



# UP Ag Connections

725 Greenland Road, Ontonagon, MI 49953

Vol. 19 Issue 03 MSU Extension March 2015

Published Monthly

## NEWS & VIEWS

By Frank Wardynski, MSU Extension Educator

U.P. Agriculture and Michigan State University lost a good friend last month. Allan Slye graduated from Michigan State University in 1960 and was the Ontonagon County Extension Director from 1966-1990. After retirement, Al continued working with the Western UP Livestock Cooperative and their feeder calf sale in Paulding, the county fair and was county commissioner chairman and there is a long list of activities of his community volunteer involvement.

I particularly remember working with Al with the livestock coop where I was president and he was secretary/treasurer. It certainly wasn't the only difficult times Al faced through the years of working with the livestock coop. They moved the sale yard from one location to another under highly contentious times, but it was the first difficult time that we had faced together. It was shortly after I became president that the Tb stuff really hit the fan. For two years Wisconsin required that cattle entering the state all be individually tested before entering. So we went to the membership to vote on requiring Tb testing of all sale cattle and added in that those cattle also needed to be vaccinated, since we were already running them through the chute anyway.

You learn a lot about people when you face difficult times together. You develop a special bond during those trails. Al was a good friend through those times. Those were the last sales conducted at the Paulding sale yard. We began pooling cattle onto trucks to go to various different sales. More trials and tribulations; our checkbook was running short also. Al wrote the last rent check for the sale yard out of his own check book.

I didn't write this just because Al was such a great man, but to use him as an example of how he embodied the American farmer. It would be hard to find a profession that requires so much time and sweat equity to make a farm work. I see farmers constantly that are under real time constraints yet seem to be the first to volunteer for their organizations, communities and neighbors. Thanks Al, for everything you've done. You'll be missed.

~Frank

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## MARKET REPORT (2/27/15)

By Frank Wardynski, MSU Extension Educator

### Market Ready Prices

Choice Steers	\$140-\$168	per 100 lbs.
Holstein Steers	\$135-\$160	per 100 lbs.
Hogs	\$53-\$62	per 100 lbs.
Lambs	\$130-\$160	per 100 lbs.
Cull cows	\$90-\$115	per 100 lbs.
Calves	\$150-\$410	per 100 lbs.
Goats	\$150-\$200	per 100 lbs.

### Breeding and Feeder Animals

Grade Holstein cows	\$1700 - 2300	per head
Grade Holstein bred heifers	\$1800 - 2500	per head

### Feed Prices across the U.P.

	Avg. \$/cwt	Avg. \$/ton	Price Range
Corn	\$11.00	\$270.00	\$180-360
Soymeal	\$26.55	\$640.00	\$440-880
Oats	\$16.45	\$375.00	\$250-500
Barley	\$12.90	\$270.00	\$180-360

Average price/100 wt. for 1 ton lots

## Wanted & For Sale Listings

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 always purchase an ad if more space is required. Please call or email your ad no later than the 15th of each month. Call the Ontonagon County MSU Extension office at 906-884-4386 or email msue66@msu.edu.

For Sale—Kverneland Model 7517 Individual round bale wrapper, self loading, traveler type. Only 817 bales, always shedded. Phone (906) 644-2385

For Sale—2 Commercial Angus Heifers \$2,000.00 each. Due in May AI Sired and AI Bred. Veesser Farm 906-466-2512

For Sale—Angus Bulls, Genez Sired. Phone: (906) 249-1507 Dan or (906) 249-1069 Thad

### REMINDER!

Plan now for the FFA Alumni Consignment auction!  
Get that equipment out from behind the barn now

**Ad registration deadline is April 11, 2015**

Plenty of time to do a little fix-up/tune-up!

**AUCTION: Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> starting at NOON**

Havelka's Construction

On Hwy 41

Just south of Wallace, MI.

