

# Agricultural Newsletter

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



## Census of Ag Needs You!

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



Do you feel the value of U.S. agriculture is undervalued and underappreciated? If so, now is your chance to help demonstrate that value.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is asking farmers and ranchers throughout the state and nation to participate in the 2007 Census of Agriculture. Census forms will be arriving in farm mail boxes shortly after the

first of the year. Completed forms are due by February 4. For the first time, producers have the option of filling out the Census online via a secure website.

The survey is conducted every five years by the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the information collected is used for statistical purposes only. The privacy of individual Census records is protected by law.

Bob Battaglia, director of the Wisconsin Agriculture Statistics Service, says the Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures and other topics. It provides the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every county in the state and nation.

Census data is used by all those who serve farmers and rural communities – federal, state and local governments, agribusinesses, trade associations and many others. For instance, companies and cooperatives use the information to determine the locations of facilities that will serve agricultural producers. USDA uses the information to ensure that local service centers are staffed at appropriate levels. Legislators use the information when shaping farm policies and programs. And, of course, farmers can use Census data to help make informed decisions about the future of their own operations.

Tools like the Census enable farmers to help shape the future of agriculture and their local communities. Speak out and let your voice be heard by participating in the 2007 Census of Agriculture.

NASS will mail out Census forms on Dec. 28 to collect data for the 2007 calendar year. For more information about 2007 Census of Agriculture, call 800-727-9540 or visit [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov) online.

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# Agricultural NEWSLETTER

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54806.

# Indianhead Sheep Breeders Association Shepherd's Clinic and Trade Show

Indianhead Sheep Breeders Association is presenting its 14th Annual Shepherd's Clinic and Trade Show on Saturday, February 9th, 2008 at the Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College Conference Center in Rice Lake, Wisconsin. The clinic has been a highly successful educational, promotional and social event with over 200 in attendance last year representing four states. Registration is from 8:00 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. with continental breakfast.



The all-day event features concurrent educational sessions for beginning to experienced shepherds on a wide variety of topics, a trade show, a silent auction, an all-day hands-on youth program with live sheep, and a roast lamb and chicken luncheon program including a live auction, awards and scholarship presentations.

Featured speakers include:

- Fred Provenza, Professor of Range Animal Production, Utah State University
- Dave Thomas, Professor and Sheep Specialist, University of Wisconsin
- Robert Padula, American Wool Council Wool Quality Improvement Consultant
- Susan McClanahan, DVM, Small Ruminant Professor, University of Minnesota
- Dan Leiterman, Nutritionist, CEO of Crystal Creek, Inc.
- Mary Falk, Dairy Sheep & Sheep Milk Cheese Producer, LoveTree Farmstead Cheese
- Kevin Christenson, Risk Management Executive, AgStar Financial Services

Topics presented will be in the areas of sheep behavior, nutrition, wool quality and economics, sheep health, sheep basics for beginners, flock economics, dairy sheep, risk management, and many more.

Pre-registration fees are \$16 for ISBA members, and \$20 for non-members. The youth program fees are \$10 for youth and interested parents including an off-site lunch (\$30 max. per family). There is an additional charge of \$10 for the clinic and trade show and \$2 for the youth program at the door or after January 31st. Fees include continental breakfast, refreshments and lunch. Discounted rooms are available at the nearby Rice Lake Best Western for Friday night. Reserve by calling 715-234-7017 and mention the Indianhead Sheep Breeders Association Shepherd's Clinic.

Additional information, pre-registration, sponsorship opportunities or trade show reservation information is available on-line at [www.indianheadsheep.com](http://www.indianheadsheep.com) or by contacting Greg Glunz at 715-268-6286 or Jeff Kieffer at 715-339-4223.

## Insurance that works for farmers and agribusiness

You wouldn't buy a piece of equipment that was broken, or hire an employee who could only do half the job. And you'd probably think twice about paying a lot for a service that wasn't right for you. Why then, would you continue to buy expensive health insurance that provides little coverage or doesn't fit your needs?

Until recently, you didn't have many choices. But now the Farmers' Health Cooperative of Wisconsin, a new health insurance option created by and for Wisconsin farmers and agribusinesses, provides the coverage you need for the health care you want, at a price you can afford.

