

Agricultural Newsletter

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



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Alternative cash grain crops field day to be held at Spooner

Phil Holman
Asst. Superintendent
Spooner Agricultural Research Station

The Spooner Ag Research Station will host an Alternative Cash Grain Crops Field Day on August 2, 2007 from 10:30 to 12:00. **Sunflowers, Canola, Camelina, Spring Wheat and Conventional Soybean** management topics will be presented.

There is considerable interest in cash grain crop alternatives. Sunflowers, canola, camelina and soybeans are oil crops that could be grown to produce your own bio-diesel. The Spooner Ag Research Station has a sunflower date of planting trial and a variety trial that will be viewed while discussing sunflower production management. Canola variety trials were conducted on the station over the past several years. Results of canola trials and production management will be presented as well as viewing canola at various growth stages. Camelina is a crop that is gaining popularity for oil crushing in the state of Montana. Come see a demonstration plot of camelina and find out more about this crop.

Spring wheat and conventional soybeans will also be featured as viable cash grain alternatives. Area marketing opportunities for grain and straw have some grain crop producers adding spring wheat to their rotation. The Spooner Ag Research Station has two spring wheat research trials this year. There is a variety trial with 14 spring wheat varieties and a nitrogen rate trial with nitrogen rates from 0 to 100 lbs/A. University of Wisconsin Agronomy Department Outreach Specialist John Gaska will talk about management of spring wheat.

With over 90% of the soybeans in the United States containing the Roundup Ready gene, markets have developed which pay a premium for conventional soybeans.

Weed control options for conventional soybeans will be discussed. Additionally the Spooner Ag Research Station has two soybean trials that will be viewed. The UW-soybean variety trial and a soybean seeding rate & seed treatment trial will be shown.

The Spooner Ag Research Station is located on the east edge of Spooner on Hwy. 70. Driving directions are: from Hwy 53 turn west on Hwy. 70 or from Hwy. 63 turn east on Hwy. 70. For more information call 715-635-3735.

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54806.

Summer manure spreading on hay fields – Some factors to consider

Kevin Shelley
Nutrient & Pest Management Program

Some caution is needed to prevent damage to established alfalfa fields from summer manure applications. The potential to damage alfalfa crowns, injure plant tissue due to salt toxicity, overapply nutrients, or even transmit disease should be considered. On the positive side, topdressing manure can build soil fertility with on-farm resources and help expand acres for spreading. There is also some research and farmer experience showing manure applications can increase yields if detrimental side effects are avoided.

Consider these agronomic guidelines for applications to established hay:

- Make applications as soon as possible after harvest to avoid salt burn injury and wheel track damage to regrowing alfalfa.
- Limit rates to 3000 to 5000 gallons/acre of liquid manure or 10 to 12 tons/acre of solid dairy manure.
- Use equipment that applies uniformly and without clumps.
- Apply to fit soils. Avoid compacting wet soils.
- Apply to older, poorer stands. Grasses benefit from manure nitrogen and are less prone to damage.
- Apply where nutrients are most needed.

Also consider the potential for forage contamination with the Johne's organism. Although most herds are not infected, prevention is very important because Johne's disease is not treatable. The bacterium is not absorbed by plants, but resides on manure and soil particles for a limited time. To reduce the risk of forage contamination:

- Allow more time between manure applications and forage harvest.
- When harvesting, minimize forage contact with soil and manure particles.
- Use the forage as silage because fermentation kills the organism.
- Avoid feeding the forage to calves, the most susceptible age group for infection.
- Spread manure from herds with low infection levels.
- Apply lower manure rates.

Check these UW sources for more information: *Applying Manure to Alfalfa, Pros, cons, and recommendations for three application strategies*. Keith Kelling and Michael Schmitt, North Central Regional Report 346 on the Soils Extension website (<http://www.soils.wisc.edu/extension>)

Applying Manure to Alfalfa by Mike Rankin, Crops and Soils Agent, Fond du Lac County on the *UWEX Team Forage* website (<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/crops/teamforage/>)

Staying safe on your farm

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

Every June our office helps organize and teach the youth tractor and machinery safety course. In my files I have a collection of farm accident reports from state and local newspapers. It may seem a bit morbid to be collecting these stories; however, they are real eye openers to show just how dangerous life on the farm can be.

Here are just two examples. A 4-year-old Wisconsin girl wanders away from her sandbox into a cornfield where her father is chopping corn. He didn't see her and ran her over with the forage harvester, amputating her arm. A Grant County man was fatally injured in a skid-steer accident while attempting to exit the loader with the bucket raised. In exiting the operator's station, he inadvertently activated the control which lowered the bucket, pinning him between the bucket and the frame.

