host farm. Contact Mike Wildeck, UWEX Dairy Agent at 261-1239 for more information.

Gaining the Competitive Edge - A Dairy Seminar Series

Make plans to attend one of the presentations by the 2008 University of Wisconsin-Extension Dairy Road Show Team in January and learn more about gaining a competitive edge in the dairy business.

The topics discussed will be of interest to both dairy producers and industry professionals. The program includes an update on dairy crossbreeding, milking performance in Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Johne's control program, and dairy nutrition using bio-energy byproduct feeds.

This year's program are offered at 14 locations around the state, including four in the north central Wisconsin area:

- Jan. 16 at Medford and Antigo
- Jan. 17 at Abbotsford and Plover

The program will be the same at each location. Topics are:

"Dairy Crossbreeding Updates," covering dairy crossbreeding results from University studies and commercial farms by Dr. Kent Weigel, UW-Extension geneticist and Dr. Randy Shaver, UW-Extension dairy nutrition specialist.

"Evaluation of Milking Performance in Wisconsin," a review of teat condition, liners, vacuum levels and other milk

management issues by Dr. Doug Reinemann, UW-Extension Milking Equipment/Electrical Specialist.

"Wisconsin Johne's Control Program," an interactive session about Johnes and the State program available to combat the costly disease by Dr. Elisabeth Patton and Dr. Andrea Foley, both from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture and Consumer Protection.

"Dairy Nutrition Using Bio-Energy Byproduct Feeds," focusing on feeding byproducts generated by the ethanol and bio-diesel industries to lactating dairy cows by Pat Hoffman, UW-Marshfield Research Station and Dr. Randy Shaver, UW-Extension dairy nutrition specialist.

All meetings will run from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. The fee for the program is \$25 per person, which includes lunch and materials. Registration is due one week before the seminar you wish to attend.

For additional information, please contact Mike Wildeck, UW-Extension Dairy Agent, at 261-1239, or via email at michael.wildeck@ces.uwex.edu.

"Dairy Facilities for Profit" Dairy Modernization Program

Clark, Marathon, and Taylor County UW-Extension are hosting a program on modernizing dairy facilities. It will be held Friday, February 1, 10 am to 3 pm at Molitor's Restaurant in Abbotsford. Topics include;

"Transition Cow Housing" UW Madison Biological Systems Engineer David Kammel will be talking about transition cow facilities. In particular, the buildings and equipment, that are used for dry and close up cows. The presentation is focused on the ease of use for the operator along with cow comfort and performance.

"Low Cost Parlor Options" Northern Wisconsin Extension Dairy Educator Sam Zimmermann will go over the design and features of low cost parlors. Several ideas and photos for low cost milking center options will be presented.

"Profiting from Modernization" Maria Bendixen Clark County Dairy and Livestock Agent will offer two example financial plans for the same modernization project and go over the positives and negatives of each plan.

"Animal Handling Facilities from a Veterinarian's Perspective". Taylor County Agriculture Educator Sandy

Stuttgen, DVM will discuss the unprofitable, unsafe, and labor-intensive items vets see when handling your animals.

In addition to the other information at the valuable program, you will have an opportunity to learn from your peers including:

Keith Niemann is the 2007 Outstanding Young Farmer for Marathon County. He is also part owner of a livestock feeding operation NW of Edgar that custom raises 1000 dairy heifers, finishes out 400+ steers and has a herd of 80 purebred Angus cows.

Peter Arnold owns and operates a 257-acre farm where he grazes 140 dairy cows. Peter strives to continuously modernize the farm to be more efficient in production and labor.

Jay Heeg, of Heeg Bros. Dairy, LLC along with his brothers operates a 700-cow 1600-acre farm. When they first expanded, they built a retrofitted parlor and have since modernized a few times to get to where they are.

The cost for the program is \$10.00 in advance and \$20.00 at the door and includes lunch and materials. The deadline for registration is January 25th. To register please call Marathon County UW-Extension at 715-261-1230.

Dairyland State Academy

What a neat experience this will provide the students in Wisconsin. This academy will provide hands-on education for students that is needed to help them complete the valued educational experience.

Although we talk about experiential learning (hands-on), it is only part of the equation. The question is not do we have hands-on learning or not. It is using hands-on learning in an active-passive way that allows for greater understanding and learning. We cannot prepare mechanics, pilots, doctors, or chefs without meaningful experiential learning. Even librarians, art historians, chiropractors, musicians, and economists embrace learning with internships, shows, or clinic rotations. What makes this learning meaningful is the natural linkage to the cognitive and reflective processes. Thinking becomes real through experience. Permanent learning occurs with repetition and reflection. This richness in education is achieved through experiential learning (hands-on), active experimentation, the sharing of theories, etc.

John Dewey said is best almost 100 years ago: "Experience is primarily an active-passive affair; it is not primarily cognitive. But the measure of the value of an experience lies in the perception of relationships or continuities to which it leads up. It includes cognition in the degree in which it is cumulative or amounts to something, or has meaning. In schools, those under instruction are too customarily looked upon as acquiring knowledge as theoretical spectators, minds which appropriate knowledge by direct energy of intellect."

What an opportunity we have to train future entrepreneurs, provide cutting-edge continuing education for our producers with the partnership between DSA, NTC, UW-MC, UW-RF, and UW-Extension Marathon County.

Please feel free to contact Dr. Scott Mickelsen at Northcentral Technical College if you would like more information regarding DSA or NTC's new Dairy Science Management program and agriculture certificates. 715.675.3331 X4373 or mickelse@ntc.edu

2007 Census of Agriculture Due February 4

Every five years the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service conducts a Census of Agriculture. Census data is critically important to help make the farming voice heard, and to help shape the future of agriculture for years to come. The information that is collected is used for statistical purposes only. The privacy of individual Census records is protected by law.

"We want all farmers, regardless of size or type of operation, to know the Census of Agriculture is their voice, their future, and their responsibility," says Bob Battaglia, director of the

Wisconsin Agriculture Statistics Service. The Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures, and other topics. The information it provides is not available anywhere else and it is of great benefit to agricultural producers and their communities in many ways.

The Census forms were mailed on December 28 and are due back by February 4, 2008. For more information about the 2007 Census of Agriculture, call 1-800-727-9540 or visit www.agcensus.usda.gov.

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