CHIPPEWA VALLEY AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION REPORT

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WI Farm Fun Facts

Labor Day is Sept. 2. The holiday is a creation of the labor movement in the late 1800s, and it was designated a holiday on June 29, 1894, when President Grover Cleveland signed the bill making the first Monday in September a national holiday.

◊ In May 2012, the job with the most US workers was retail sales, with 4.34 million employees. Farming wasn't in the top 10.

◊ By comparison, in 1910 the top occupation was farmer (owner or tenant), with 6.13 million workers. The second and third largest occupations were paid farm laborers (2.83 million) and unpaid family farm workers (2.51 million). Source: US Census Bureau

Upcoming Meetings—contact local Ag Agent for info:

September 4—Chippewa Valley Variety Trial and Dairy Feeding Field Day, Chippewa Falls on Wednesday, September 4 at the Chippewa County Farm UWEX trial plots from 11:30am to 2:00pm with lunch served from noon to 12:30. With a growing season that has resulted in late planting due to wet conditions and current dry conditions, the focus of the field day will be on crop and feed management. For more information, contact the Chippewa County UW-Extension Office at 715-726-7950, ext. 5 or Jerry Clark, Crops & Soils Educator.

September 4—Challenges with this Year's Corn Crop , Baldwin. Area dairy, livestock, and cash grain farmers are invited to attend the Challenges with this Year's Corn Crop meeting co-hosted by the UW- Extension and AgStar Financial Services. The meeting is an opportunity to discuss crop insurance adjustments and reporting, making decisions on immature corn, and 2013's weather effects on corn silage production, quality, feed value, and pricing. The event will be held at the American Legion Hall, 410 Maple Street, Baldwin. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m., with the program starting at 10:00 a.m. sharp. There is no cost for the workshop. Pre-registrations are requested for the lunch count to either the St. Croix Co UW-Extension office at 715-531-1930 or to AgStar at 866-577-1831.

September 17—Grant Programs for Farmers & Food Entrepreneurs, Baldwin. Join us for a workshop designed to help you identify which grants or other financial options might be right for you. This workshop will discuss ways to plan your project and strengthen your application. Specific grant programs to be covered include: USDA's Value Added Producer Grant program, USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education grant program, USDA's Specialty Crop Block Grant program, and Wisconsin DATCP's Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin grant program. Registration fee of $15 will cover the cost of lunch and materials. Workshop will be held at St. Croix County Ag Center, Baldwin. For more information, contact St. Croix County UW-Extension office at 715-531-1930.

Randy's Rumors . .

Randy Knapp
Chippewa County Agricultural Agent

Making a Feed Inventory

The 2013 cropping season has been quite extraordinary to say the least. With a record amount of rainfall in the spring, plantings fell behind. In the corn crop, some dairymen have already harvested corn silage due to dry weather. Others will have a normal yield. The hay crop follows the same trend, winter kill and low yields for some, with others having normal yields.

The end result is not just lower quality feeds on some farms, but feed deficits also exist. Combine that with volatile grain and protein costs and the need for managing feed costs becomes critical. One step to aid in feed cost management is doing a feed inventory.

A feed inventory establishes your current stock of various feed ingredients on hand. The process involves determining the volume of each feed stored and then multiplying by the stored density to yield a weight of feed in storage.

For example, let's assume we have silage in a bunker with a dimension of 30' x 10' x 50'. Its volume is 15,000 cu ft. If the silage has a stored density of 40 lb/cu ft (as fed), the weight of feed in the bunker is:
15,000 cu ft x 40 lb/cu ft = 600,000 lb = 300 T as fed

There are several ways to do a feed inventory:
1) Pencil and paper
2) Computer spreadsheets
3) Commercial software that integrates with your feed weighing system.

A feed inventory done today will likely include corn silage still in the field. Regardless of the method employed to calculate current feed in storage this starting point can be used to estimate and plan the use of feed stocks.

It allows a producers to look at some "what if" scenarios.

- What if haylage increases in a ration, how long will it last?
- What if a cheaper feed is added to supplement supplies, will it last until next harvest?
- What if the corn silage storage losses are greater than usual, will there be enough?

