



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Chippewa Valley Agricultural Extension Report

Dunn County - 715-232-1636

Katie Wantoch - Agriculture Agent
<http://dunn.extension.wisc.edu>

Eau Claire County - 715-839-4712

Lyssa Seefeldt—Agriculture Agent
<http://eauclaire.extension.wisc.edu>

Chippewa County - 715-726-7950

Jerry Clark - Agriculture Agent
<http://chippewa.extension.wisc.edu>

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• Cultivating your Farm's Future flyer	

Happy Holidays From All of Us at Your Local Extension Office!

The Dunn County office will be closed on December 24 & 25 & January 1.

Winter 2019

Volume 9, Issue 3

New Eau Claire County Agriculture Agent Hired

Eau Claire's new Agriculture Agent, Lyssa Seefeldt, started on December 8th. Lyssa has over 6 years of experience in Extension Marquette County, working with the Central Wisconsin Agricultural Specialization (CWAS) area as a livestock educator. She comes from a diversified dairy and livestock farm in Marathon County where she developed her passion for working with pigs and other livestock. Lyssa earned a Bachelor of Science in animal science from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and a Master of Science in animal science from South Dakota State University.

Wisconsin Farm Center Offers Assistance to Farmers

Many farmers balance the needs of their family and farm above everything else, often ignoring their own needs. As farmers continue to endure an extended period of tough economic conditions, services are available to farmers and landowners that is **free and confidential**.

The **Wisconsin Farm Center** at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is there for farmers to call for guidance on finances, farm succession planning, and other issues they may be dealing with. Farm Center staff work with farmers and their families one-on-one to address each personal situation. Farmers, whether beginning their career or nearing retirement, can experience challenging situations. Staff are able to walk through options with farmers about how to navigate difficult personal or financial situations. While at times, alternatives may seem very limited, sometimes an outside perspective can help bring light to possibilities.

Just as taking care of physical health is important, so is taking care of mental health. Those in need are encouraged to reach out for help and utilize available resources by calling the Wisconsin Farm Center at 800-942-2474. Staff are available Monday through Friday from 7:45 a.m.-4:30 p.m. If there is a mental health emergency during non-office hours, farmers should contact 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

Extension Dunn County has a new address! The Extension office is still located in the Community Services Building (formerly the Health Care Building) but is now located on the second floor in room 216. The mailing address is now 3001 US Hwy 12 E, Suite 216, Menomonie, WI 54751

An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title VI, Title IX, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Requests for reasonable accommodations for disabilities or limitations should be made prior to the date of the program or activity for which it is needed. Please do so as early as possible prior to the program or activity so that proper arrangements can be made. Requests are kept confidential.

Is your beef operation ready for winter?

Jim Versweyeld, Walworth County Agriculture Educator

With another Wisconsin winter upon us, it's a great time to consider cold weather protection for your beef cattle. While winter's wrath and timing will vary across our state, it's a safe bet that all Wisconsin cattle herds will feel dangerous weather impacts over the coming months. Planning for cold temperatures and high winds can help keep your herd healthy and productive, control your feed costs, and ultimately improve your profits.

With thick winter hair, healthy rumen activity and body temperatures around 101 degrees F, it is true that cattle handle the cold better than their human caretakers. As cattle work harder to maintain that body temperature, however, the amount of feed consumed dramatically increases.

Studies have shown that for every 10-degree drop in outside temperature below 30 degrees, cattle energy requirements increase by 13%. Make sure enough feed is available to support this increased need. Also, make sure water is readily available. If water is restricted, feed intake will be reduced, as well.

Provide shelter

Giving cattle the ability to stay dry, out of the wind, and on a well-bedded pack may be the ideal option for extreme cold protection. A shed with the open side facing south is a good choice. Avoid using buildings that are too tightly constructed without adequate ventilation. Moisture and dampness can be more dangerous than cold as harmful pathogens thrive in these environments.

