

UP Ag Connections

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NEWS & VIEWS

By Frank Wardynski, MSU Extension Educator

I need to start with an apology for falling behind with the newsletter schedule last month; some people didn't receive the March newsletter until April. My plan is to move the newsletter release about one week earlier for the next few months to get back on schedule. Another issue that I haven't been able to find an economical solution for is that if you're a producer in the Eastern end of the U.P. your delivery of the newsletter goes South through Wisconsin, around Lake Michigan and then back up over the bridge. Unfortunately, this process takes about two weeks and when I'm late getting copy to the printer, the problem really gets compounded for those of you in the East. I've been looking for the economical solution, but have yet to find it. I'm sorry for that.

The calendar tells me it's spring. The weather is back and forth and I can feel the anticipation for farming activities. Spring is always a mixed feelings time of year with great joy in anticipation of warmer weather, sun tans, and jobs that are more productive and fun than plowing snow. However, in the Western U.P. it's also the mud season, and I hate mud. It seems the best way to deal with mud is to either stay out of it or get bigger wheeled tractors which make bigger ruts. We're only two to three weeks away from grass and a new set of challenges.

Field activities will be here soon enough and the hours are going to get long. Please stay safe. There is probably nothing that turns the stomach of a farmer more than hearing the misfortunes of our neighbors, especially when it relates to tragedy on the farm. Try to take the time to stay rested and stay safe.

Inside I want to point special attention to some special points of interest. One is a significant change in the breeding soundness exam program for bulls. The date is set for two weeks later than normal and there will be no testing in Escanaba on the Friday of that week. See details inside. Also there is a great article regarding Dr. Hilding "Bud" Linderoth, Jr. Bud was the recipient of the Service to Agriculture Award presented by the Growing UP Ag Association. I had a previous speaking engagement at the Dairy Calf and Heifer Association conference in Madison and wasn't able to attend the GUPAA annual meeting. I have talked with others and State Representative Ed McBroom was the featured speaker and did an excellent job of addressing some key issues we are facing in the state to include transportation and energy infrastructure.

~Frank

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MARKET REPORT (4/2/15)**Menominee County Farm Bureau's** By Frank Wardynski, MSU Extension Educator **Breakfast on the Farm Market Ready Prices** Saturday, June 13, 2015 Choice Steers per 100 lbs. \$142-\$166 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. \$135-\$160 per 100 lbs. • Holstein Steers Shepeck Farms Hogs \$43-\$45 per 100 lbs. Menominee, MI : Lambs \$130-\$190 per 100 lbs. General Admission-Free • Cull cows per 100 lbs. \$85-\$110 Breakfast-\$5 Calves \$220-\$490 per 100 lbs. per 100 lbs. Goats \$150-\$200 Breeding and Feeder Animals • Grade Holstein cows \$2000 - \$2700 per head Grade Holstein bred heifers \$2000 - \$3000 per head Feed Prices across the U.P. Avg. \$/cwt Avg. \$/ton Price Range Corn \$11.25 **REMINDER!** \$190-260 \$225.00 Sovmeal \$26.30 \$526.00 \$430-622 Plan now for the FFA Alumni Consignment auction! : Oats \$16.20 \$324.00 \$240-408 Get that equipment out from behind the barn now Ad registration deadline is April 11, 2015 Barley \$12.76 \$255.50 \$175-336 Plenty of time to do a little fix-up/tune-up! Average price/100 wt. for 1 ton lots AUCTION: Sunday, May 3rd starting at NOON Havelka's Construction Wanted & For Sale Listings On Hwy 41 Just south of Wallace, MI. Personal ads will be removed monthly. We reserve the right to edit your ad. Free ads must be no more than 110 spaces. Please respect the space requirements. You can For more information call: always purchase an ad if more space is required. Please call or email your ad no later 906-753-4192 than the 15th of each month. Call the Ontonagon County MSU Extension office at 906 -884-4386 or email msue66@msu.edu. **BUY OR SELL!** Looking for fenced pasture in U.P. 60-70 beef cows with calves. Phone Greg at 231-357-1368. For Sale: 4' x 5' round bales of Timothy, Brome, and Alfalfa. Equivalent to 20 small squares. \$35-\$45 Phone (906) 446-3398 Wanted to Buy: Grass fed yearling cattle. No grain fed. Phone (906) 379-9135 **Super Duper Yooper Pig Sale** Johnson Brothers Sale Barn FOR 3740 18th Road Escanaba, MI April 18, 2015 Barn opens at Noon Sale starts at 2 p.m. E.S.T. **Offering 60+ elite** late January and early February barrows and gilts. For more information call: Todd Boicken - 815-592-9291 Looking for a past edition of the newsletter? Check out www.maes.msu.edu/upes Check Us Out On Facebook! Super Duper Yooper Pig Sale