Addressing or planning for these types of questions before they actually happen can help ease stress and also give producers greater control over feeding decisions. To determine if feeds will last to next harvest multiply the feed out rate (i.e. tons/day) by the number of days until next harvest and subtract this from current inventory. A negative value means feeds will need to be purchased, a positive value means there is excess.

Producers needing to procure feeds should develop purchasing strategies that may include forward contracting and utilizing future price protection against rising feed costs.

Farmers short on feed inventory could consider culling some of the herd, rather than buying feed. Every individual operation will need to evaluate their own situation regarding cash flow and long term profitability.

It is easy to overlook some steps when tracking feed inventories. First, use realistic rations that have been formulated by a nutritionist. When reducing inventories after feeding, use the actual ration fed. Don't forget that there is feed going to the dry cows and heifers, and they help to reduce feed inventories as well. It is easy to overlook those groups when tracking inventories, but they do contribute to the feed consumption. Changes in the ration will occur, and that could impact the length of time a feedstuff will last. Don't forget to recalculate the feed lasting to next harvest when there are any changes made to rations.

Farmers that have excess feed inventory may want to consider harvesting corn for grain instead of corn silage and selling grain or other excess feedstuffs considering today's market prices.

Feed inventory tracking is a simple method that improves feed management decisions. In a time of volatile grain and protein prices, knowing what is on hand, how long it will last and the ability to plan for shortfall is critical to a producer's feed management decision and ultimately profitability.

For further information contact your local Extension Office.—*Adapted from: "Making a Feed Inventory", Brian Holmes, UWEX; "Feed Inventory Tracking: Underutilized But Critical", Robert Goodling, PSU.*

Jerry's Jargon

Jerry Clark
Chippewa County Crops & Soils Educator

Growing Season Continues to Bring Challenges to Corn Silage Production

The 2013 growing season is without a doubt going to go down as one of the most interesting and challenging seasons in recent memory. Heavy snow on May 2, above average rainfall through June, and near record drought in July and into August has made for enough crop production headaches this year. The next hurdle is to harvest an uneven crop of corn silage and make the best quality feed possible.

During extreme dry conditions, the corn plant can often look drier than it actually is. Harvesting corn for silage just because it looks dry can be a big mistake as the crop is usually too high in moisture for good fermentation. The best estimate for determining when to harvest corn for silage is have a sample tested for whole-plant moisture. Chopping a few stalks and removing the moisture is the best way to gauge the water content of the corn plants.

Most hybrids require about 55 to 60 days to develop from the silk stage to physiological maturity. Hybrid maturity differences in development time occur primarily from emergence to silking, not from silking to maturity. Growers are concerned when corn does not reach the silk stage until early August or later. Killing frosts can easily occur by late September, so corn silking in early August would not be safe from major yield reductions due to frost until October. Knowing when corn silks and figuring about 42 to 47 days to ½ milkline can give an estimate when corn may be ready for ensiling. However, this does not matter if the corn plant does not have a cob on it! Again, using a whole-plant moisture test is the best way to determine when corn is ready to be chopped.

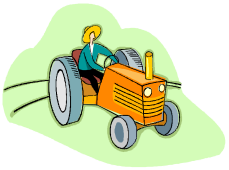
Another concern the dry conditions has brought with it is the risk of nitrate poisoning to livestock. As feed supplies tighten, green chopping or feeding chopped corn directly to animals is tempting and often necessary. Taking into account the risk of nitrate toxicity and managing the ration for animals can reduce the potential for nitrate poisoning.

Nitrogen is a mobile nutrient and when converted to nitrate is dispersed through the plant and especially to the youngest leaves. When a drought occurs, nitrates are less mobile and tend to accumulate in the lower portion of the stalk. Nitrates tend to be particularly high the first few days after a drought-breaking rain. Forage should not be fed green-chopped for two weeks following the rain event to allow the plant to disperse nitrate and allow nitrate levels to drop to normal.

Nitrate is usually highest in the lower portion of the plant so chopping corn high to leave the bottom of the stalk in the field will lower nitrate. The ensiling process also decreases nitrate. Some nitrate will be lost as silo gas. This gas is hazardous to people and animals so do not enter the silo without thorough ventilation. In 30 to 60 days the nitrate level is decreased to half of the original amount.

