

Agricultural Newsletter

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



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Volume 15 Issue 4

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Spooner Ag Research Station 100th Anniversary Open House to Be Held

*Phil Holman
Superintendent
Spooner Agricultural Research Station*

**Tuesday, October 20, 2009
From 1:00 to 4:00**

At the Spooner Ag Research Station Headquarters Building

Spooner Ag Research Station History

The Spooner Agricultural Research Station was established in late 1909 when the city of Spooner donated 80 acres of sandy loam soil to the University of Wisconsin. Additional purchases and sales have resulted in the present size of 388 acres.

The original station was under the leadership of Dr. E. L. Delwiche. Professor Delwiche worked on developing crop production methods and varieties for Northwestern Wisconsin. Crop improvement has been an important task at the station. The station produced Wisconsin #25 open pollinated dent corn and Spooner oats, both good selections at the time. The station was instrumental in the development, release, and maintenance of Wisconsin Early Black, Flambeau, 606 Manchu, and 507 Mandarin soybeans.

In 1923, the station undertook the inbreeding of corn and by 1929 made the first early experimental double hybrids. Station Superintendent, Professor Arthur Strommen, is credited as moving the corn belt further north by developing and breeding early maturity corn varieties. The station supervised the production and processing of foundation seed stocks, reaching a high of 3,602 acres in 1946.

The sheep project on the Spooner station was taken on in 1936 after an outbreak of Brucellosis in the herd of dairy cattle. Many kinds of research has been done, from pasture studies to introduction of the Targhee breed to Wisconsin. In 1995—as a response to the many Wisconsin sheep producers who had shown a strong interest—the Station began pioneering research in the dairy sheep industry and remains the definitive source for dairy sheep information in the country. A sheep milking parlor was opened in 1996. The station has hosted the Spooner State Sheep Day for 57 years and continues to be instrumental in the planning and execution of the Annual Great Lakes Dairy Sheep Symposium, begun in 1995 and hosted in the United States and Canada, including here at Spooner.

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Spoooner, WI 54801 or UWEX Area
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Joel Salatin Featured at LCO Sustainable Living & Local Foods Fair

LCO Convention Center - Hayward, Sept. 25

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

Nationally-famous farmer and speaker, Joel Salatin, will be the keynote speaker at the Lac Courte Oreilles Sustainable Living and Local Foods Fair to be held on Friday, Sept. 25 at the LCO Convention Center at the corner of B & K east of Hayward. Salatin will give his address at 11:00, followed by a question and answer period and a book-signing.

The Fair, which runs from 9-3, features a large number of highlights including a seed exchange, farmer market and breakout sessions on local food sources, food networks, community gardens, composting, rain barrels, native landscaping, renewable energy and other topics. A local foods luncheon will be available on-site for \$5.

According to Wikipedia, the on-line encyclopedia, Joel Salatin describes himself as a “Christian-libertarian-environmentalist-capitalist farmer who produces high-quality, beyond organic meats, which are raised using environmentally responsible, ecologically beneficial, sustainable methods”. He and his wife own a 550-acre farm called Polyface in Virginia. They raise cattle using rotational grazing followed by chickens in portable coops. No chemicals are used and no corn is fed. Salatin’s unconventional farming practices have attracted considerable attention in the alternative agriculture community. His definition of his local market or “foodshed” is one that does not extend beyond a four hour drive from his farm.

Salatin is prominently featured in Michael Pollan’s book *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*. He spends about a hundred days a year lecturing at colleges and to environmental groups. Salatin has authored a number of best-selling books: (1) *Salad Bar Beef*; (2) *Pastured Poultry Profit\$*; (3) *You Can Farm: The Entrepreneur’s Guide To Start & Succeed in a Farming Enterprise*; (4) *Holy Cows And hog Heaven: The Food Buyer’s Guide To Friendly Food*, and (5) *Everything I Want To Do Is Illegal: War Stories From The local Food Front*.

The Fair is sponsored by the LCO Tribal Government, LCO Community College’s Energy and AISES, NNAHA Environmental Health Services and UW-Extension at LCO. For further information contact Kelli Stamper at 715-638-5136 or kstamper@lhohc.com. You don’t want to miss this event!

Organic Certification Cost Share Funds Available

Laura Paine
Organic Agriculture Specialist
Wisconsin Dept. of Agriculture

Organic farmers and processors are invited to apply for certification cost-share funds for federal fiscal year 2009 (October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009). Wisconsin's organic farmers and processors are certified by private certification companies that are accredited by the USDA.