If a roof overhead isn't feasible for your operation, consider a windbreak. Natural windbreaks that exist on your farm are the most cost-effective option. Woodlots, brushy fence rows or hilly terrain can provide effective ways of protecting cattle from the wind.

If natural windbreaks are not an option on your farm, there are many different windbreak styles available.

Constructing windbreaks

Permanent windbreaks may be constructed in a variety of shapes. Although there is no perfect solution to the wind, semicircle-shaped, V-shaped or L-shaped windbreaks have proved effective.

You may be tempted to construct a solid wall to fight winter winds, but studies show that porous windbreaks are actually more effective. Solid panels cause the wind to go up and over, dipping down right behind the panel. This design limits the area of protection and can cause large snowdrifts.

A better alternative is a porous windbreak that lets some air flow through but reduces the velocity. Research indicates that 20% to 30% fence porosity can be effective in reducing wind chills while extending the area of protection farther from the barrier. A 25% porosity, for example, can be achieved by placing 6-inch boards 2 inches apart. Slotted fences should be at least 10 feet high for the best wind and snow blocking.

Portable windbreaks may offer the flexibility you need as you move cattle to different locations or storms bear down from different directions than your prevailing winds. Portable windbreaks must be constructed to remain stable and secure and also to withstand movement to other areas. Build with ease of movement in mind and consider designs that can be lifted and carried using available equipment. Fabric windbreaks are available that may be a versatile option for your farm.

How long should your windbreak be? The general rule is 1 foot of barrier length for every cow.

While winter in Wisconsin is inevitable, it doesn't have to have adverse effects on your bottom line. Your extreme weather plan can protect your herd, your next calf crop and your profits. Take some steps now to make sure your cattle remain healthy as temperatures fall.

Additional resources for successful management of your beef operation are available at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension [Wisconsin Beef Information Center](https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/wbic/), <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/wbic/> or by contacting your county agriculture Extension educator.

Article written by: Jim Versweyeld, UW Division of Extension Agriculture Educator- Walworth County, and recently appeared in the Wisconsin Agriculturist magazine.

Winter Cow Feeding Considerations

Many producers have felt the stress of non – favorable environmental conditions for producing forage for livestock. For many producers this summer not only was pasture forage production short, but producing and sourcing winter hay supplies has been challenging. We wish that the winter will be a fast and harmless season, but unfortunately the future is hard to predict.

Traditionally, feeding the beef cow herd in the winter months has been on a hay ration. Unfortunately, an all hay ration is one of the most expensive feeding systems with the current hay market. With tight hay supplies and high prices, re-thinking your feeding program to provide a balanced, least-cost ration to the cowherd would be a timely management strategy.

There are many alternative feedstuffs out on the market today. One question many have is, "What are the alternative feedstuffs, and how do I determine if they are a good buy?" With that said, there are many pros and cons to take into consideration when altering your feeding program. Below are publications that may help aid in the decision making process for winter feeding strategies.

Articles on the WI Beef Information Center, <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/wbic/> can be accessed at the following links:

[Winter Cow Feeding Considerations](#), [Hay Analysis Guide for Beef Cattle: Determining Winter Feed Needs](#).

[Winter Cow Feeding Strategies Proceedings- Driftless Beef Conference 2013](#), [Corn Silage Opportunities and Considerations for 2013](#)

Tips to Reduce Winter-Feeding Hay Costs for Beef Herd

William Halfman, Monroe County Extension Agriculture Agent

With hay being in short supply in some areas I thought it might be beneficial to re-post this article that Dr. Radunz and I put together back in 2011.

Winter-feeding of the beef cows represents the greatest expense in most beef cow-calf enterprises. Currently high feed prices, even for hay, should cause farmers to evaluate their winter-feeding strategies to identify ways to reduce feed costs through minimizing feed waste.