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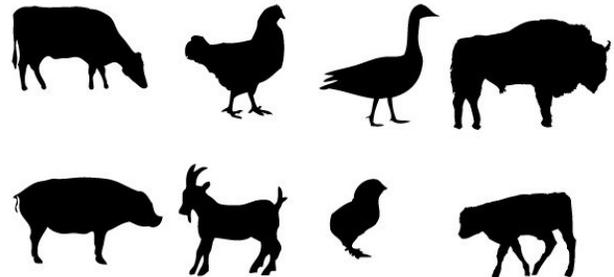
**BUY OR SELL!**

## NOTICE

### W. Alger County Farmers



The Michigan Department of Natural Resources – Wildlife Division is seeking a partnership with the local agricultural community. The Au Train Wildlife Refuge has 232 acres of hay fields and 145 additional acres that were once farmed. Wildlife Division would like to determine how many farmers would be interested in a sharecropping partnership. Land may be available lease free. At this point, we are attempting to determine the level of interest. Please contact the Marquette Operations Service Center at (906) 228-6561 and leave your name and contact information no later than March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015. A follow up meeting will be held locally once we determine the number of interested partners. For questions please ask for Brian or Bill. Thank you.



## Super Duper Yooper Pig Sale

Johnson Brothers Sale Barn

3740 18th Road

Escanaba, MI

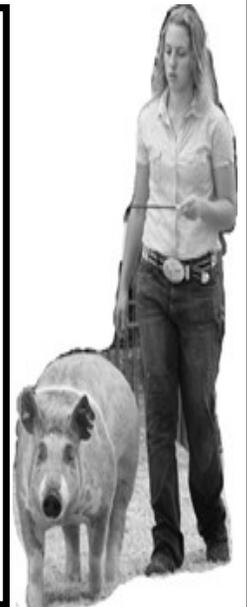
April 18, 2015

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:  
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## Key Strategies for Long-term Success on Your Farm

*Commodity markets have adjusted over the last 12 months, have you? Here are 10 strategies for long-term success on your farm.*

Dennis Pennington, Michigan State University Extension

At the recent **Great Lakes Crop Summit** held in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, Purdue University agricultural economist **Mike Boehlje** spoke to a crowd of more than 700 farmers and agribusiness representatives about 10 key strategies for long-term success. Boehlje, a farmer himself, gave an optimistic yet realistic assessment of agriculture from a financial standpoint. He recognizes that while agriculture is a thriving industry in the United States, there are ups and downs and commodity markets specifically may have hit a bump in the road. Gone are the days of \$6 per bushel corn. Input prices are up, so are cash rents and investment in farm equipment and capital improvements like tile drainage and irrigation. In a refreshingly original manner, he walked throughout the aisles asking farmers questions during his presentation to help make his points. Here is a summary of the 10 strategies he discussed from my perspective.

### Create value for your customer

First, understand your customer. Ask them what you can do to enhance value to them. Differentiate the level of service you provide to them. Can you deliver a specific quality, provide storage and be able to deliver just in time when they need it. Can you provide your customers with any value-enhanced products?

### Focus on a strategy

What strategy can work best for your farm? Operational excellence (low cost producer)? Customer intimacy (providing value to the customer)? Product or process innovation? Pick a strategy that you are good at and work on it. It will be different for every farm or operation.

### Increase asset utilization (asset turnover)

We all like new paint, but \$4 corn will not buy much new equipment. Lease rather than buy – this saves capital. Perhaps a joint venture or share machinery agreement can be used with neighbors and friends rather than each buying your own. Outsource or hire custom farm operators for some tasks. Increase gross income without investing a dime. There are no other industries that would invest the amount of money in equipment and let it set for the number of hours per year as we do in agriculture. Share combine with a farmer in Indiana – so we don't have conflicts on when we need to use the combine. Know your asset turnover ratio – improve it! That will grow your business.

### Increase your margins - buy right

This is the first and most important factor in determining cost of production. This is much more important than trying to outguess the markets. You have much more control over what you pay for goods and services than you do trying to hit the high price in the market. "Market" your crop rather than price it. Provide any added customer benefits or value you can. Control costs and employ best management practices and technology.