The cost share program provides for reimbursement of 75% of their certification costs with a maximum payment of \$750 per farm or processor per year. All certified organic farms and handlers are eligible for cost sharing on a first come, first-served basis.

Applications for the period of October 1, 2008 - September 30, 2009 are being accepted through October 15, 2009.

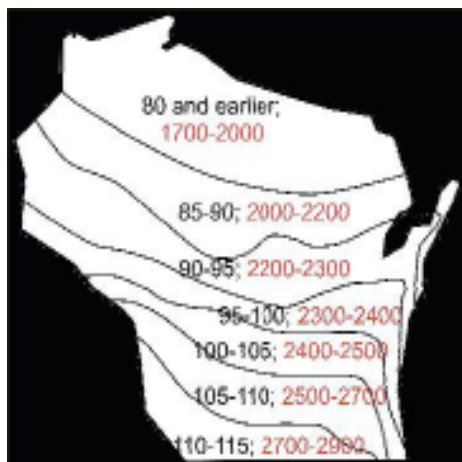
Application materials have been mailed out to over 1200 farmers and handlers on our list," said Laura Paine, coordinator of the program for DATCP. "We've worked with certifiers to keep our list current, but we encourage people to contact us if they don't receive the packet."

Application materials are available on-line at [http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/\(search for "organic cost-share"\)](http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/(search%20for%20%22organic%20cost-share%22)) or may be requested from Paine at 608-224-5120 or via email at laura.paine@wi.gov.

Will Corn Mature in 2009?

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

Record cool temperatures have occurred across the state this season and the lack of heat is getting farmers concerned about whether the corn crop will mature. The map shows the typical relative maturity zones for full-season corn grown in Wisconsin when planted prior to May 15 and the associated growing degree units. Growing degree unit (GDU) accumulation in NW Wisconsin ranges from 2300 in western Burnett County to 1700 GDU in northern Ashland County. Relative maturities for this area ranges from 95 to less than 80 days.



The 30 year average accumulated GDU units for Spooner from May 1 through the average killing frost of Sept. 28 is 2365. The normal GDU accumulation at Spooner from May 1 to Sept. 17 is 2287 GDUs, which is approximately what is needed to mature a 90 day RM corn hybrid. As of Sept. 17, 2009 only 1917 GDUs have accumulated in Spooner, which is 370 GDUs behind normal. Daily GDU accumulation ranges from 0-36 GDUs per day. In Sept aver. GDU accumulation is ~13

GDUs per day. Given this deficit we are 17 days behind normal.

While heat units are important to maturing out a crop, it is not the only factor. Researcher in Iowa (Ritchie et al., 1993) determined that the number of days between pollination and a killing frost influence the time to maturity. Once corn silks they found it takes about 55 to 60 days to achieve maturity – R6 black layer. So if the ave. killing frost occurs Sept 28 the crop must be silking by Aug 1-5 to achieve maturity.

Was corn silking the first week in August? In many areas throughout NW Wisconsin, corn did not silk until the second or even third week in August. So will our corn crop mature in 2009? Statistically there is still a chance, but the odds are not looking favorably. The farther we can go into October before a killing frost the better, and while we're crossing our fingers (and toes) let's also hope for a prolonged fall harvest season too.

Given the uncertainty of a mature corn crop what are your management options?

- Monitor corn and consider which acres may be likely candidates for silage or high moisture shell corn, and be considering possible markets.
- Do you have enough drying fuel, if still possible lock in price.
- Be prepared for the dock for shrink and other quality discounts at the elevator.
- Fine-tune your dryer so that over- or under- drying does not occur. Over-hearting the grain in the dryer or filling the bin too fast for drying to occur will increase costs and decrease grain quality.

- Hire and train skilled labor to monitor dryers, fans, augers and other equipment during the drying process.
- Consider leaving some corn to dry in the field, but be aware of losses due to ear droppage, stalk breakage, or wildlife damage.

Negotiating the Value of Immature Corn Silage

Kevin Schoessow
Adapted from Joe Lauer, UWEX Corn Agronomist

Due to early season drought and a record setting cool growing season, there is the potential for greater interest in livestock farmers purchasing immature corn for feed. Given this likely scenario, there is bound to be questions about pricing standing corn silage. Arriving at a fair and equitable price for corn silage is difficult due, however there are some factors which need to be considered. Those include production costs, grain price, harvesting costs, costs of handling, hauling and storage, fertility value of stover, and forage quality.