The Farmers' Health Cooperative of Wisconsin was created when the Wisconsin Federation of Cooperatives proposed applying cooperative principles to health care. The FHCW combines years of feedback from farmers and agribusinesses into a partnership between Wisconsin cooperatives, a farmer-owned management company and Aetna Insurance. These partners have joined together to offer health insurance options that meet the needs of farmers and agribusinesses and are affordable.

The Farmers' Health Cooperative offers comprehensive benefits and a choice of six different plans that include: Coverage for work-related injuries; prescription drug benefits; first-dollar coverage for preventive care; a \$2,000 accident policy and unlimited lifetime benefits; and access to a 24-hour nurse hotline.

Co-op members know that belonging to a member-owned, member-driven organization provides advantages other organizations just don't offer. Joining the Farmers' Health Cooperative of Wisconsin will give you access to the many advantages of group health care purchasing including group buying power and better coverage than most farmers can get on their own, plus the advantages of being insured under a member-owned cooperative.

It's time to compare your current coverage with the benefits you could get through the FHCW. To learn more about the health insurance options available through the Farmers' Health Cooperative of Wisconsin, call the customer service center at: 800-539-9370 or visit Web site: [www.farmershealthcooperative.com](http://www.farmershealthcooperative.com).

## Maximize your resources by prioritizing

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

With current prices of fertilizer and other inputs on the rise, it will continue to be important for farmers to prioritize how to spend limited resources on inputs. With cost of nitrogen near \$0.50/lb, phosphate at ~\$0.36/lb and potash at ~\$0.30/lb it will be important to the bottom line to spend those fertilizer dollars wisely, even with higher commodity prices.

The following is a list of priorities to help make the most of crop nutrients and purchased fertilizer.

1. Making fertilizer decisions based on soil test taken in the last 4-5 years. This is especially the case

with phosphorus, potassium and micro nutrient applications.

2. Make sure soil pH is adequate for the rotation. Most agronomic crops require soil pH to be at or near 6.0. One exception is alfalfa which requires a pH of 6.8. Acid soils reduce the availability of nutrients to plants. Nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, sulfur calcium and magnesium are most influenced by acid or low pH soils.
3. Take credit for the fertilizer value of manure and legumes. Alfalfa can have a fertilizer equivalent value from 40 to over 150 lbs of nitrogen/acre. Red clover and trefoil can have 30 to 120 lbs of nitrogen/acre fertilizer equivalent. The fertilizer value of manure can also be significant depending on the source and application rate
4. Apply fertilizer to the lowest testing fields first. You will get the most value from purchased fertilizer, even if it is on low yield potential soils.
5. Next apply fertilizer to all fields likely to respond to fertilizer applications. To stretch fertilizer costs you may only apply part of the recommended rates.
6. On fields with high, very high or excessively high phosphorus and potassium soil tests only apply required nitrogen rates, and defer applications of other nutrients. Be careful with this strategy for crops with high removal rates such as alfalfa and corn silage.

While these strategies may stretch your fertilizer dollar, they do require some careful thought and understanding of cropping history. For more information contact your local Ag Extension agent or visit <http://www.soils.wisc.edu/extension/hottopics/>

# Dairy Road Show offers farmers a competitive edge

***UW-Barron, Rice Lake, Tues. Jan. 15***

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

Make plans to attend the 2008 University of Wisconsin-Extension Dairy Road Show Team in January. This year's Road Show entitled "Gaining the Competitive Edge - A Dairy Seminar Series" will be offered locally at UW-Barron at Rice Lake on Tuesday, January 15, from 10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Besides Rice Lake, the program is offered at 13 other locations in Wisconsin including Menomonie (also January 15).

- Jan. 8 at Kiel and Lomira
- Jan. 9 at Casco and Gillett
- Jan. 10 at Readstown and Sparta
- Jan. 11 at Dodgeville and Baraboo
- Jan. 15 at Menomonie and Rice Lake
- Jan. 16 at Medford and Antigo
- Jan. 17 at Abbotsford and Plover

The program will be the same at each location. The topics will include:

- **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, which includes lunch and materials, is \$25 per person. Registrations are due one week before the seminar you wish to attend.