### Grow volume or sales (intensification)

Increase productivity. Try to get more volume with less investment. Perhaps a joint venture for size or volume may help you to get new market access. Major companies don't quantify business growth by number of acres or number of sows – it is topline; how much gross sales or bottom line – how much profit did they achieve. Use flow planners and develop standard operating procedures (SOP).

## Manage money or capital

Protect working capital (current assets minus current liabilities). This is your ability to pay your bills and debt. Do you have enough cash flow? Carefully use debt – perhaps lengthen repayment periods. Try to get fixed interest rate loans. Evaluate lease versus buy options. You need about 25-30 percent of gross sales in cash – this protects against downturns and gives you opportunities to invest during tough times. Repayment capacity – farmers want to pay it back faster than they should. We want to be debt free. When times are good, can pay it off that fast, but when times are not good, will have trouble remaining solvent.

## Use your time efficiently

Focus on management. Hire skilled employees and provide training and education for employees and treat them as employees, not hired hands. Hire them for their "head," not their "hands." Use scheduling and work flow planners and develop standard operating procedures (SOP).

## Manage operating risk

Do what you are good at. Make sure you have proper insurance (both crop and liability).

## Get smart

Use consultants – how many farms have chief financial officers (CFO)? If you don't have the time, hire someone that can provide these services. A CFO provides information needed to make purchasing decisions, loan repayment capacity, equipment purchases, and manages the financial health of farm. Network with successful farmers and agri-businesses. Develop your own management skills.

## Think like a CEO

What matters most? People. Money. Relationships. Strategy. Make decisions based on these company assets, not personal preferences, needs or wants.

The Michigan State University Extension Farm Information Resource Management (FIRM) team can provide assistance and resources for farm management topics including Farm Bill, cost of production, budgeting, crop insurance and many other topics. To learn more, visit the FIRM website.

This article was published by **Michigan State University Extension**. For more information, visit <http://www.msue.msu.edu>. To contact an expert in your area, visit <http://expert.msue.msu.edu>, or call 888-678-3464.



## **March 2015 - FSA News**

### **HAS EXTREME COLD WEATHER EFFECTED YOUR LIVESTOCK?**

The 2014 Farm Bill authorized the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) to provide benefits to livestock producer for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather. LIP payments are equal to 75 percent of the market value of the applicable livestock on the day before the date of death of the livestock as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture.

To be eligible for LIP, a livestock producer must have legally owned the livestock on the day the livestock died and report the loss no later than 60 calendar days from the ending date of the applicable adverse weather event. Applicants must provide adequate proof that the eligible livestock deaths occurred as a direct result of an eligible adverse weather event. Producers will also need to provide verifiable beginning and ending inventory records as proof of death. Documentation of the number and kind of livestock that have died may include:

- Purchase records
- Veterinarian records
- Bank or other loan documents
- Production records
- Records assembled for tax purposes
- Property tax records
- Private insurance documents
- Photographs or video records to document loss, dated if possible
- Contemporaneous producer records existing at the time of the adverse weather event
- Dairy herd improvement records

### **NAP DEADLINE FOR SPRING PLANTED SMALL GRAIN CROPS – MARCH 15, 2015**

Has natural disaster like drought, excessive rain, frost, freeze, or high winds caused crop losses or prevented planting? Did this impact your bottom line? Crops not insurable under Risk Management Agency CAT Crop Insurance are covered under NAP and can be purchased for \$250 per crop and a maximum of \$750 per county.

- The deadline for purchasing your 2015 NAP policies for: Peas, Oats/Barley for Forage, Sorghum, Beans, Potatoes, Triticale, Vegetables, Corn Grain in Chippewa, Barley Grain in Luce is March 15, 2015.