In the upper Midwest a mature cow will eat approximately 3 tons of hay during a common 6-month winter-feeding period. You can easily double your hay usage, if your method of feeding is to place bales out in the pasture or lot without any type of feeder. In this situation the hay becomes expensive bedding for the cows. Thus you will also double your winter feed costs, which at current prices can easily add \$300 per cow. Even when feeding hay with hay feeders the waste can vary from 15-50% depending on type of feeder thus significantly increasing your feed costs.

Michigan State University evaluated waste from different types of hay feeders in a study. The results showed some types of feeders do a better job of reducing round bale hay loss than others. This study compared 1) typical ring feeder with a solid panel around the bottom (see picture on left below) 2) a cradle type hay feeder with slanted vertical bars so cow could access hay, but not place their head inside the feeder; 3) a silage feeder type wagon, and 4) a cone type hay feeder similar to the feeder pictured on right below, but with a solid panel at the bottom to keep any loose hay in the feeder.



Dry matter hay waste was 3.5%, 6.1%, 11.4% and 14.6% for the cone, ring, feeder wagon and cradle feeders, respectively. If a farm currently estimates hay waste of 20% from using a bale ring without a solid panel, by switching to a cone style ring feeder, they could reduce overwinter hay costs by \$53 dollars per head (hay = \$100 per ton). For a 20 head cow herd this would result in a total feed savings of \$1069 for the winter.

The researchers also shared the following observations regarding hay feeder design that may help reduce feed losses

- **Provide enough distance between the outside of the feeder and the feed.** Feeders, which allow cows to be able to comfortably keep their heads within the feeder perimeter, reduce feed losses.

- **Avoid bars or dividers between feeding stations.** Design features, which allow more access to the hay by reducing a cow's inclination to push or butt another cow to get access to the hay, will reduce hay losses.

- **Provide a comfortable feeding height.** Cows prefer to eat with their ears are lower than the top of their shoulders similar to how they eat grazing. Cows that reach over the top of the feeder to get hay also tend to waste more.

- **Use a hay saver panel.** Feeders designed to sit on the ground will benefit from having a solid panel at the bottom to keep hay inside the feeder. In the pictures, the ring feeder has a hay saver panel whereas the cone feeder does not. The cone feeder could be improved by placing a 'hay saver' panel at the bottom.

A final tip to help reduce feed losses is to place a new bale in the feeder when only 10% of the bale is left. This will force the cows to eat a majority of the bale as well as make sure there is adequate room for the new bale. If you are in the market for new bale feeders, keep this study in mind when selecting a feeder. Modifications can also be made to current feeders to help reduce feed losses.

Guidelines for Soil Compaction Management During a Wet Harvest Season

Francisco Arriaga, Extension Specialist, Dept of Soil Science & Brian Luck, Extension Specialist, Dept of Biological Systems Engineering

Fast Facts:

- Waiting for better soil moisture conditions is best, but not always possible.
- Reduce axles loads and maintain low equipment tire pressure.
- Managing equipment traffic pattern can help contain and reduce soil damage.
- Don't assume subsoiling is needed.
- Surface tillage might be needed to address ruts.
- Cover crops can help.

Background:

Crop yields are decreased in compacted soils. This reduction in yield is caused by a reduction in root growth, water infiltration and plant water availability. Therefore, it is important to reduce the risk of soil compaction. Wet soil conditions in the fall increase the risk for causing soil compaction during harvest operations. Below are some guidelines to help prevent forming, diagnose, and manage soil compaction during wet harvest conditions. Preventing soil compaction from happening is usually the best management approach when possible.

Guidelines:

One of the main issues during wet harvest is the creation of ruts from equipment traveling in a field. Rutting creates an uneven soil surface which affects seed to soil contact during planting the following season's crop. Also, ruts are a sign of surface soil compaction and clay smearing which increase the likelihood of soil crust to form. An effective strategy to reduce the risk of ruts is to manage traffic patterns in a field.

