UW Extension Cooperative Extension

Your county extension office

Chippewa Valley Agricultural Extension Report

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Inside this issue:

Your Farm Tells A Story, how are you telling it?

WI Farm Fun Facts

- Farmers receive how much money of each retail dollar spent on food that is eaten at home and away from home?
  Answer: $0.16

- Wisconsin's dairy industry accounts for what percent of all WI agriculture jobs?
  Answer: 40%

Spring is Here...So Why is it Still Snowing!

Mother Nature has dumped another several inches of snow onto the ground today. And while its very white and makes the landscape picturesque, that is okay in December but it is now April! Shouldn't we have the saying, "April showers bring May flowers." I guess this year we'll have snow showers that will bring us some flowers later this spring! It seems that this winter will never end, but at least we are not seeing cold temperatures during the day. So far we have had a nice melting of the snow, which is allowing it to sink into the ground.

Hopefully this melting trend will continue and the ground will be ready to plant soon. As you are getting your farm machinery prepared, you may need to become familiar with some recently signed Wisconsin legislation which updates the definition of **implements of husbandry (IOH),** extends weight limitations from a maximum single axle weight of 20,000 pounds to 23,000 and the maximum gross vehicle weight would go from 80,000 to 92,000 pounds. The bill also addresses length and width limits, safety concerns to lighting, and rules of the road.

The legislation would require farmers and large equipment operators to secure a 12-month permit from their local town, county or state unit of government, depending on the roads the equipment will be operated on. Safety is important and this recently signed Wisconsin legislation takes everyone's needs into consideration.

Farmers, agriculturists and local town officials are invited to attend a seminar to discuss this bill that updates state laws regarding farm machinery operating on Wisconsin roadways. The University of Wisconsin-Extension Dunn County and Dunn County Farm Bureau are hosting a presentation about these changes on **Monday, April 28th from 1 -3 p.m**. at the Dunn County Judicial Center, multipurpose room 1402, 615 Stoke Pkwy, Menomonie, WI 54751. Presenters will include:

• Paul Zimmerman, Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, Executive Director of Governmental Relations, will discuss the recently signed Wisconsin legislation and Farm Bureau lobbying efforts.

• Cheryl Skjolaas, UW-Extension Agricultural Safety Specialist, will discuss how these new laws and practices will affect the agriculture industry.

Registration is not required for this presentation. Refreshments and materials will be provided. For more information contact Katie Wantoch, UW-Extension Dunn County, katie.wantoch@ces.uwex.edu.

Greenhouse Gossip...Erin LaFaive, Eau Claire County Horticulture Educator

Container Gardening

Did you know you can grow vegetables, flowers, and herbs without a speck of lawn? It's called container gardening and is great for individuals that have limited mobility as plot gardening takes more bending, lifting, hauling, hoeing, weeding, etc. than some individuals can tolerate.

The benefit of growing plants in containers is that you can have more control over their environmental conditions by moving the container (if it isn't too heavy). For example, if the plant isn't receiving enough sun you can move it to a different location or if it's receiving too much sun you can move it to the shade.

The challenge with container gardens is that they require more water than plants grown in the ground. Especially during hot or windy weather you may need to water three times a day. The amount of water required depends on the size of the container and plant. This is especially true towards the end of the growing season. During this time you may notice the water runs out the bottom of the container very fast when watering. The reason is that the growing plant has created a more extensive root system which takes up more space in the container and the nutrients from the soil. Less soil means less water retention which also means more watering. The good news is by the time this happens harvesting is already or close to completion.

If you take a vacation you MUST have someone watering your plants while you are gone or else you will have a sad or dead looking container garden. Adding mulch such as bark chips around the plant helps to reduce moisture loss. Some people even set up drip systems that are on a timer. To determine if the soil is dry insert your finger about an inch down into the soil, if it feels dry water thoroughly. Watering thoroughly means watering until the water runs out the bottom of the container. Leave about an inch from the top of the pot free from dirt. This will help the water stay in place as it soaks into the soil rather than spill over the top.

There are many types of containers that can be used such as above ground pots, baskets, boxes, or barrels. Unglazed terracotta (orange clay pot) pots dry out quickly as the soil moisture gradually seeps through the clay walls. Try maintaining moisture by using a double-pot technique where a slightly smaller container is placed in a larger container with sand or pebbles in between.

The type of soil used is different than garden soil. If you will be moving your container around to capture more sun then try using lighter weight soilless mixes containing peat moss, perlite, and/or vermiculite. Soilless mixes have a tendency to dry out quicker. Pasteurized bagged soil mixes are free of harmful organisms and weed seeds that could compete with your plants.