### **CHANGES IN FARMING OPERATIONS**

If you have bought or sold land, or if you have picked up or dropped rented land from your operation, make sure you report the changes to your FSA office within 30 days of the changes. You need to provide a copy of your deed or recorded land contract for purchased property. Failure to maintain accurate records with FSA on all land you have an interest in can lead to possible ineligibility and penalties. Making the record changes now will save you time in the spring and ensure that no late certification fees are incurred. Update signature authorization when changes in the operation occur. Producers are reminded to contact the office of a change in operations on a farm so that records can be kept current and accurate.

### **BEGINNING FARMER LOANS**

FSA assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
  - Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
  - Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

Additional program information, loan applications, and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

### **DON'T MISS THE DEADLINE – Important Dates to Remember**

March 15, 2014 – Deadline to purchase NAP coverage for Peas, Oats/Barley for Forage, Sorghum, Beans, Potatoes, Triticale, Vegetables, Corn Grain in Chippewa, Barley Grain in Luce.

March 31, 2015 – Final date to make Program Election for ARC/PLC

Mid-April 2015 – Through Summer 2015 – Producers sign ARC/PLC contracts for 2014 and 2015 crop years

### **GREAT INTEREST RATES: Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL)**

**Remember: these loans are now available for Hay/Forage Storage as well as traditional grain storage!**

February's Interest Rates:

- 1.875 percent for 7 years with a loan of \$100,000 or less
- 2.000 percent for 10 years with a loan of \$100,000 - \$250,000
- 2.125 percent for 12 years with a loan of \$250,000 - \$500,000

Contact your local FSA county office for March's interest rates

It is also important to be aware of what some food safety auditors may consider to be raw manure. In some cases, food safety auditors have considered fish emulsion to be raw manure. If using fish emulsion, be sure you have documented assurance from the supplier that it contains no detectable generic E. coli. This documented assurance should be in the form of an analysis report. As an additional precaution, Michigan State University Extension recommends delivering the fish emulsion through a drip line or other means where there is no direct contact of the fish emulsion with the edible portion of the plant.



## 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 2014 breeding season after the severe winter.*

*Frank Wardynski  
Ruminant Extension Educator*

Annually, about 20% of bulls do not pass breeding soundness exams. Last year, 25% of tested bulls failed. Over the past 10 years beef cow production costs and feeder calf prices have risen to historically high levels. Using infertile bulls will result in cows not becoming pregnant during the breeding season, fewer calves to sell and more cows being fed without offsetting income.

Fertility testing bulls can be conducted for less than \$5.00 per cow. That's really cheap compared to the costs associated with open cows. With current prices for feeder calves and pregnant cows, open cows will be very costly. 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. 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, Ontonagon, Iron River**

**May 8, Escanaba**

To schedule an appointment, contact Frank Wardynski, Ruminant Extension Educator with Michigan State University at [wardynsk@anr.msu.edu](mailto:wardynsk@anr.msu.edu) or 906-884-4386.

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## U.P. Dairy Capitol Vet Clinic Coordinates Meeting

Barry Wehner of U.P. Dairy Capitol Vet Clinic has coordinated a luncheon meeting sponsored by Zoetis; And invited Michigan State University to share on the program set for April 7, 2015 at the Hereford and Hops Restaurant in Escanaba starting at 11:30 EDT, 10:30 CDT.

Phil Durst, Michigan State University Dairy Extension Educator will discuss Bovine Leukemia Virus: Should You be Concerned. Katelyn Thompson MSUE Farm Business Management Educator will follow and address Animal Handling Tips for Employee Training Programs. The Zoetis sponsored lunch will begin at 1:00 EDT/12:00 CDT with a calf care management program to follow. Dr. Wallace of Zoetis will discuss newer calf care management practices. All dairy farmers are invited regardless of their associated vet clinic.

**RSVP is required by April 1. To RSVP**, contact Frank Wardynski at the Ontonagon County Extension Office, 906-884-4386 or [wardynsk@anr.msu.edu](mailto:wardynsk@anr.msu.edu) or call U.P. Dairy Capitol Vet Clinic at 906-753-4192.