Most discussions of traffic pattern management within agricultural fields involves uniform machinery sizing and Global Positioning System (GPS) guidance of machines. However, it can also be achieved with some awareness and discipline on the part of the operators. This is even easier in wet conditions where rutting has occurred. Maintaining repeated travel patterns between transport equipment and the harvester (i.e. driving in the ruts) can reduce the damage of operating on wet soils and will confine any damage to specific and well known locations in the field. Figure 1 shows GPS data, collected once per second, on every piece of equipment involved in an operation harvesting alfalfa for ensiling. The left image shows the paths of two mergers, the forage harvester, and six transport trucks. The right image only shows the path of the forage harvester, simulating managed traffic, where every other piece of machinery is staying within the forage harvester tracks. Although the entire field is impacted by the operation of the machinery future corrective measures could be taken on the locations of the ruts rather than applying the correction to the entire field.

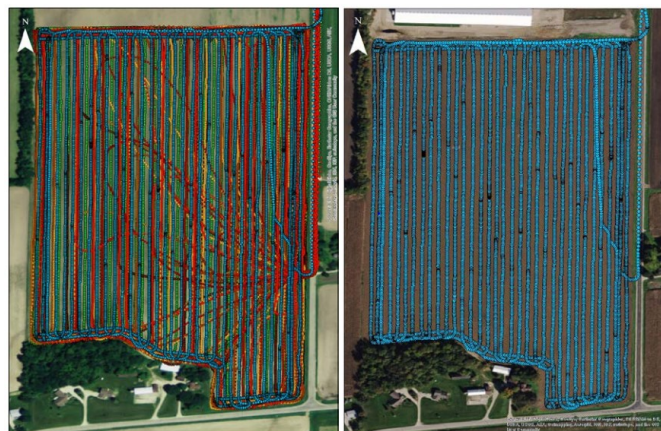


Figure 1. Global positioning system data of an alfalfa forage harvest operation with all equipment involved; merger path, chopper path, and six transport trucks (Left). Global positioning system data of forage harvester path only simulating controlled traffic within a harvest operation (Right).

Some other machinery specific considerations for operating in wet conditions are to: 1) utilize machines equipped with tracks if possible, 2) maintain tire pressures as low as practical, 3) attach dual wheels wherever possible, 4) consider only carrying half (or reduced) loads out of the field, and 5) utilize tractor based transport equipment within the field while loading transport trucks at the edge of the field. Using equipment equipped with tracks spreads the mass of the machine over a greater area which reduces the overall pressure exerted on the soil. This effect is also achieved by running tire pressures as low as practical and implementing dual wheels wherever possible. Reduction of the total machine weight by only carrying half loads out of the field will reduce the total pressure exerted on the soil as well. There is a harvest efficiency consideration with this, in that it will take longer to harvest, so a judgement call on whether this is a good approach will need to be made based on crop quality and weather conditions. Finally, utilizing grain carts or dump carts to carry the product out of the field will reduce compaction with that equipment having larger tires and spreading the load over a larger area as opposed to utilizing trucks.

If there is a considerable amount of tire ruts, doing some light tillage to smooth the soil surface will help with planting operations. If ruts are present, surface tillage might be needed to improve the seedbed. Surface tillage can be done localized to those areas with ruts only if needed. Then plant a cover crop if possible, probably a grass such as cereal rye that has a fibrous root system that will help that soil surface.

If shallow compaction (<6" deep) is detected, plant a cover crop (again cereal rye would be a good option for this, maybe mixed with a legume but not necessary for this) and track compaction with a penetrometer in the fall and spring. Freeze/thaw conditions this winter can also help alleviate shallow compaction but might not always work.

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Don't assume that the presence of ruts indicates subsoil compaction. Soils are most susceptible to compaction at water contents near field capacity because the proportion of soil pores filled with air and water is just right for compaction (soil consolidation) to occur. It seems counterintuitive, but soils with most of the pores filled with water are less susceptible to subsoil compaction. Recall that liquids are not compressible, unlike air, thus can bear an equipment load whereas air would allow for a pore space to collapse. However, soils near saturation are very prone to rutting and smearing near the surface.