In reviewing these real life or death situations we explain how nearly all reported incidents are not just freak accidents. They are preventable injuries.

We stress having a safe attitude... Always!! There are plenty of hazards, distractions, bad habits, physical and emotional stresses when working around machinery and the farm. Most of what we teach is common sense when it comes to experienced adults. However, even experienced adults need reminders to be safe; slow down, take your time, and think.

Dos and don'ts of feeding

*John Morris
Inspector
Wisconsin Dept. of Agriculture*

Hi, I'm John Morris and I work for the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection in Northwest Wisconsin. Part of my job duties include inspecting feed mills and investigating feed related complaints. One of my tasks is to see that medicated feeds are properly labeled so you, the user, understand how to feed them to get the greatest use out of the medication.

When using medicated feed make sure the mill gives you complete directions every time you get medicated feed. All medicated feeds must be accompanied with:

- The name and level of the medication.
- The purpose of the medication (such as for control of coccidiosis, for increased rate of weight gain).
- Proper feeding directions (such as feed free choice, feed 8 lbs. per head per day with other feed/forage, feed 3 lbs. per 100 lbs. of body weight per head per day).
- Caution or warning statements (such as do not feed to lactating animals, do not feed to horses or other equines, discontinue medication 14 days prior to slaughter). Some medications may not require the use of caution statements.

Both floor stock (premade feeds bagged and ready to go out the door) and custom mixed feeds need to include this information. Floor stock feeds would have this information preprinted on the label attached to each bag. For custom mixed feeds, this information may be provided in different ways. Often it is done by a document with this information attached to the sales invoice.

Why is this important? Anyone can make a mistake. By supplying you with that information you can check the purpose statement before feeding it to your animals and verify that the medication and purpose are what you expected. What if the feed was made for animals of a different size than you are feeding? This could result in the wrong drug level or feeding directions. This is your way to protect yourself and your animals from drug misuse.

If using less than the minimum medication level allowed, your animals will probably not respond to the medication. If you use above the maximum medication level allowed, the animal may do worse. Either way you are wasting your money and possibly reducing the animal's growth/production rate.

I've seen customers request feed with such little medication that the animal could not eat enough feed to get the minimum dose to possibly have an effect. I've also seen customers unknowingly request feed with too much medication (possibly the recipe was designed for 800 pound animals, but this time it was intended to be fed to 300 pound animals). These types of errors don't do you, the animal, or your wallet any good.

Remember, some medications have several uses. Before you ask for medication “X” to be added to your feed, you need to know:

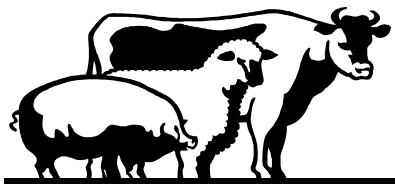
- What do I want from the medication (disease control, feed efficiency, etc.)?
- What size animal am I feeding?
- How much are my animals eating?

Your feed manufacturer or supplier needs to know the above, plus:

- Where are the animals being fed (in a feed lot, or on pasture with actively growing grass/forage)?
- What are the animals being raised for (slaughter, reproduction, milk/egg production)?

If your neighbor says his animals are doing great with medication “X”, don’t ask for medication “X” to be added to your feed without first knowing why he is using it and what level he is using. Then you can determine if your animals might also benefit from it for that purpose.

We all know medications have their uses and times when needed. Proper use of medications can save or even make you money and ensure their continued availability in the future. You wouldn’t put a Band-Aid on a broken arm, or wrap a cut finger in a mile of gauze, so why would you use a medicated feed without reading the label?



Determine the price of your standing hay

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

Each year the Spooner Area UW-Extension office receives many calls from individuals wanting to either sell or purchase hay directly off the field. This hay crop is commonly referred to as “standing hay.”

The value of standing hay is dependent on the quality of the stand, estimated yield per acre, field conditions, harvesting costs, and current market conditions. Average hay yield in Burnett and Washburn is 3.5 tons per acre on a dry matter basis. First cutting generally accounts for 40% of the total yield for the season or about 1 to 1.5 tons per acre, with second and third cuttings averaging from three-quarters to one ton per acre.

In recent years, the average hay price in Burnett and Washburn County for good quality alfalfa hay has been about \$75-85 per ton. This is a “farm gate” price which means the price includes the value of the hay plus harvesting costs, but not delivery costs.

Harvesting costs vary depending upon the type of equipment and the number of times the hay is handled. Typically, hay harvesting costs range from \$25 to \$50 per ton on a dry matter basis.