## Dealing with Irrigated Crops and Food Safety

*When implementing irrigation practices to produce crops, growers should be mindful that the water being used doesn't contaminate produce with food-borne illnesses.*

Posted on **March 4, 2015** by **Phil Tocco**, Michigan State University Extension

The unpredictable nature of weather makes irrigation a necessity with some crops. How you irrigate can have a dramatic effect on food safety. Where food safety is concerned, [Michigan State University Extension](#) advises a number of considerations that must be planned for when irrigating crops.

### Method of irrigation

With all other risk factors being equal, overhead irrigation poses the most risk of contaminating a crop. Surface irrigation, such as exposed drip tape on top of the soil, is less of a contamination risk. Finally, irrigation delivered in a closed system, such as buried drip tape or drip tape under plastic, poses almost no risk of contamination.

The difference is so profound in level of risk that it is reflected in the [Food Safety Modernization Act](#) requirements. Water that is applied overhead or via a method where water may contact the plant must be tested and kept under a certain threshold. Water that is applied under plastic or through buried drip tape has no such requirements.

### Plant growth stage

If the plant is in a vegetative state or is more than a month from harvest, then there is a relatively low risk of contaminating the crop. If, however, the crop is within two weeks of harvest or there are fruit present on the plant, the risk of contamination is increased significantly.

### Water sources

Municipal and well water sources are the safest in terms of potential contamination. Ponds are an intermediate risk while rivers and streams pose the greatest risk to contamination. It's important to remember that risk is a reflection of how easily an existing pathogen can get through to the crop after harvest. Just because you utilize a high risk source, method or plant growth stage does not mean you are destined to contaminate the crop. If you employ a water test and it shows low or no generic E. coli numbers, then there is little chance of contamination. Understanding irrigation water risks is complex and very specific your farm's practices. If you have difficulty understanding your risk, contact the [Agrifood Safety Work Group](#) at [gaps@msu.edu](mailto:gaps@msu.edu) or 517-788-4292. To obtain more information about irrigation water risks, ask for guidance document AFSM033-01.

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## Sanitation is Critical to Prevent Plant Diseases

### Part 1: Greenhouse sanitation

*Learn about proper sanitation in the greenhouse and how to recognize vegetable disease symptoms.*

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. Sanitation refers to any practice that aims to prevent the spread of pathogens by removing diseased and asymptomatic infected tissue (not showing symptoms but in close proximity with diseased plants), as well as decontaminating tools, equipment and washing hands.

Sanitation is critical to prevent plant diseases in the greenhouse and the field. Michigan State University Extension recommends training your employees on practices that can reduce pathogen inoculum, or “seeds” of the pathogen. Consistent and effective sanitation leads to healthy plants.

#### Sanitation in the greenhouse

Sanitation is important year round, but prior to the beginning of a new season when the greenhouse is empty, a new opportunity to improve greenhouse sanitation awaits you. **The greenhouse floor can harbor pathogens** and therefore exposed soil must be avoided. An effective practice is to have concrete or gravel floors. Some other barriers are available – weed cloth or plastic – but concrete is a good, long-term investment.

**Avoid accumulation of any plant debris or weeds** inside and outside the greenhouse. Debris can harbor pathogens that quickly become the source of inoculum for healthy plants. Weeds can serve as alternate hosts for diseases and insects during the winter and early spring months. Weeds become the bridge for diseases and insects between two growing seasons.

**Raised benches will reduce the possibility of inoculum splash from the floor** to the plants on plug trays or pots on benches. Metal benches are preferred because they are less porous and therefore easy to clean. Disinfection, when done properly, can decrease the population of pathogens or nuisance organisms like algae present on various surfaces.