GUPAA Service to Agriculture Award

The Growing U.P. Agricultural Association (GUPAA) was formed in 1981 as an expansion of the original Growing U.P. Committee to help find answers to the many concerns, problems and opportunities of Upper Peninsula agriculture and agricultural research. Every year GUPAA honors someone that has demonstrated exemplary service to the betterment of UP agriculture. This year, the association is proud to present this award to Dr. Hilding "Bud" Linderoth, Jr.

Dr. Linderoth was born on a dairy west of Daggett, the second of four children and the oldest son. A 4-H-er and farm kid, he graduated from Stephenson High School in 1953 and from Michigan State University's School of Veterinary Medicine in 1959.



Shannon Linderoth accepting the Outstanding Service to Ag Award from President Jon Haindl on behalf of Dr. Bud Linderoth

Bud entertained offers to join the faculty of several Midwest universities, but they just weren't home. He returned to the U.P. and went to work, which he did tirelessly for the next 50 years. Like those of his clients, most of Doc's days began long before the sun rose and ended long after it set.

His territory ranged from Peshtigo to Northern Marinette County, Florence County, Dickinson County, Delta County and of course, Menominee County. And beyond. It was nothing for him to put 75,000 miles or more on his truck each year tending to area dairy and beef cattle, horses, pigs, dogs, cats or any other animal for which a client needed care - even a llama that lived in someone's house.

Over the years, many of his clients became trusted friends. While he cared for their animals, they cared for him, providing countless meals, oil changes and even the occasional bottle of homemade wine.

Intellectually gifted, he had a perpetual thirst for knowledge. He could talk about so many subjects: literature, investing, history, research or current events. He even had a pilot's license. He was always learning something and always stayed up to date on veter-inary research and techniques.

He practiced "production medicine" before there was a definition for it, focusing on the interaction between health, nutrition and disease prevention long before it was fashionable. He was dedicated to his animal clients and had uncanny diagnostic abilities which was in demand from specialists at Michigan State.

He worked through broken bones, illness, heat, cold and whatever conditions a farm threw at him. He was one of the original tough guys and was known to suture his own lacerations. When asked if there was anything he would have done differently, he just smiled and said, "No, this is what I chose."

Thank you Dr. Linderoth for choosing to provide exemplary and dedicated service to U.P. agriculture. It is an honor for the GUPAA membership to present you with this award.

(For more information regarding GUPAA and membership, please call the MSU, UPREC at 906-439-5114)

What Would Your Employees Say They Like/Dislike About Your Farm?

For a farm to meet their goals their employees must be performing their job to the best of their abilities and enjoying their job.

Posted on April 7, 2015 by Stan Moore, and Phil Durst, Michigan State University Extension

Over the past two years, my colleague at <u>Michigan State University Extension</u>, <u>Phil Durst</u> and I have received answers to questions regarding satisfaction and engagement from 174 employees on 14 dairy farms. The project was designed to obtain anonymous feedback from employees and then develop a report for owners and managers that would help them improve their employee management.

On today's dairy farms, we rely on employees to handle the daily care of animals, equipment, etc. If farms are going to be successful in meeting their quality, production, and profitability goals, it will be because employees are performing their job to the best of their abilities.

Our interviewer asked employees "What do you like most about working at this dairy?" and "What do you like least?" These are open-ended questions that enable people to share whatever they are thinking.

Some of what we learned can be used by farm owners in recruiting new employees, and other responses can help managers and owners improve their management and thereby retain the good employees they already have.