For additional information, please contact your local UW-Extension Ag Agent, or Otto Wiegand at 715-635-3506 or 800-528-1914, or by email at [otto.wiegand@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:otto.wiegand@ces.uwex.edu).

# Alternative crop considerations

*Phil Holman  
Asst. Superintendent  
Spooner Ag Research Station*

The past few years there has been considerable interest in what NEW or DIFFERENT crop could be grown profitably. Things to consider for growing alternative crops:

1. What about economics? Consider the expected yields, prices, and production costs for each crop. Corn and soybean prices futures prices are high. It will take good prices and yields of the alternative crops to economically justify growing other grain crops. There will be some differences in production costs for seed, fertilizer and herbicide.
2. What market or use is there for the crop? Wheat (spring or winter) does have established markets. Other crops would require your own use or finding a buyer who would use and want to buy the crop.
3. What effect will that alternative crop have on your crop rotation? Sunflowers are an alternative host for white mold. A crop rotation with soybeans and sunflowers has a good chance of experiencing a problem with white mold. Also, consider whether the alternative crop will fit within a conservation plan to limit soil erosion losses.
4. Lastly, will you need specialized equipment for planting, harvesting and/or storing the crop? Sometimes only small modifications are needed but other times, different equipment would need to be purchased or the work may need to be custom hired.

## This Quarter's Events

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**December 28 Mailing – USDA Ag Census** – Please fill it out accurately

**January 24 - March 20 – Thursdays, 11:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., Wisconsin School for Beginning Farmers**, Spooner – distance learning, includes pasture-based farm management for dairy, beef or small ruminants, farm start-ups, mentoring, business planning, rations and nutrition, milking center design, \$150 for Terms II & III or \$15 per session, contact Otto at 715-635-3506 / 800-528-1914, see article.

**January 9, Wednesday, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. - Quickbooks Training for Farmers**, WITC, Rice Lake – contact Tim 715-537-6250, or Otto at 715-635-3506 / 800-528-1914.

**January 15, Tuesday, 10:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. - Dairy Road Show**, UW-Barron, Rice Lake - see article, also watch farm magazines and newspapers. To register, contact Otto at 715-635-3506 / 800-528-1914, or Tim at 715-537-6250.

**January 15-17, Tuesday - Thursday, Ag Lime Conference, Madison**, contact Kevin at 715-635-3506.

**January 22, Tuesday, Pesticide Applicator Training, Barron**, contact Tim Jergensen at 715-537-6250.

**January 24 - 25, Thursday -Friday - Midwest Value-Added Agriculture Conference & Wisconsin Local Food Summit**, Eau Claire – Plaza Hotel, contact Jane Hansen, UWEX, 715-339-2555, or River Country at 715-834-9672 / 800-226-9672.

**January - February, Wednesday - Friday - Northern Safari of Ag Specialists** at Phillips, Ladysmith, Ashland, Maple and Spooner, contact Otto or Kevin at 715-635-3506 / 800-528-1914, further details in inserted flyer.

**February 6-7, Wednesday - Thursday - Rice Lake Farm Show, Red Cedar Mall**, Rice Lake, contact Tim at 715-537-6250.

**February 9, Saturday – Indianhead Sheep Breeders Clinic**, Rice Lake, contact Tim at 715-537-6250.

**February 13, Wednesday, 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. - Conservation Tillage Seminar, Cumberland** – Das Lac Haus, contact Kevin or Otto at 715-635-3506 / 800-528-1914, or Ryan at 715-485-8600.

**February 14-16, Thursday - Saturday – GrassWorks Grazing Conference**, Holiday Inn, Stevens Point call Paul Nehring at 715-261-6009, or Robert Brandt at 715-748-2008.

**February 20, Wednesday - Beef Quality Assurance Training, Balsam Lake**, 7 - 9 p.m., contact Ryan at 715-485-8600.

**February 21, Thursday, 9 a.m. - Pesticide Applicator Training, Bayfield County**, contact Jason at 715-373-6104.

**February 21-23, Thursday - Saturday - MOSES Organic Farming Conference**, LaCrosse, contact MOSES at 715-772-3153 or [info@mosesorganic.org](mailto:info@mosesorganic.org).