If deep/subsoil compaction (deeper than 6") is detected, a sub-soiling or deep strip-tillage operation might be helpful. A cover crop would help here as well, but it will depend more on the growing season required for that cover crop and its root system's ability to penetrate the compacted layer. Freeze/thaw will not help for deep compaction (need the freeze/thaw cycles, similar to wetting/drying, to loosen the soil). There is a chance that a cover crop will help here, so it might pay off to monitor compaction this fall and again in the spring to determine if a deep tillage operation (e.g. sub-soiling or deep strip-till) is needed.

It is recommended for long-term no-tillage fields with ruts or other soil damage in localized spots in the field, to just target those areas with tillage if needed and leave the rest of the long-term no-tillage field alone. Soils in long-term no-tillage fields have a greater ability to "bounce" back than of conventional tillage managed soils. In general, soils should be allowed to dry before any other operations are implemented, if weather cooperates.

Access soybean program after challenging year

Jerry Clark, Chippewa County Extension Agriculture Agent

The soybean harvest is here, and it is time to assess all the management strategies and hurdles that were thrown at us during a very challenging 2019 growing season.

Considering all the decisions made throughout the season, from variety and maturity selection to combine setup for harvesting, it will take steady management and decision-making skills to weather the storm (no pun intended) and plenty of blessings to get the crop to harvest.

So now that we are at harvest, consider the decisions made. Give yourself a pat on the back for making the right ones, and determine if a better one could have been made to offset challenges.

To start, assess the variety and maturity selected. A delayed planting season led many farmers to change varieties and earlier maturities.

Of course, we can never know when the first frost will come or how long the growing season will be, but we can still make good variety selections with data from several sources. Using sources such as the University of Wisconsin Soybean Variety Performance Trials is a good place to start to compare varieties and maturities when changes in selection need to be made. Were several bushels left on the decision-making table due to variety or maturity selection?

Another decision to assess is planting population. What did you plan for a final plant stand count, and are you in the ball park or not even in the stadium? Was the final stand count around 100,000, which is considered a high potential yield?

Assessing planting population and final plant stands at harvest is something that can lead to better decisions to increase yield and possibly save seed dollars, especially if planting populations are high.

What decisions were made regarding fertility? Now is the time to assess the total fertility program. Soil testing is the key. Have soil tests been pulled within the last four years?

Many fields across Wisconsin have seen reduced or low potassium levels. Consider that for every bushel of soybeans removed from the field, 1.4 pounds of K₂O is removed. So for example, a 50-bushel-per-acre yield results in 70 pounds of K₂O per acre pulled out of the field. Is this being replaced? Is more needed for 2020? Again, assessing at harvest how your fertility program performed is essential for next year's planning and budget.

Pest Management

Hopefully, pest management is something you are evaluating throughout the growing season. Plenty has been written and discussed regarding weed management and herbicide programs as they relate to resistance issues, especially in the case of waterhemp. As the combine rolls through the fields, are observations being made and notes taken of weed species and their locations in the field? Were insects scouted and thresholds monitored to help make decisions in 2019?

Harvest-time is the time to assess your overall pest management program. Consider diseases observed during the growing season. Is soybean cyst nematode an issue? Now is a great time to test for SCN to see if it is present and at what levels. A free sampling kit is available from the Wisconsin Soybean Marketing Board.

As the combine enters fields, is it set up correctly to manage the crop in the field? Combines can be operated to reduce losses without affecting the harvesting rate. Consider shatter losses of 2% acceptable, as more than 80% of the machine loss usually occurs at the gathering unit. With the soybean crop at the finish line, don't leave beans in the field due to improper setup of the harvesting equipment.

With the challenging growing season behind us and the harvest season in full swing, assess all decisions to determine if the right ones were made and to prepare for 2020.

Originally published in the Wisconsin Agriculturalist Nov 2019

Farm Stress & Decision-Making During Challenging Times

John Shutske, Professor and Extension Agricultural Safety and Health Specialist

What causes stress for farmers and farm families?