Nitrate-N Content	Guidelines for feeding (dry matter basis)
Below 1000 ppm	Safe
1000-2000 ppm	Limit this feed to half of total ration
2000-3000 ppm	Limit this feed to one-third of total ration
3000-4000 ppm	Limit this feed to one-fourth of total ration
Over 4000 ppm	Special caution needed; ensile to reduce nitrate

Mark's Musings...



Mark Hagedorn,
Eau Claire County
Agricultural Agent

Improving the Quality and Profitability of Drought-stressed Corn Silage

Drought-stressed corn can be a good source of high quality silage. The trick is to manage it carefully—from harvest to packing and storage. Here is a quick guide to ensuring high feed values and profit from drought-stressed corn silage.

1. Closely monitor plant moisture content
Standing drought-stressed corn can be deceptive. Even if it looks dry and dead, it can contain over 70% moisture. Start testing moisture levels 2-3 weeks prior to harvest. You want the dry matter at cutting to be between 30-38%, depending on the type of storage. Once the plant dies, it can dry down quickly, so be prepared to harvest fast.

2. Be aware of varying levels of crop stress, moisture and nutrient content
Varying soil type and conditions create variable crop stress, moisture and nutrient content within one field. You want to continuously test for moisture during harvesting. During feed out, increase nutritional testing so you can make adjustments for variability and reduce the risk of feed out problems.

3. Pack, pack and pack again!
Drought stressed corn silage packs like grass or cereal silage. To increase the packing density, additional weight and time with the packing tractor may be needed.

4. Test nitrate levels
Drought-stressed corn is often high in nitrates. Nitrates tend to accumulate in the lower stalk, so cutting at 12-15 inches can decrease nitrate in the silage. But this might not be practical because it will reduce your tonnage. Note that nitrates levels can spike after rain, so it is best to wait three to five days after rain before you start harvesting the crop. Silage fermentation can reduce nitrate levels by 20-50%. Allow at least 4 weeks post ensiling for nitrate levels to fall before feeding. Test silage for nitrates prior to feeding and periodically during feeding to assure nitrate levels are below detrimental levels.

5. Be aware of dangerous silo gas
Silo gas is always a concern with corn silage and increases with higher nitrate levels in drought stressed corn. Nitrates can turn into nitrous dioxide, an extremely toxic gas. Even brief exposure to silo gas may cause permanent injury or death. Proceed with extreme caution if you notice a faint, brown-tinted low hanging gas, stained forage or a bleach-like odor. If you detect any of these signs, leave the area immediately.

6. Look for signs of Mycotoxin in the field
Drought stressed corn is particularly vulnerable to mold and/or yeast spore invasion into the ear. This typically takes place when corn pollinates under drought stress and high heat.

7. Monitor closely even if crop conditions improve
Severe drought stress causing abnormal plant and ear development requires careful management even if more normal rainfall returns later in the season. Mycotoxin threats may actually increase. Expect the crop to have lower starch, higher but more digestible fiber, and elevated plant sugars.

8. Don't underestimate the value of drought-stressed corn
Although grain content may be low or not present, drought-stressed corn silage can have up to 75-90% the nutritional value of normal corn silage.

Tip: Ask your nutritionist for advice on feeding with drought-stressed corn silage.

Katie's Korner . . .

Katie Wantoch,
Dunn County Agricultural Agent

Farm Succession

Farm succession is a process that can take years to implement and complete. For many farmers it is a process that happens once or twice in a career. In comparison, daily farm tasks and production management decisions can provide more immediate gratification to managers. For these reasons, it is easy to delay and avoid retirement and farm succession planning.

Yet the need and requests for farm succession education and facilitation continues to increase. Farmers are considerably older than the rest of the U.S. labor force. Over 25% of all farmers, and about half of all agricultural landlords are 65 or older, compared with only about 3% of the overall labor force. Older farm operators and landowners operate over one-third of all farm assets and are staying on the farm longer than previous generations (Mishra, Durst and El-Ostra 2005). The 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture noted that the fastest growing group of farm operators is those 65 years and older, with a 22% increase over the 2002 Ag Census data. While Wisconsin principal operators' average age is one of the younger averages, Wisconsin's average age of the principal operator continues to move upward, from 52 years in 1997 to an average 55 years in 2007.