Assuming hay is worth \$75 per ton and first cutting yield is one ton per acre with harvesting costs at \$25 per ton, the value of the standing hay would be \$50 per acre (1 ton/acre x \$75/ton = \$75/acre minus \$25/ton harvesting costs = \$50 per acre).

The above method is just one approach. Other methods take into account more specific variables such as land costs, stand establishment, fertilizer costs, and quality.

Some judgment must be used when negotiating a price. The buyer and seller must agree on the crop quality and yield to properly adjust pricing. For more information on hay prices farmers can visit the weekly hay market demand and price list for the upper Midwest, at http://www.uwex.edu/ces/forage/pubs/hay_market_report.htm.

Are low fertilizer nutrient rates effective?

*Tom Syverud
Extension and Outreach Educator
Ashland and Iron Counties*

Low rates of nutrients come either from small application rates of common fertilizers or from larger applications of low analysis fertilizers. Today’s high yield hybrid crops need substantial nutrients for top performance. When the crops nutrient needs aren’t met, reduced yield and increased cost of production result. When fertilizer costs are high, farmers may cut back their use of fertilizer or switch to a non-traditional fertilizer program. How does this affect soil fertility and crop production?

A non-traditional fertilizer program uses materials that include earthlike materials and/or organic materials derived from animal, vegetation or waste products. Usually these nontraditional fertilizers have relatively low analysis. Some benefits claimed by these programs are increased yield, improved quality, balanced nutrition, improved

emergence, improved root growth, relieved stress and improved ability of crops to recover from damage.

Additional claims may include natural plant feeding, soil conditioning, addition of hormones and encouragement of bacteria and earthworms. Another claim may be greater nutrient availability from liquid fertilizers. Don't confuse nutrient availability and actual nutrient content. State laws ensure that labels list the available nutrients as percent by weight. Nutrient availability of a fertilizer indicates the potential for uptake only. In the US, dry fertilizers are 85 to 100% water soluble compared to 100% for liquids. However, once applied to the soil, they all act the same. The moisture content of the soil determines if a liquid fertilizer stays in solution or if a dry water soluble fertilizer goes into solution. Whether or not the soluble fertilizer was in a liquid or dry form has little effect on its nutrient uptake. Plants normally take up only about 10 - 25% of phosphorus, 35 - 60% of potassium and 50 - 75% of the nitrogen the first year. Most of the rest maintains or increases the soil nutrient reserve. Soil pH has a great influence on the availability of soil phosphorus.

All soils have a finite amount of nutrients available for crop use. Crop harvest removes a large amount of nutrients. Fertilizer programs that supply low rates of nutrients can deplete soils of phosphorus and potassium, reduce yields and raise cost of production. There is no substitute for a good fertilizer program based upon soil testing and optimum crop production. For a point of reference, solid dairy manure surface applied, has an analysis of 3-3-8, of available nutrients the first year after spreading. *Some information was obtained from NC Publication 207.*

This Quarter's Events

July 5-7, Thursday-Saturday – Central Burnett County Fair – Webster.

July 7, Saturday, 10 AM - 12 PM - Beef Pasture Walk, Lake Superior Grazing Initiative, Mark Jolma Farm, 41496 Sosin Rd., Marengo. Call Bob Mika, Grazing Specialist at 715-682-7187, ext. 113 with questions.

July 21, Saturday, 10 AM - 12 PM - Beef Pasture Walk, Lake Superior Grazing Initiative, Charles Ylitalo Farm, 62821 County Hwy. C, Marengo. Call Bob Mika, Grazing Specialist at 715-682-7187, ext. 113 with questions.

July 24-25, Tuesday-Wednesday – Wisconsin Grazing School, Neillsville, Clark County - \$75, contact Dennis Cosgrove, UW-River Falls, 715-425-3345.

July 26-29, Thursday-Sunday – Washburn County Junior Fair – Spooner.

July 28, Saturday, 9-12 AM – Beef Pasture Walk, Bob and Don Hamblin, Hayward – 13633 W Peninsula Rd, just north of the casino, former dairy farm features 60 cow-calf, 150 acres of pasture, new grazing plan, former, modern beef handling facilities with corral and tub.

August 2, Thursday, 10:30 AM - Alternative Cash Crops Field Day, Spooner Ag Research Station

August 2-5, Thursday-Sunday – Sawyer County Fair – Hayward.