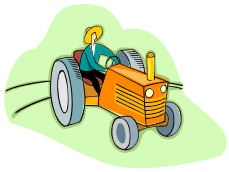
Some garden centers sell plants specifically for container gardens. These varieties are smaller than their garden counterparts. The larger the plant the larger the pot for example, corn, squash, and pumpkins would need large pots to accommodate their root systems. Tomatoes and peppers grow best in five gallon containers and annual flowers and smaller vegetables such as lettuce and snap beans grow well in two gallon containers. Combination containers are a great way to maximize space. This is a term used when containers have a mixture of plant types such as flowers and herbs or flowers and vegetables.

To make container gardening economical find containers around your house such as ice cream buckets. Proper water drainage is required to reduce root rot so make certain holes are on the bottom of the container. When using containers for vegetables make sure the container wasn't used for chemicals or other harmful substances that may be left in the container and contaminate the plant and thus your food.

For container size and light requirements for individual vegetables, flowers, and herbs use this weblink http://learningstore.uwex.edu/Container-Gardening-P381C0.aspx to find the publication on Container Gardening by H.C. Harrison.

Mark's Musings...

**Mark Hagedorn,
Eau Claire County
Agricultural Agent**



A Review of Biosecurity Fundamentals

Biosecurity; why to implement a biosecurity plan and how to get things in motion

The current outbreak of Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea virus (PEDv) in the United States and memories of the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak in the United Kingdom has attracted much media attention. Much animal suffering has occurred and millions of animals have been destroyed. Economic difficulties have been severe in the British agricultural communities, and the cost to that economy is now estimated at more than $10 billion. Avoiding a similar catastrophe in the U.S. has been and continues to be a priority for all those in animal agriculture. The heightened awareness of the importance of preventing infectious diseases from entering our herds and flocks has many people talking about and enacting biosecurity programs.

What is biosecurity?
In the context of animal agriculture, biosecurity is the series of management steps taken to prevent the introduction of infectious agents into a herd or flock. Biosecurity usually involves screening and testing incoming animals, some sort of quarantine or isolation for newly purchased or returning animals, and then finally some type of monitoring or evaluation system. Once an infectious agent is in a herd or flock a similar but slightly different set of management practices are employed to prevent the infectious agent from leaving the farm in animals or products. In some publications this is also included as part of biosecurity, while in some cases you may see this referred to as biocontainment.

Why is biosecurity important?
Biosecurity is important for a great number of reasons. First it is an essential aspect of on farm food safety programs. Keeping food products wholesome and of highest quality is important for the health and welfare of consumers. This helps to ensure consumer demand for product, and therefore ultimately the profitability of animal agriculture enterprises. Secondly, animals are healthier and more productive. This benefits the farming community through greater efficiency and profitability. Finally, a vibrant agricultural community is a positive influence on the economy of our state and nation, and an important resource in maintaining a healthy environment.

How do you start to develop a biosecurity plan?
The initial step in a biosecurity plan is to assess goals and key concerns of the farm. The producer along with his/her advisors needs to determine just what infectious agents are important in their plan. Diseases such as FMD are so devastating for the entire farming community that federal and state regulations and plans are in place to prevent such catastrophes. Foreign animal diseases require a special set of biosecurity plans because they could potentially cover such a broad range of animal species and territory. However, on the individual farm level a variety of common domestic bacteria and viruses can be identified as important disease problems and should be included in the biosecurity plan. On most dairy farms this would include diseases such as contagious mastitis, Johne's, *Salmonella spp*., Bovine Virus Diarrhea (BVD), Neospora, digital dermatitis, and a few others. Once the types of disease agents are identified, a risk assessment should be completed.

What is risk assessment?
Risk assessment is a way of determining the presence, distribution, and severity of a given disease. Once risk areas have been identified, appropriate control measures can be enacted. Acceptable levels of risk for a farm will be determined by what products are sold or what may be sold from the farm in the future. Typically this involves meat, milk, perhaps breeding animals, embryos, etc. Understanding what diseases are important for the sale of each of these products and understanding how disease may enter and spread within animal groups is the next step. This is followed by close evaluation of methods to prevent the disease from entering the herd from sources outside the farm. If key areas can be identified they are often call critical control points. Actions taken at these critical control points are the most effective way of implementing a biosecurity plan.