As with most pricing issues we first need to start with a base price. The general rules of thumb for the price per ton of corn silage at 65% moisture are; 6-8 times the price of #2 shell corn for standing corn, if the silage is harvested then 10 times the price of #2 corn, 1/4 to 1/3 the price of baled hay, or production cost per ton of corn silage plus some rate of return (usually 8-10%). Given these rule's of thumb corn silage at 65%

moisture could be valued anywhere from \$20-40/ton as fed.

Adjustments for moisture differences must be made. For example: if \$24.50 per ton of 65% moisture silage has been established. Each ton at 65% moisture contains $(2000 \times .35) = 700$ lbs of dry matter. Value per cwt DM = $\$24.5/7 = \3.50 . If, however, moisture content is 70%, then each ton contains only 600 lbs of dry matter. To have comparable value, this silage would have to be priced at \$21.00 $(6 \times \$3.50)$ per ton. On the other hand, if moisture content was 60% then a comparable price would be $(2000 \times .40 = 800; 8 \times \$3.50 = \$28.00$ per ton). The formula is $(\$ \text{ per ton} \times \text{actual dry matter})/\text{dry matter for referenced silage}$.

Another adjustment that needs to be taken into account is silage quality. Research shows that the highest milk yield per ton of silage occurs when the corn is chopped at 1/2 milk line. If corn is chopped before or after this maturity level a discount of up to 15% should be taken. Given this year's growing conditions, and potential to have field corn diverted to silage, corn silage may not be harvested at the proper milk line. Drought stressed corn could be discounted as well. Some general discounts for drought stressed corn would be 0-10% for 20 - 40 bu/acre corn, 10-20% for 0 - 20 bu/acre corn and 20-30% for short barren stalks.

To determine the value of silage standing in the field we need an estimate of what is standing in the field. There are two "quick and dirty" ways to estimate corn silage yield are:

Based on Grain Yield...for stressed corn, about one ton of silage

per acre can be obtained from each 5 bushels of grain per acre. For example, if you expect a grain yield of 50 bushels of grain per acre, you will get about 10 ton/acre of 30 percent dry matter silage. For corn yielding more than 100 bushels per acre, about one ton of silage per acre can be expected for each 7 to 8 bushels of grain per acre.

Of course a more accurate way to estimate yields is to weigh the corn plants from a portion of an acre (1/100th) in several spots of the field. Another method would be to count the number of loads taken off the field and estimate the tons per load.

In order to obtain actual tons harvested, weigh each wagon load or count how many feet of silage went into a silo after settling. If you know the silo size, how many feet of silage was put up and what the moisture was, silo charts can be used to calculate tons stored. Dividing stored tons by acres harvested will give you yield per acre.

Finally, multiply your adjusted base price with yield and acre to determine total value. If the buyer is responsible for harvesting, these costs must also be taken into account. Silage harvest costs range anywhere from \$25 - \$90 acre depending on harvesting equipment and hauling.

Footnote: Additional information can be found on the UWEX Corn Agronomy Website at <http://corn.agronomy.wisc.edu/> Click on corn silage pricing decision aid: This spreadsheet is intended to provide a framework for negotiating the price of standing corn silage. The spreadsheet develops a price from the seller's (minimum to accept) and buyer's (maximum to pay) perspectives.

Farm Energy Saving Tips

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

In these challenging financial times, here a few ideas to help save money on farm energy.

Maintain tractors and stay up on injector and filter schedules. Use proper viscosity oils and seasonal fuels. Avoid excessive idling. Keep tire pressure at the lowest recommended level and avoid over-ballasting.

Reduce synthetic fertilizer use. Take advantage of on-farm nutrient credits. Consider conservation tillage and no-till management. These approaches reduce diesel fuel consumption, preserve topsoil structure and conserve soil carbon.

Change lighting strategies. Switch incandescent lighting to compact fluorescent lamps in barns, sheds and outbuildings. Consider changing out yard lamps with more focused fixtures.

Increase electric motor efficiency. Rebuild older motors and gain several percentage points in motor efficiency. Consider variable-speed drives as appropriate.

Manage stock tanks to reduce electrical use during winter. Earth-bermed or super-insulated stock tanks require smaller heater. Some designs require no electricity.

Manage stored fuel. A 300-gallon unsheltered above-ground tank can lose up to 10 gallons per month through evaporation during warm months, particularly when painted a

dark color. Silver-coat the tank and put up a shelter to keep them shaded.