August 4, Saturday, 1-3 PM – Organic Dairy Pasture Walk, Dette and David Bischoff – Comstock, Barron Co, 2089 Barron-Polk Rd (county line), two miles south of Hwy. 48, features rotation grazing of dairy cows, organic milk (Organic Choice), mixture of Holstein, Brown Swiss, Normandie, Jersey, Ayrshire and Dutch Belt cows.

August 11, Saturday, 10 AM - 12 PM - Beef Pasture Walk, Lake Superior Grazing Initiative, David Nortunen Farm, 61445 Heino Road, Marengo. Call Bob Mika, Grazing Specialist at 715-682-7187, ext. 113 with questions.

August 22, Wednesday, 5-8 PM – Beef Seminar "Pre-Conditioning: Adding Value to Your Calf Crop" – Ladysmith, includes discussions on vaccination, weaning, economic of pre-conditioning calves and feeder calf sales, \$9 includes meal, contact Aliesha, 715-532-2151.

August 25, Saturday – Spooner Sheep Dairy Day – UW Ag Research Station, Spooner.

August 28, Tuesday, 5-8 PM – Spooner Garden Tour - UW Ag Research Station, Spooner.

September 6, Tuesday – Goat Field Day, Robin and David Trott - Ladysmith.

September 15, Saturday 1-4 PM – Horse Pasture Walk, Appa-Lolly Ranch, Gina Benson and Keith Anondson, Washburn Co, W1581 Town Hall Rd, Springbrook - features multiple ownership, grazing, trail riding, training, boarding and rescue of various breeds of horses, topics include proper equine winter care.

September 18-20, Tuesday-Thursday, 8:30-4:30 – Farm Technology Days, Albany, Green County – Plain View Stock Farm, Keith & Theresa Blumer, features crop technologies, renewable energy, biofuels, conservation, dairy, facility modernization, animal ID and nutrient management.

October 2-6, Tuesday-Saturday – World Dairy Expo – Madison.

Assistance programs for farmers

*Otto Wiegand
Area Ag Agent in Livestock
Burnett, Washburn, & Sawyer Counties*

Low-Interest Loans – for farm storage facilities, transition to organic, women and minority farmers, also beginning farmer and rancher land contract guarantee program – contact www.fsa.usda.gov or your local FSA office.

Farm Link – program that connects beginning farmers with retiring farmers or helps farmers to relocate. The Farm Center also assists in legal, mediation, financial and other counseling. Contact: Wisconsin Farm Center, DATCP, 800-942-2474.

Land Trusts – lands trusts or land conservancies assist landowners in putting easements on all or portions of their property to restrict future use. Contacts: Western Wisconsin Land Trust, Menomonie, 715-235-8850, Bayfield Regional Conservancy, 715-779-5363, or Gathering Waters Conservancy, 608-251-9131 to find out which land trusts serve your immediate area.

Farm Labor – several farm employment agencies operate in Wisconsin. Farms magazines often carry ads. Farm trainees from Asia, Europe, Africa or Latin America are also available. Call your county agricultural agent for more information.

Relief Milker – Cumberland area, also sprays for flies, call Scott Riebe, 715-822-3004.

AgrAbility Program – provides advice to farmers with disabilities on how to obtain financial assistance. It is a partnership between UW Cooperative Extension and Easter Seals of Wisconsin. Contact: 800-422-2324.

EQIP Cost Share - cost-sharing is available for a number of conservation practices. Contact your local NRCS office to find out what programs may be available for your county. Signup periods are typically in the fall.

Dairy Modernization Grants - up to \$7,500 may be awarded for professional services related to siting, engineering, design, layout and diagrams of new barns, parlors and other farm structures related to new modernization and expansion projects. Also eligible is consulting for risk management, financial management and labor management; financial management software and training in conjunction with modernization, expansion or efficiency projects. Funding must be connected to new modernization projects (within one year of business plan completion). Funding may be limited. Contact Jim Cisler at DATCP, 608-224-5137.

Dairy Transition Grants - up to \$7,500 may be awarded to help dairy farmers get started in business or for existing dairy farmers to transition to or enhance organic or intensively managed grazing operations. Cow, goat or sheep operations may apply. Projects must incorporate financial analysis and planning. Funding may be limited. Contact Jim Cisler at DATCP, 608-224-5137.

Dairy Investment Tax Credit – up to 10% of the amount a producer spends on dairy farm modernization or expansion. Contact: Elaine Kroeger at Revenue, 608-266-2442.

Dairy 2020 Grants - up to \$3,000 may be awarded for professional services to develop a comprehensive business plan for the start-up, modernization, or expansion of a Wisconsin dairy farm. Contact Irv Possin at Commerce, 920-322-1888, or Jim Cisler at DATCP, 608-224-5137.