The Positive:

Frequently, we heard what we call "generic" responses, such as "I like working with animals (or equipment)", "I like working outdoors" as things that employees like most. That is good; we certainly want employees who enjoy the general job they are doing. These responses can help employers develop job ads and descriptions that will attract those who share these preferences. *Continued on Page 5*

Grass Finished Beef Marketing Update

The grass fed beef industry is a growing industry and many producers are searching for information on current market prices. This article will shed some light on sources of information for the grass-fed beef producer.

Posted on March 20, 2015 by Kable Thurlow, Michigan State University Extension

Due to less information availability in the grass fed beef market, producers have a difficult time gaining access to the going rate for their cattle. Unlike traditional commodity crops, and livestock markets, the grass fed industry is relativity new, and gaining access to the markets is not as easy as checking the Chicago Board of Trade, or your local grain elevator.

According to Allen Williams, a nationally recognized expert in the grass-fed beef industry, most grass-fed beef pioneers started out on a small scale, marketing directly to the consumers, very similar to the way that the all-natural grain fed program started. As more producers enter the grass-fed beef sector, the increased competition will force some that have been fairly comfortable with their current methods of marketing, to become more creative. In order to remain competitive, grass fed beef producers will need to ensure that they are producing a high-quality desirable end product. This competition needs to be viewed as an opportunity to strengthen the industry, rather than a thorn in the side of those already considered veterans of the industry.

According to Williams, like most industries, the early adapting pioneers in the grass fed beef industry were on the cutting edge, and not afraid to take risks. Most were smaller producers marketing their beef direct to consumers. Then, as media attention helped to grow consumer interest in grass fed, there became larger entities, and existing branded programs that started adding grass fed beef to their portfolios. Williams states that the all-natural grain-fed programs started out as small producers, then moved to larger producers, then branded programs were developed, then existing programs entered the scene, and finally large packers entered the arena. He also believes that the grass fed industry is mimicking the all-natural beef programs and he reasons that this is a telltale sign of maturity in the grass fed sector. This is mainly due to the larger existing programs that are entering the grass-fed beef industry.

Industry experts maintain that growth in grass-fed beef is very stable and has been between 25-30 percent annually over the past decade. Many experts also predict that this growth will continue as interest from larger companies increases. Where can a producer go to find out current market trends and prices? Truth is, there are limited resources available in terms of market places that are publicly sharing prices received for their grass fed beef products. It really helps to have an expert in the field who you can tap for information, and producers need to make networking within grass fed circles a priority. The USDA Agricultural Market Service has a market reporting site, however, it is in its infancy stages and should improve as more information enters the market.

According to the latest USDA AMS_National Grass Fed Beef Report, the price on a dressed weight basis is averaging \$312.50/ cwt. There are several wholesale buyers currently paying in the \$3.10- \$3.30 per pound range on a hot carcass weight basis. A survey of Michigan producers participating in a North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education grant with Michigan State University Extension has indicated a price range of \$2.80 - \$5.50 on a hot carcass weight basis for small volume, direct marketed sales.

As growth in this industry continues and as larger meat packing companies enter the grass-fed sector, information on grass-fed beef prices will continue to improve. As with growth in any industry, opportunities to participate also follow and the same is true with the grass fed beef industry. As major packers enter the industry, there will be an increased demand for genetics and for finishing capacity. Both of these are major needs and can present an opportunity for those interested in grass fed beef production. These opportunities do not come without risk and those interested in participating need to make sure that they do their homework before entering the business. Finishing cattle on grass takes a great amount of skill and is not something for the novice to tackle in great quantities. A good grass finisher must be a great forage manager, knowing how to match livestock nutritional needs with ever changing pasture based forages is extremely challenging, but it can be done.

In the meantime, it is important that you link up with other producers, as well as University and Industry representatives that are working in the grass fed sector. These individuals can help you gain access to valuable information that may not currently be at your fingertips.