For more information on energy saving tips contact the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service at 1-800-346-9140 or

www.attra.ncat.org. Energy assistance can also be obtained from the Wisconsin Focus on Energy program by calling 1-800-762-7077 or www.focusonenergy.com

Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy & Livestock Farmers

LCO College, Hayward – 15 Sessions, November 2009-March 2010
Thursdays, 11:00-1:15

Otto Wiegand
Area Ag Agent
Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties

The Wisconsin School for Beginning Farmers course will be offered locally this fall and winter at the LCO Community College east of Hayward. The course comes through the UW Farm and Industry Short Course. Delivery will be done through interactive video and audio. Most of the subject materials apply to both grass-based and conventional farming. An important aspect of the course is business planning. If desired, students will be able to develop their own business plans by the end of the course. Since the course began in 1995, 300 students have enrolled and a third went on to start their own farms.

There are 15 required regular class sessions. The course is divided into three terms. Classes run from 11:00 AM to 1:30 PM on Thursdays except for one class on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. Students who miss a class may catch it later on-line.

Subjects this year are not yet set, but could include starting a livestock business whether confinement or grazing, grazing system layout, stray voltage, goal-setting, feeding on pasture, production and marketing of pasture-based beef, goat and sheep dairying, information on beginner loans, enterprise budgets, farm-driven marketing, business plan writing, successful models for business startups, bio-fuels and farm energy, organic farming, low-cost parlors, out-wintering and environmental stewardship. Watch for news releases in the papers.

The cost of the entire course will be about \$240 or \$15 for individual sessions. Sponsorships are encouraged. You can also enroll for individual classes or terms, or take the course for university credit at a higher cost. Additional afternoon sessions covering related topics of interest may be added by local UW-Extension. You will have to bring your own lunch.

To register or obtain further information, contact Otto Wiegand at UWEX Spooner at 715-635-3506, Dick Cates at 608-265-6437, or Jennifer Taylor at 608-265-7914. The course is a collaborative effort between the UW-Center for Integrated Agricultural Studies, UW Cooperative Extension, CALS, DATCP, the Technical Colleges and GrassWorks.

Health Care for Farmers – Finding Options That Work

Adapted by Otto Wiegand

Area Ag Agent

Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties

Badger Care Plus For Children and Families – available to all Wisconsin children up to 19 years old, at all income levels, and to parents and caretakers of children with incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty level. Families must meet income and age restriction guidelines on an annual basis, thus higher future incomes or having last child reach 19 can result in ineligibility. For information or application contact www.access.gov under Apply for Benefits, or call Member Services at 800-362-3002.

Badger Care Plus Core Plan – provides access to basic health care services for long-term uninsured adults. Recipients must meet the following requirements: income must be below the 200% of the federal poverty level, must be between ages 19 and 64 with no dependent children under 19 living with them, and must not have private health when they apply or have had in the past 12 months. Contact www.access.gov as above, or call 800-291-2002.

Farmers' Health Cooperative of Wisconsin – cooperative health care for Wisconsin farmers and agribusinesses. Provided through Aetna, rates are dependent on costs incurred by members. Adults enrolling must participate in a free personal Health Risk Assessment as a requirement. Contact www.farmershealthcooperative.com, or call 800-539-9370.

Health Insurance Risk Sharing Program – offers health insurance to Wisconsin residents who are unable to find adequate coverage in the private market due to their medical conditions or lost group health insurance. It is considered Wisconsin's high-risk pool or health insurance of last resort. Requirements include residency in Wisconsin, under age 65, not eligible for employer-offered group health, and not eligible for Wisconsin Medicaid or Badger Care Plus. Contact www.hirsp.org, or call 800-828-4777.

Community Health Centers – Seventeen Community Health Care Centers exist in 33 medically-underserved areas. The network is federally-funded, fees for services are charged on a sliding-scale basis, and centers accept most types of insurance if the client has it. Contact www.wphca.org, or call 608-277-7477.

Free Health Care Clinics – offer primary care or pharmaceutical services in 32 locations to people without health insurance or minimum insurance. Contact 715-839-8477.

Parish Nurse Programs – are offered in 400 churches in Wisconsin for prevention, early intervention, counseling and other programs. These programs bring a holistic approach to health care. Check with churches in your area.

All of these program and many other tools are available at the UW-Extension Responds website Farming In Difficult Times: www.uwex.edu/ces/ag/farmingindifficulttimes.html, or contact your local UW-Extension Agent or call the DATCP Farm Center at 800-942-2474.

Farm Women Weekends

Farm Women's Gathering Weekends will be held in Eau Claire at the Plaza Hotel on October 10 & 11, 2009 and in Westin, Wisconsin November 7 & 8, 2009. These weekends are overnight experiences that include the Gathering Circle process, input on self-care, assertiveness, communication skills, mental stress relief and women's wellness.