MVP Loans - this program is designed to assist dairy producers who are undertaking capital improvement projects to purchase milk cows that will result in a significant increase in Wisconsin's milk production. Loans provide near equity capital for increasing herd size. Commerce's participation is limited to no more than \$500 for each cow added to the operation. The maximum award available under the MVP program is \$1 million. Contact Irv Possin at Commerce, 920-322-1888, or Jim Cisler at DATCP, 608-224-5137.

Farmer-Rancher Grants – USDA funded grants for on-farm research, demonstration and education grants. Contact NCR-SARE at 800-529-1342.

Focus On Energy Program – pre-construction grants are available for energy-efficient home, business, farm, grain-dryer and other construction as cash-back rewards for energy-efficient lighting, heating or cooling appliances. Contact: 800-762-7077.

Center for Integrated Agricultural Studies – provides information on research, funding sources, training, marketing for grazing, organic, beginning farmer and other value-added or sustainable types of agriculture. Contact: Jennifer at 608-265-7914.

Center for Dairy Profitability – provides information and tools for budgeting, decision-making, modernization, financial benchmarking and management education, including papers, publications, software and CDs. Contact: (608) 263-5665.

For more information or questions on other programs, call Otto Wiegand or Kevin Schoessow at Spooner, 715-635-3506, Tom Syverud at Ashland, 715-682-8393 or Jason Fishbach at Bayfield, 715-373-6104.

Spooner Sheep Dairy Day is August 25

*Yves Berger
Superintendent
Spooner Ag Research Station*

On Saturday, August 25, 2007, the Spooner Ag Research Station will host its Biennial Spooner Sheep Dairy Day.

The morning session starts with registration at 8:30 a.m. in the Station auditorium. After registration and a short introduction, different specialists will present the results of new research in the sheep dairy industry and topics relevant to the everyday operation of a sheep dairy farm.

Whole lamb on the spit is offered as the main course for lunch.

Afternoon seminars held at the sheep barn are more hands-on related. Advanced sheep farmers and beginners alike will receive useful information to bring back home.

The public is welcome to attend. Even if you are not in the sheep business, please feel free to

come and learn about the raising of sheep and tour our facilities at the Spooner Ag Research Station. Registration is free; however, there is a charge for the lamb barbecue luncheon.

Do reproductive soundness exam on bulls before breeding season

*Bill Halfman
UW-Extension Agricultural Agent
Monroe County*

A Breeding Soundness Examination is an economical procedure to ensure a successful reproductive program for cow-calf operations.

The bull is often the most neglected individual in the herd, and his contribution in a cow-calf operation is most often underestimated. “The bull is half the herd,” has often been stated. A cow is responsible for half the genetic potential of one calf in a single year. The bull is typically responsible for half the genetic material of 20 to 30 calves. Unless the bull is in top physical condition as well as reproductive ability, he cannot deliver the genetic potential at the appropriate time. The bull’s capacity to locate cows in heat and successfully mate with them is important for a profitable operation. Actually, the herd bull is worth more than half the herd, and the statement really does not give his contribution adequate credit.

It has been reported that one out of five bulls running in herds is either sterile or sub-fertile. This means that 20 percent of these bulls are incapable of getting cows successfully

bred. Ten percent to 15 percent of yearling bulls also are in the same category.

Breeding soundness exams should be done 45 to 60 days prior to the breeding season. Producers can’t wait until halfway into the breeding season to discover problems with the bull. A poorly functioning bull will result in a large economic loss as well as a strung out calving season and reduced uniformity of calf crop.

A breeding soundness exam does not guarantee that the bull will be reproductively sound during the breeding season, but it is the best technique available. Because of this, producers are encouraged to observe the cows and bulls during the breeding season. Be sure the bull is mating with the cows in heat. Check the cows in about three weeks to determine if they were settled.

Cow-calf producers should arrange for a qualified bovine veterinarian to conduct the breeding soundness exam. The exam includes an evaluation of the bull’s reproductive tract, semen volume and quality, as well as the bull’s structural soundness and overall physical condition.

A breeding soundness exam is not a cost. It is an investment; it is insurance. Only one missed cycle of two to three cows will result in an economic loss equal to or greater than the cost of the exam. An open cow will create a greater loss. A local producer recently related that he discovered 15 out of 40 open cows during pregnancy checking last fall. The bad news is that the losses will occur in the remaining years of the cows’ productive life. A breeding soundness exam will help to keep these losses at a minimum.

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Attend one of the many county fairs and field days scheduled this summer



Kevin Schoessow
UWEX Area Agricultural Agent

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