**February 26, Tuesday, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. - Extreme Makeover Parlor Edition**, UW-Barron, Rice Lake – workshop on low-cost milking parlors, contact Otto or Kevin at 715-635-3506 / 800-528-1914, Tim at 715-537-6250, or Ryan at 715-485-8600. Further details in article.

**March 8, Saturday, 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. - NW Graziers Network Winter Conference**, UW-Barron Co., Rice Lake – Larry Tranel of Iowa State University Extension will discuss the financial benefits of rotational grazing in dairy, Todd Churchill of Thousand Hills Cattle Company will discuss marketing grass-fed beef, Lynn Johnson will talk about carbon credits, other topics. Lunch and snacks are provided. Early registration is \$25, register by March 5. Late registration is \$35. Call Otto or Kevin at 715-635-3506 / 800-528-1914, Tim at 715-537-6250, or Ryan at 715-485-8600.

**March 14, Friday , 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. - Pesticide Applicator Training, Spooner** – contact Kevin or Otto at Spooner, 715-635-3506 / 800-528-1914.

**March 15, Saturday, Chequamegon Organic Conference**, Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, Ashland, contact Jason at 715-373-6104.

**March 25, Tuesday, Pesticide Applicator Training, Balsam Lake**, contact Ryan at 715-485-8600.

**Late-Winter Gardening Series, Ashland**, February 7 - Seed Starting with Jason Fischbach, March 22 - Summer Bulbs with Susan Mahr, April 10 - Apple Grafting with Bob Tomesh. Contact Jason at 715-373-6104.

# Sunflower production and plot results

*Phil Holman*

*Asst. Superintendent*

*Spooner Ag Research Station*

With the interest in biodiesel production this spring, many area farmers considered growing different oil seed crops. Canola variety trials have been grown at the Spooner Ag Research Station the past few years; however, it has been over 20 years since sunflower research was conducted here. Two trials were conducted to verify what would be a reasonable expected yield for sunflowers.

The first was a small sunflower variety trial using seed that area growers and UWEX agents had obtained for a demonstration plot. The variety trail had seven varieties which were planted in early May. Each variety was planted in two rows with 25' of row length with four replicates.

The second trial was a date of planting trial. The 6-row planter was split with three rows of Croplan 803 and 3 rows of Pioneer 64H41. Three replications (passes) were planted on May 1, May 14, May 25 & June 6. Two rows of fifty feet long were harvested to determine yields.

Both trials were conducted on an irrigated sandy loam soil. The previous crop was alfalfa and an additional 60 lbs/acre of nitrogen was applied. Weeds were controlled by one application of Spartan and two cultivations. With the irrigation, good fertility and good weed control, the sunflowers looked like what we could expect in a good growing season. A separate field of non-irrigated sunflowers yielded poorly due to our severe drought conditions.

## ***Variety Trial***

Variety	Yield lbs/A	Moisture %	Test. Wt. lbs/bu	Plant Ht. in.	Pop. plants/A	Lodging %
Pioneer 64H41	2936	12.5	29.5	65	20535	0.5
Sunking 3303NS	2884	13.9	26.6	53	17009	0.6
Pioneer 63M91	2375	12.7	28.2	60	12549	0.0
Croplan 520CL	2140	11.6	29.8	58	19083	1.6
Sunking 2202	2100	12.2	27.5	53	13898	0.8
Sunking 3130NS	1849	11.9	29.1	59	16594	0.5
Croplan 803*	1835	9.6	31.1	51	24684	2.6

LSD(0.1) 690 1.1 1.3 5 3565

\*Croplan 803 was planted along side with a different planter at a higher seeding rate

## ***Date of Planting Trial***

Variety	Planting Date	Yield lbs/A	Moisture %	Test. Wt. lbs/bu	Plant Ht. in.	Pop. plants/A	Lodging %
Pioneer 64H41	1-May	3060	9.7	32.6	59	23166	4.1
Pioneer 64H41	14-May	3060	10.7	33.9	69	27007	2.4
Pioneer 64H41	25-May	2906	12.7	33.6	71	26296	2.8
Pioneer 64H41	6-June	1784	20.0	31.7	81	24974	4.4
Croplan 803*	1-May	1312	9.0	30.4	56	22128	13.5
Croplan 803*	14-May	1143	9.3	34.1	64	24916	4.7
Croplan 803*	25-May	720	9.8	32.8	68	24394	7.2
Croplan 803*	6-June	312	13.8	32.7	78	24916	21.4