Who is involved?
In most cases the herd veterinarian works closely with the producer to develop and start the implementation of a biosecurity plan. However, each and every person who lives, works, or visits the farm has a stake and role in the biosecurity plan. To make a biosecurity plan effective and easier to follow it is important to adopt

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Jerry's Jargon

Jerry Clark
Chippewa County Crops & Soils Educator

Is this alfalfa stand good enough to keep?

With another long winter and cool temperatures still being registered, alfalfa fields are taking their time showing their status. We had plenty of prolonged snow cover which usually lowers the risk of winterkill or injury. However, our lesson was hopefully learned last year that alfalfa health can't be taken for granted and assessments of alfalfa stands are necessary to evaluate and estimate the health of fields. As the snow melts it will soon be time to assess alfalfa fields to determine the amount of winter injury, if any has occurred.

Keep in mind the points listed to below to help you assess alfalfa fields this spring.

- Slow Green Up - One of the most evident results of winter injury is that stands are slow to green up. If other fields in the area are starting to grow and yours are still brown, it is time to check those stands for injury.
- Asymmetrical Growth -Buds for spring growth are formed during the previous fall. If parts of an alfalfa root are killed and others are not, only the living portion of the crown will give rise to new shoots resulting in a crown with shoots on only one side or asymmetrical growth.
- Uneven Growth - During winter, some buds on a plant crown may be killed and others may not. The uninjured buds will start growth early while the injured buds must be replaced by new buds formed in spring. This will result in shoots of different height on the same plant, with the shoots from buds formed in spring several inches shorter than the shoots arising from fall buds.
- Root Problems - The best way to diagnose winter injury is by digging up plants and examining roots. Healthy roots should be firm and white in color with little evidence of root rot, Winter injured roots have a gray, water soaked appearance and/or a brown discoloration due to roots rot.. If the root is soft and water can be easily squeezed from the root it is most likely winter killed. If the root is firm but showing signs of rot it may still produce, depending on the extent of injury. If over 50% of the root is damaged, the plant will most likely die that year. If less than 50% is injured, the plant will likely survive for 1 or maybe 2 years depending on management and subsequent winter weather.

Also, while assessing for winter injury, take a stand count to determine if there are enough healthy plants to make the field productive.

Stems/ft^2	Action	Predicted Yield Potential (Assuming no winterkill)
>55	Stem density not affecting yield	Same as current year
40-55	Some yield reduction expected	If good health same as current year. If >30% root injury then significantly less
<39	Consider replacing stand	If good health same as current year. If >30% root injury then significantly less

Katie's Korner . . .

Katie Wantoch,
Dunn County Agricultural Agent

Farm Financial Statements

For years the major motivation for many agricultural producers in keeping farm financial records was to fill out a Schedule F for income taxes and to have the necessary books needed to obtain credit from lending institutions. To the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) minimum profits were reported and to the banker maximum profits were projected. With that motivation for record keeping, it is not likely that the records were of much use in making management decisions on the farm operation.

Today, a good set of financial records will do much more than satisfy the IRS or your banker. Today's successful farmers are using detailed financial statements to identify the most profitable farm enterprises for their operation, determine per unit production costs, track trends and financial progress in the business and to create comprehensive business plans. Accurate and detailed financial records can be used to more effectively manage cash flows, to make investment or liquidation decisions and to explore alternative uses of capital investments in the farm operation.

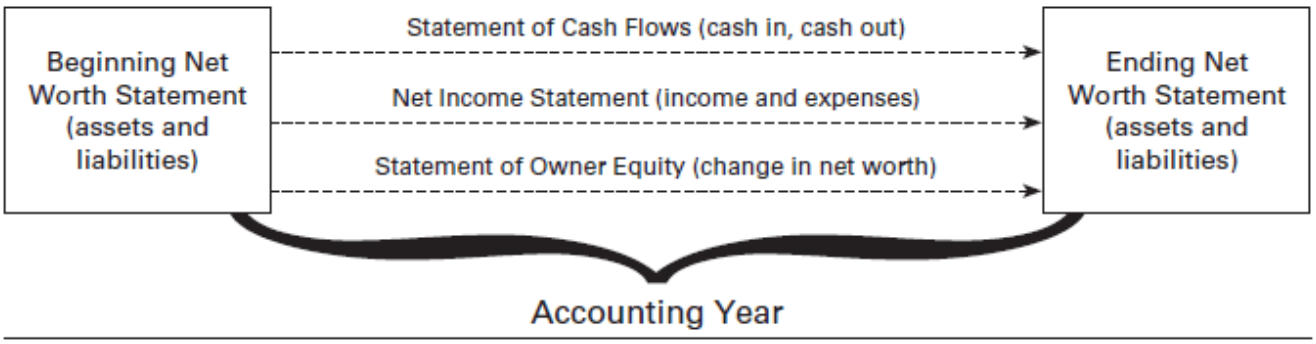
Before discussing the financial statements that are likely a part of most farm financial record keeping systems, there are a few important concepts that apply to all of them. Records and the management decisions made from prepared financial statements are only as good as the data entered. The old adage, "Garbage in – Garbage out" really does apply to financial records. It is important to be consistent in how values are entered in the different statements. If you are going to conservatively value assets, then do it consistently across all assets and enterprises. If you are selling commodities at market value from one enterprise (i.e., crops), then it is important that the enterprise (i.e., dairy) that is buying that commodity also buys it at market price. One other consistency concern is to try and match expenses with production for making management decisions. For example, you may have the cash on hand at the end of one fiscal year, and for tax purposes, you may choose to prepay for fertilizer in December for the following year's crop. For management decisions you should view that fertilizer expense as occurring in the year actual production occurs, even though the expense was pre-paid earlier to reduce tax liability.