For more information about grass finishing, contact me at <u>thurlowk@anr.msu.edu</u>, MSU Extension grazing educator Jerry Lindquist at<u>lindquis@anr.msu.edu</u>, or MSU Extension beef specialist Jason Rowntree at <u>rowntre1@anr.msu.edu</u>. Also you may consider attending the <u>National Grassfed Exchange Conference</u> to be held in Mt. Pleasant, Mich., Sept. 16-18, 2015. This conference is a key information exchange of the industry experts.

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The Simple Economics of Breeding Soundness Exams for Bulls

Conducting breeding soundness exams on bulls is cost effective every year. It will be critical to check fertility before the 2015 breeding season after the severe winter.

Frank Wardynski Ruminant Extension Educator

After the severe weather of last year, I thought that bulls failing breeding soundness exams was going to increase drastically. Fortunately the increase was moderate increasing from 20% to 25%. For whatever reason, the early testing fail rate is at 44%. The high cattle prices that are predicted to continue over the next few years mean that getting cows pregnant is critical. Some anticipate that softer milk prices is going to result in more dairy cows going to slaughter and soften cull cow prices by this fall. Pregnant cows will produce calves selling at tremendously high prices while open cows will sell next fall for lower prices. Knowing bulls are infertile just makes sense. Michigan State University Extension recommends fertility testing bulls every year before breeding season. The cost is \$55 per bull when examined at one of the scheduled clinics.

NOTE: THE SCHEULE HAS CHANGED FROM PUBLISHED IN THE LAST NEWSLETTER AND FROM PREVIOUS YEARS!!! On May 7, there will be no testing in Ontonagon and on May 8 there will be no testing in Escanaba. May 6, is going to be a really big day in Bark River.

The following schedule has been set for the Upper Peninsula:

May 4, Cooks May 5, Garden and Chatham May 6, Bark River May 7, Pelkie and Iron River

To schedule an appointment, contact Frank Wardynski, Ruminant Extension Educator with Michigan State University at <u>wardynsk@anr.msu.edu</u> or 906-884-4386.

What Would Your Employees Say Cont'd

But as we shared with farm owners and managers, positive responses specific to their operation showed us that employees had a loyalty to this farm, rather than just liking farm work. Farmspecific responses fell in the following categories;

- Teamwork on the farm
- Owner/Manager and their treatment of employees
- The job itself
- Learning on the job

Imagine your next job posting promoting being able to work on a farm where there is great teamwork, employees are treated as part of the family, the job is challenging and fast-paced, and there is opportunity to grow in the business!



The Negative:

Most frequent responses on the "Like Least" question included:

- Owner attitude/treatment of employees
- Communication deficiencies
- Perceived fairness issues
- Lack of teamwork
- Work schedule problems, and
- Equipment problems.

Owner attitude and treatment of employees included things like poor employee management, owner or manager swearing, coming to work with a bad attitude, etc. Owners/managers are responsible to set the tone on the farm. If we want a work environment that is positive, respectful, and productive, it starts at the top. Owners/managers have a responsibility to lead, and good employees recognize when we are doing a good job. Management also cannot put off dealing with problem employees. If you do, the good employees will leave, not those that you are letting slide. Communication is another important area that was lacking, and was often magnified by language barriers. Management has the responsibility to lower these barriers and ensure that employees feel they have a voice on the farm.

Closely tied to communication is fairness. We heard from employees on several farms that they didn't feel that they all were being treated the same within their respective farm. Often times the perception of fairness is impacted by poor communication. Employees need to know "why" things are the way they are. If you don't adequately communicate with them, they will come up with their own story to explain the situation. It is much better for them to know the real "why"!

Like many of the negatives, teamwork, is either a plus or a minus on your farm from an employee's perspective. Most employees want to be part of a well-functioning team. They don't want to work in an environment where there are frequent employee-toemployee conflicts. Good employees will leave this type of farm, just like they will leave a farm with a poor manager.

Work schedule came up as a frequent "like least" answer as well. One take home message from our employee surveys is that farms should not assume that certain groups of people want to work long hours, and every day of the week. We need to work with employees to make their jobs livable, enjoyable and rewarding. We need to make sure they have time for a personal life as well.

Finally, employees need to have equipment that works. Working with broken equipment that is slow to be repaired will reduce employee productivity, increase employee accidents, and likely will cost more than the repair.