When comparing the age of farmers across enterprises, it is not surprising to find younger principal operators of labor intensive livestock operations, such as hogs and dairy. Many times an older farmer will eliminate the labor intensive enterprise and switch to beef, eventually narrowing the enterprises to cropping and finally to just hay production. While this allows the older generation to continue farming into what is considered their retirement years, it does not allow the farm assets, especially the dairy assets, to remain as productive as they might have been if the farm had transitioned to a next generation. These Baby boomers' decisions and lack of succession plans may stall and discourage the Generation Xers, Ys and Millennials who want to continue the family tradition of farming and become full managers of the farm in their own right. If farm succession is a goal for this generation of dairy farmers, they need to begin earlier to discuss and develop a farm succession plan.

Over the past several years, UW Extension and the UW Center for Dairy Profitability have provided various farm succession educational workshops and programs. These programs were designed to build awareness of farm succession issues, increase knowledge, and begin the development of farm succession plans. However, UWEX agriculture agents receive requests from many farm families who need individual support to continue exploring the financial implications of farm succession, developing a true transition plan of management decisions and fully implementing all the components necessary for a successful farm succession plan.

Last year I participated in the International Farm Succession Network (IFTN) Farm Succession Coordinator Training program and assisted with the development of the Farm Succession Facilitator's Manual. Over the next several years there will be many intergenerational transfers that will encompass farm business assets. Knowing where to start can be the most challenging. If you are considering a farm succession, please feel free to contact me and I can facilitate your farm business with starting this process. I can be reached at the Dunn County UW-Extension office (715) 232-1636 or via email at katie.wantoch@ces.uwex.edu.

Town Hall Meetings to Review Impacts of Agricultural Equipment on Roads Continue Around the State

The size and weight of agricultural equipment and the potential impact it has on public roads is the subject of a series of town hall meetings being held throughout the state. The public is reminded that three meetings are coming up this week and next.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) are urging the agricultural community, local highway officials and others to attend the meetings. Sessions will provide detailed information on the recommendations of a special study group that reviewed size and weight limits and other issues related to agricultural equipment, also known as implements of husbandry (IoH).

Agricultural equipment is getting larger and heavier which helps in more efficient farm production, but it can also impact pavement and road structures. WisDOT, in partnership with DATCP, convened the IoH Study Group, involving over 20 stakeholders representing various transportation and farm organizations, equipment manufacturers, law enforcement, local officials and the University of Wisconsin-Madison/ Extension.

Two of the more challenging issues for the study group were establishing maximum size and gross vehicle and axle weight limits. Some of the group's recommendations include:
Maximum width of IoH equipment of 15 feet. Equipment up to 17 feet wide may be operated without written authorization when they meet safety requirements to ensure safe passage by other road users.

Maximum width of IoH commercial motor vehicles of 10 feet.

Maximum height of 13 feet 6 inches. Equipment greater than this height may be operated without written authorization. The operator is responsible for ensuring there are no conflicts with overhead obstructions such as wires or structures.

Maximum length of 60 feet for single IoH equipment; 100 feet for combinations of two IoH; and 70 feet for a combination of three IoH.

Expanding the weight allowance for IoH up to 15 percent over the limits established by the Federal Bridge Formula, except where posted or during spring thaw. Safety, the capacity of roads and bridges and consideration of commonly used IOH equipment guided the recommendations for size. Road width, overhead wires, bridge standards and the ability to safely maneuver through turns determined the new size parameters. The recommendation on weight allowance is based on engineering analysis and research on the damage done to roads as a result of increased weight.

The town hall meetings offer a chance to ask questions and provide feedback on the proposed size and weight limits. In addition, the meetings will share other recommendations such as new definitions for IoH, operator requirements for vehicles that exceed base definitions and best practices such as pipelines, nurse trucks and one-way roads.