LSD(0.1) 946 1 N.S. 4 2317 7.5

\*Croplan 803 was heavily damaged by birds

## ***Results***

The variety trial yield averaged 2,300 lbs. of sunflower seed per acre. Two varieties also had poor germination compared to the other varieties. Varieties varied in their plant height, head size, and speed of dry-down for harvest.

The date of planting trial was an interesting trial to observe. The later planting of sunflowers grew considerably taller than the earlier plantings because of warmer temperatures as the plant stem was growing. Yields did not differ much in the early planting but declined when planting in late May and June. Additionally, later plantings had higher seed moistures which could be a problem if drying or storing is needed. The Croplan variety matured earlier and received more bird damage before harvest.

## Low-cost parlor conference set

A one-day conference on low-cost milking parlors entitled “Extreme Makeover Parlor Edition” will be held in Rice Lake from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. on Tuesday, February 26 at UW-Barron in Rice Lake. The conference will include the following titles:

- How to set priorities and spend your parlor dollars wisely to reach your goals
- Dairy modernization grants and programs
- A low-cost parlor in every barn
- What a parlor did for our family (farmer panel)

Over 500 low-cost parlors have been installed in Wisconsin in the past decade for costs as low as \$5,000. Many of these parlors have been retrofitted into barns or lean-to's. Parlors make milking easier and more efficient as well as saving the knees. Parlors extend the milking career of farmers as well as help to encourage the younger generation to stay on the farm.

Contact Otto Wiegand at 800-528-1914 or your local UW-Extension agricultural agent for more information.

## Terms II & III - Wisconsin School for Beginning Farmers

### *Spooner Ag Research Station*

**Thursdays, 11:00 a.m. - 1:15 p.m., January 24 – March 20**

*Otto Wiegand*

*Area Agricultural Agent*

*Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties*

The Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers course is still offered for those who want to join us at Spooner for Terms II and/or III from January to March. See schedule below.

Class sessions run from 11:00 AM to 1:30 PM on Thursdays. Students who miss a session may catch it later on-line. Course delivery is done through interactive video and audio. The cost for Terms II & III is \$150. Or you may take individual sessions for \$15. Additional afternoon sessions covering related topics of interest may be added at Spooner during Terms II & III. This information will be available later. Bring your own lunch.

Term II is especially appropriate for all types of farms and covers enterprises, budgets, marketing and business planning. Each student is encouraged to develop his/her own business plan by the end of the course.

To register or obtain further information, contact Otto Wiegand at UWEX Spooner at 715-635-3506 or 1-800-528-1914. The course is a part of the UW-Madison Short Course of Agriculture and is a collaborative effort between the UW-Center for Integrated Agricultural Studies, UW Cooperative Extension, CALS, DATCP, the Technical Colleges and GrassWorks.

### ***Schedule:***

#### Term II

January 24, Thursday – Developing a business plan, lessons from farm startups

January 31, Thursday – Successful business startup model, marketing strategies

February 7, Thursday – Enterprise budgets, records

#### Term III

February 14, Thursday – Organic dairying

February 21, Thursday – Sheep dairying

February 28, Thursday – Low-cost milking parlors, wintering

March 6, Thursday – Dairy crossbreeding, decision-making

March 13, Thursday – Bringing it together, farmer perspectives

March 20, Thursday – Presentations of student business plans, farmer/lender panel



UWEX Area Agricultural Agents  
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**Agricultural  
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**2008**

**Complete the Census of Agriculture  
to provide USDA with important  
information**

**Beginning farmers can still take  
advantage of a learning program**

**Check out the production results of  
the sunflower trial at the Spooner  
Ag Research Stations**

**Attend one of the many agricultural  
trainings scheduled this winter**

Kevin Schoessow  
UWEX Area Agricultural Agent