So what would your employees say about you and your farm? It's your reputation that we are talking about. In future articles, **Phil Durst** and I will address these areas and how managers and owners can improve them.

Sanitation is critical to prevent plant Diseases Part 2: Field sanitation

Good sanitation in the field will reduce pathogen inoculum in vegetable plants.

Posted on March 6, 2015 by Lina Rodriguez Salamanca Michigan State University Extension

Sanitation is one of many tactics needed for an effective disease management strategy in the greenhouse and field. Sanitation includes any practice that aims to prevent the spread of pathogens by removing diseased and asymptomatic infected tissue, as well as decontaminating tools, equipment and washing hands. This article will help you and your employees use good sanitation and reduce pathogen inoculum, also known as "seeds" of the pathogen. Consistent and effective sanitation greatly increases the chances of raising healthy plants.

Sanitation in the field

Sanitation in the field needs to take place before, during and after the growing season. Prior to planting, fine-tune your weed management plan. Many weeds are known reservoirs for plant pathogens and insects. By controlling weed populations in your fields, you can reduce pathogens and their vector populations.

Wash soil off of farm equipment, including brushing off soil particles from shoes. These practices are especially important to prevent movement of soilborne pathogens such *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum* (causal agent of White mold), *Phytophthora capsici*, *Verticillium dalhiae* and different species of *Fusarium*. A power washer is an important piece of equipment in the battle against these diseases. Plows, discs, cultivators and other pieces of equipment should be power washed between fields.

Avoid working fields when plants are wet. This practice minimizes bacterial spread from diseased plants to healthy ones. For example, this tactic is important for tomato bacterial diseases such as spot, speck and canker that can prove challenging to control once in the field.

Remove infected plants or plant parts. As soon as symptoms appear, collect, bag and destroy or pile diseased material away from fields. Removing infected fruit and plant debris from the field can reduce the amount of pathogen inoculum that could move into healthy plant parts. Cull piles should be placed away from production fields and waterways and, if possible, covered with a plastic tarp to speed up microbial decomposition and minimize pathogen spores from escaping. Burn, chop and spread, or deep plow debris at the end of the season. The choice of practice depends on the specific disease that was present in the field the previous season.

At harvest, **carefully pick only healthy produce** and avoid any mechanical damage on the fruit or other plant parts harvested.

Damage such as small wounds or bruises can be the point of entrance for microorganism that can compromise fruit quality while in transit or storage (short or long term).

Clean tools during use, **disinfecting knives, shears and other harvesting tools often**. To accomplish this, wash tools with soapy water and dip or wipe in 70 percent ethanol or <u>other products</u>. It is important to refresh sanitizing solutions as specified on the product label. Tool sanitation and hand-washing can help minimize plant-to-plant spread of diseases caused by several bacteria and viruses. Provide hand-washing stations equipped with clean water and soap. During harvest, careful hand-washing is critical to minimize plant pathogen spread. For example, to-bacco mosaic virus (TMV) can be transmitted to tomatoes and peppers if hand-washing is poor after smoking cigarettes. This tobacco virus is very stable and can be present on dry tobacco in cigarettes.

Sanitation requires detail-oriented employees. Always inspect plant material prior to planting in the field. Plant material can carry diseases and insect pest, introducing them to clean and new fields. Instruct employees on how to recognize common disease symptoms and pests. Scouting often and thoroughly is needed to identify problems as early as possible. The more eyes available to look at your vegetables plants in the greenhouse and the field, the more chances issues can be identified earlier.

Field sanitation practices summary

- Remove plant debris and infected plants as soon as symptoms appear by collecting, bagging and removing.
- Burn deep plow debris in the fall or chop and spread early in winter.
- Disinfect knives, shears and other harvesting tools often.
- Frequent hand-washing with clean water and soap.
- Wash soil off farm equipment (power wash preferred) between fields.

Brush soil particles off from shoes when moving in between fields (brushes or boot covers are handy).

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Meetings & Events Calendar

April

April 18 Super Duper Yooper Pig Sale, Johnson Brothers Sale Barn opens at noon, Sale starts at 2:00 pm EST. Call Todd Boicken 815-592-9291 for more information.

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