Please register early and be one of the women to enjoy the experience of some time away from the farm, share stories with other women, make new friends and reconnect with those you haven't seen for awhile. Bring a friend.

There is no cost to attend either of these weekends. The cost of refreshments, meals lodging, materials and instruction for the weekend are covered by grants and private donations. To register or for more information call Christy at 262-723-4156 or e-mail Mary Bub at mmbub@juno.com.

NCR-SARE Announces 2009 Farmer Rancher Grant Call for Proposals

The 2009 North Central Region - Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (NCR-SARE) Farmer Rancher Grant Call for Proposals is now available online at <http://sare.org/ncrsare/cfp.htm>.

Farmers and ranchers in the North Central Region are invited to submit grant proposals for projects to explore sustainable agriculture solutions to problems on the farm or ranch. Proposals should show how farmers and ranchers plan to use their own innovative ideas to explore sustainable agriculture options and how they will share project results.

Projects should emphasize research or education/demonstration. Grants can range from \$6,000 for individual farmers up to \$18,000 for groups of 3 or more farmers.

NCR-SARE expects to fund about 50 projects in the twelve-state North Central Region with this call.

The deadline for proposals is Thursday, December 3, 2009 at 4:30 p.m. For more information, contact Joan Benjamin, NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher Grant Program Coordinator, at jbenjamin2@unl.edu or 402-472-0809 or (800) 529-1342. You can also contact the Wisconsin SARE coordinator, Diane Mayerfeld at dbmayerfeld@wisc.edu or 608-262-8188.

The NCR has funded more than 700 farmer rancher grants worth more than \$4,300,000 since the inception of this program.

This Quarter's Events

Contacts: Ag Agents Otto Wiegand or Kevin Schoessow, UW-Extension, Spooner Station, 715-635-3506, or Jason Fischbach, UW-Extension, Ashland & Bayfield Co., 715-682-8393 for more information, brochures or how to register.

Sept. 23, Weds, 10-Noon – Jersey Dairy Pasture Walk – Bob & Darlene Winter, Chetek, contact Tim Jergenson at Barron UWEX 715-537-6250, or Lynn Johnson at NW Graziers 715-268-8778 (see article).

Sept. 25, Fri – LCO Sustainability Fair – LCO Convention Center, Hayward, guest speaker Joel Salatin, nationally-famous grazer, local food proponent and featured in Michael Pollan's best-seller *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (see article).

Sept. 25-27, Fri-Sun – World Beef Expo – Wis. State Fairgrounds, West Allis.

Sept. 29-Oct 3, Tues-Sat – World Dairy Expo – Madison

Sept. 30, Weds – deadline for first round of applications for new Conservation Stewardship Program - all farmers need to do by Sept. 30th is complete a self-assessment checklist to see if they may be eligible for payments, successful farmers will receive five-year contracts capped at \$40,000 per year for each farm, with a national average of \$18 per acre per year, get an application packet and appointment with the local NRCS office to complete it, the checklist is available on the Wisconsin NRCS website at www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov.

Oct. 10-11, 9:00 Sat- 2:00 Sun – Farm / Rural Women Gathering – Plaza Hotel, Eau Claire - sponsored by Seeds of Hope, Wis. Farm Center, Life & Legacies and Wis. Rural Women's Initiative, contact Christy at 262-723-4156.

Oct. 20, Tues - 1 p.m. - 100th Anniversary Open House - Spooner Agricultural Research Station, Spooner, WI.

Oct. 30-31, Fri-Sat – Focus On Goats Annual Conference – Sinsinawa Conference Center, Sinsinawa - \$30 for one day or \$55 for two days, early registration by Oct. 15, contact Jeanne Meier at DATCP, 608-224-5121.

Nov. 11, Weds - Pest Management Update - Lake Hallie/Chippewa Falls. Contact Chippewa County Extension at 715-726-7950.

Nov. 12 – Mar. 2010, weekly, 15 sessions – Beginning Farmer Course – LCO Community College, Hayward, starts Nov. 12, 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, etc, \$240 for full course or \$15 per session (see article).

Jan. 21-22, Thurs-Fri - Midwest Value-Added Conference and Wisconsin Local Food Summit – Ramada, Eau Claire – also can enroll in new Value-Added Agriculture 'College' at same location on Weds, contact River Country at 800-226-9672 or 715-834-9672, or Wis. Local Food Network at 715-339-2555.



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Kevin Schoessow
UWEX Area Agricultural Agent