The financial position and performance of a farm business can be summarized by four important financial statements. The relationship of these statements is illustrated below. The major statements and their purposes are as follows:

- Net Worth Statement (also known as Balance Sheet) —Summarizes the property and financial assets owned, the debts owed, and the net worth of the farm business at a point in time.
- Net Income Statement (also known as Profit and Loss Statement) — Summarizes the income generated, the expenses incurred, and the net income earned by the farm business during a period of time.
- Statement of Cash Flows (also known as Cash Flow Projections)—Summarizes all the sources and uses of cash by the business during a period of time.
- Statement of Owner Equity—Shows how net worth changed from the beginning to the end of the year.

Material adapted from *Farm and Ranch Financial Statements, Utah State University*

Relationship of the four major financial statements



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practices that are customized to the individual farm setting and really make a difference. Not all animal groups are equally susceptible to infection and not all human activities are equally likely to contribute to disease control or potential spread. Strategies are being developed to help identify activities and animal groups that contribute to the risk of acquiring or preventing a specific disease. As part of that risk assessment, the level of risk can be categorized as low, medium, or high. Emphasizing high-risk animal groups and high-risk human activities can help to make the biosecurity plan more effective and simpler to implement. Cooperation and promotion of a sound biosecurity plan is important for the financial health of the farm, as well as the consumer through wholesome and high quality agricultural products.

What is bioterrorism or agroterrorism?
Bio or agroterrorism is the intentional contamination of plants, animals, or humans with infectious agents (viruses, bacteria, protozoa, insects, or fungi) or toxins (nuclear, chemical, bacterial or fungal) with the express intent to cause disease or economic hardship in animals, agricultural systems, or humans.

Remember-…"if biosecurity is not inconveniencing you, you are not doing it right"! Dr. Paul McGraw

UW-Extension, PNAAW to Offer Level 1 Manure Applicator Certification Training

The UW-Extension Offices of Chippewa and Barron Counties and the Professional Nutrient Applicators of Wisconsin will be offering voluntary **Level One Manure Applicator training and certification**. The training will be held in Barron on **April 9 from 1:30pm – 3:30pm**, at the Barron County Government Center, room 110. Level One certification is for anyone applying manure and is interested is voluntary certification. Level One is designed to ensure that all employees have a working knowledge of manure spill response, nutrient management, regulations, application techniques, and safety. Safe manure handling practices discussion will focus on public road safety, manure gases, and confined spaces. **Cost for attending the program is $5.00.** To register contact the UW-Extension offices in Chippewa County 715-726-7950 or Barron County 715-537-6250.

UW-Extension Apple Grafting Workshop

The Chippewa County UW-Extension Office and the Chippewa Valley Master Gardener Association will host an **apple grafting workshop April 15 beginning at 6:30pm** at the Chippewa County Courthouse Room 003. Come and learn how grafting works and techniques to successfully graft apple scion wood and rootstock. Dr. Brian Smith, UW-Extension Fruit Crop Specialist and Jerry Clark, Chippewa County UW-Extension Crops and Soils Educator will lead the workshop. **Cost to attend the workshop is $20** which includes scionwood, rootstock, and other grafting materials. Each participant will receive materials to complete four grafted trees.
Space is limited to the first 40 registered participants.
To register, contact the Chippewa County UW-Extension Office 715-726-7950.