**Initial and frequent bench sanitation is needed.** Initial sanitation includes surface disinfection prior to introducing plant material into the greenhouse. Start by removing any residues or plant debris (those containing organic matter). Wash benches, walls and floors with soapy water and rinse (power wash if possible). Apply the selected disinfectant, taking into account their properties (see below). Remember, materials listed for surface disinfection can give your greenhouse a clean start, but most of them do not have residual activity. During the season, sanitation focuses on frequent collection, bag and removal of potting residue, plant debris and weeds from the greenhouse premises. Surface sanitation must be done prior to vegetable transplant production begins. Remember, always read the label and follow manufacturer instructions.

\*Times and method according to label specifications.

\*\*It is best NOT to reuse containers, especially if disease was problematic in previous seasons. If reusing containers, clean flats and pots thoroughly with soapy water and scrub to eliminate organic matter (soiless media, etc.) prior to disinfection. Then submerge in a bleach solution for 10 to 30 minutes and rinse thoroughly to avoid causing damage to seed or seedlings (phytotoxicity). Change the bleach solution every two hours (maximum).

Before entering the greenhouse, disinfect tools, boots and any other equipment. Footbaths with a disinfectant at each greenhouse entry point can prevent the introduction of pathogens from shoes or boots. Change disinfectant in footbaths daily. If you chose to use foot mats, wash and disinfect them frequently, weekly at a minimum. Alternatively, offer disposable boots to anyone entering the greenhouses.

**Clean tools** during use can help minimize the plant-to-plant spread of diseases caused by several bacteria and viruses. Hand-washing and sanitation can minimize pathogen spread. Provide hand-washing stations equipped with clean water and soap. Careful hand-washing is critical to minimize plant pathogen spread. For example tobacco mosaic virus (TMV) can be transmitted to tomatoes and peppers if hand-washing is not adequate after smoking cigarettes. Tobacco mosaic virus is very stable and can be present on dry tobacco in cigarettes.

Sanitation requires detail-oriented employees. **Always inspect plant material when it enters the greenhouse and prior to planting in the field.** Plant material can carry diseases and insect pests, introducing them to clean greenhouse facilities or new fields. Train your employees 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 vegetable plants in the greenhouse and the field, the more chances issues can be identified earlier.

#### Greenhouse sanitation practices summary

- Disinfect surfaces such as greenhouse benches, potting stations, etc. before transplant production season.
- Remove plant debris by collecting, bagging and removing.
- Remove infected plants as soon as symptoms appear by collecting, bagging and removing from greenhouse premises.
- Disinfect knives, shears and other harvesting tools.
- Frequent hand-washing with clean water and soap.
- Brush soil particles off from shoes when moving in between greenhouses (floor mats, baths, brushes or boot covers are handy).

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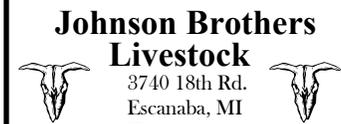
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## Meetings & Events Calendar

### March

March 20 Welcome Spring!  
March 29 Palm Sunday

### Registered Maine Anjou and Angus CLAY KNOLL FARMS



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### April

**April 5** Happy Easter!  
**April 7** 11:30 am EDT, 10:30 CDT Luncheon Meeting UP Dairy Capital Vet, Hereford and Hops Restaurant in Escanaba, MI  
**April 11** Ad Registration deadline for FFA Alumni Consignment auction, call 906-753-4192 for more information  
**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.

### May

**May 3** FFA Alumni auction Hwy 41 south of Wallace, MI Buy and Sell!  
**May 4** Breeding Bull Soundness Exam Cook, MI. See page 5 for more information  
**May 5** Breeding Bull Soundness Exam Garden and Chatham. See page 5 for more information  
**May 6** Breeding Bull Soundness Exam Bark River. See page 5 for more information  
**May 7** Breeding Bull Soundness Exam Pelkie, Ontonagon and Iron River. See page 5 for more information  
**May 8** Breeding Bull Soundness Exam Escanaba. See page 5 for more information  
**May 25** Memorial Day

### U.P. Agriculture Connection

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Published monthly by  
Ontonagon County  
MSU Extension  
725 Greenland Road  
Ontonagon, MI 49953