Three upcoming meetings, co-hosted by the University of Wisconsin Extension, will take place from **7 to 8:30 p.m.** on the dates and locations listed below:

September 3 – Chippewa County Courthouse Large Assembly Room, 711 North Bridge Street, Chippewa Falls

September 4—Belmont Conference Center, 102 W. Mound ViewAvenue, Belmont WI

If you are unable to attend the meeting and would like more information or to comment, contact Rory Rhinesmith, Deputy Administrator, Division of Transportation System Development at (608) 267-7111. Written comments regarding the project can be mailed to Mr. Rhinesmith, WisDOT, 4802 Sheboygan Avenue, Room 451, PO Box 7910, Madison, WI 53707-7910. The meeting sites are accessible to wheelchairs. Citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing and require an interpreter should call at least three working days prior to the meeting.

The complete IoH Study Group report is on the Wisconsin DOT web site(http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/business/ag/index.htm). Also, an online feedback survey is available until September 8. Check the web site for details.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact Cheryl Skjolaas, Interim Director and Agricultural Safety Specialist , UW Center for Agricultural Safety and Health, 460 Henry Mall, Madison WI 53706, 608-265-0568, Email: skjolaas@wisc.edu
Website: http://fyi.uwex.edu/agsafety

Chippewa Valley Variety Trial and Dairy Feeding Field Day September 4

The Chippewa County UW-Extension Office is hosting a Chippewa Valley Variety Trial and Dairy Feeding Field Day on Wednesday, September 4 at the Chippewa County Farm UWEX trial plots from 11:30am to 2:00pm with lunch served from noon to 12:30. With a growing season that has resulted in late planting due to wet conditions and current dry conditions, the focus of the field day will be on crop and feed management.

Speakers and topics at the field day include; Dr. Joe Lauer, UW-Extension Corn Specialist, "Handling uneven and drought stressed corn"; Dr. Randy Shaver, UW-Extension Dairy Nutritionist, "Navigating the 2013-2014 dairy feed situation"; and Jerry Clark, Chippewa County UW-Extension Crops and Soils Educator, "Growing high sugar sorghum-Is it a crop for you?"

Whole plant corn silage moisture testing will be available at the field day. Stalk chopping is available on site. Farmers are encouraged to bring in 4 corn stalk samples per hybrid for moisture testing.

There is no cost to attend and a lunch sponsored by Northwestern Bank, Agri-Tech Services, and AgStar Financial Services will be served from 12:00p.m.to 12:30p.m. 2.0 CCA continuing education credits in crop production will be offered.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September

4 Chippewa Valley Variety Trial & Dairy Feeding Field Day, Chippewa County Farm UWEX Trial Plots
4 Challenges with this Year's Corn Crop , American Legion, Baldwin
11 Dunn County Hazardous Waste Collection, Colfax fairgrounds
12 Dunn County Hazardous Waste Collection, Dunn County Transfer Station, Menomonie
14 Eau Claire County Clean Sweep, WRR Environmental Services, Eau Claire
17 Grant Programs for Farmers & Food Entrepreneurs Workshop, St. Croix Co. Ag Center, Baldwin

October

1-5 World Dairy Expo, Alliant Energy Center, Madison, WI

November

12 UW Pest Management Update Meeting, 10 am-3 pm, Eagles Club, Lake Hallie/Chippewa Falls—Contact Jerry Clark at 715-726-7950
14 UW "Reproducing Profitability" Reproductive Management Workshop, 9:30 am to 3:30 pm, Eau Claire Expo Center, Eau Claire, WI - Contact Mark Hagedorn at 715-839-4712

December

3 UW Heifer Management Meeting, 1 pm – 3:30 pm, UW-Extension Office Altoona, WI - Contact Mark Hagedorn at 715-839-4712
5 Soil, Water, and Nutrient Management Update, 9:30 am to 3:00 pm, Eau Claire Expo Center, Eau Claire, WI - Contact Mark Hagedorn at 715-839-4712
11 UWEX Winning the Game:" Launch and Land Your Post-Harvest Grain Marketing Plan, 10 am-2:30pm, Dunn County Judicial Center, Menomonie —Contact Katie Wantoch
12 UWEX Winning the Game:" Launch and Land Your Post-Harvest Grain Marketing Plan, 10 am-2:30pm, Barron County—Contact Tim Jergenson

For statewide UW-Extension agriculture events, please visit http://bit.ly/ANRECalendar