Do any of these scenarios sound familiar?

I haven't started the paperwork for that major loan due next week! I just learned two producers in my township lost their milk contracts! Should I go back to school with so much economic uncertainty? How will I ever find time to learn more about precision farming? We were supposed to start in the field at 8a.m. and my two most important operators are no-shows! My spouse and I aren't able to talk about things the way we used to. I haven't had a moment to myself since we added all that custom work to make our business plan feasible. Who knows whether the big tractor will make it through another full chopping season? There's a missed call on my cell – one of our employees must be hurt!

The list could continue endlessly for most people who work in agriculture. Farming is one of the most stressful occupations in the U.S. Stress is a double-edged sword. A little stress can serve as a constructive motivator, galvanizing us to action (Simon & Sieve, 2013). Too much stress, on the other hand, can damage our health (Donham & Thelin, 2016), compromise safety and sabotage personal relationships (Buck & Neff, 2012; Randall & Bodenmann, 2009). Stress diminishes our capacity for considering and evaluating alternative solutions to complex problems, thereby limiting our power to make sound decisions (Morgado, et al., 2015). Stress can also manifest itself as a vicious cycle with escalating consequences that can paralyze a farm family. With the arduous and sometimes volatile conditions we see in agriculture, the risk of too much stress is alarming.

Physically, what happens?

Stress is our reaction to a threatening event or stimulus. Such events and stimuli are called "stressors." People differ in how they perceive and react to stressors. Something one person would rate as highly stressful might be rated as considerably less stressful by someone else. Several factors influence our capacity for coping with stress: The presence of a social network (e.g., family, friends, community groups, church); Our skill and confidence in assessing a complex situation and then developing and evaluating solutions; Personal variables (e.g., physical health, experience, confidence, anxiety threshold, problem-solving ability) (Donham & Thelin, 16)

When we encounter a stressor, our brain and body respond by triggering a series of chemical reactions that prepare us to engage with or run away from the stressor. Two hormones that we release are adrenaline, which prepares muscles for exertion, and cortisol, which regulates bodily functions. If a stressor is exceptionally frightening, it might cause us to freeze and become incapacitated (Fink, 2010). The stress response causes our: Blood pressure to rise; Heart rate to increase; Digestive system to slow down (or stop); Blood to clot more quickly (Fink, 2010; Donham & Thelin, 2016; Simon & Zieve, 2013).

Thousands of years ago, people who stumbled upon a hungry saber-toothed tiger or other predator would be more likely to survive

the encounter if they were able to spring up and sprint away swiftly. An increase in blood pressure and heart rate and a slowdown of digestive processes meant more energy could be directed toward escaping. If they couldn't run quickly enough, their odds of surviving a wound from the hungry tiger were better if their blood clotted rapidly.

Today, this physical response to stress can be damaging to our health. Unrelieved stress is a known risk factor in many of the leading causes of premature death among adults, including conditions and illnesses such as heart disease, hypertension, stroke, diabetes and deterioration of the immune system (Mayo Clinic, 2016). Stress is also a risk factor for depression, addiction and suicide (Donham & Thelin, 2016).

What about my safety?

Farming ranks as one of the most dangerous industries in the U.S. (National Safety Council, 2017). Stress, long hours, and fatigue contribute to injury risk (Gerberich et al., 1998). When we confront several stressors at once, we may become distracted, and this distraction can cause errors that lead to serious or fatal incidents, such as tractor rollovers or entanglement in a fast-moving machine. Thus, proper safety precautions are essential for preventing such incidents.

Farm operators who face financial pressures while running a modern farming operation sometimes don't invest in eliminating farm hazards. They might not replace damaged or missing shields on machinery. They may choose not to retrofit old tractors with rollbars and seatbelts. They might defer investments in equipment and facilities needed for safe animal handling and housing. Or they may require children to do potentially dangerous farm work before they are physically and mentally ready to perform these jobs safely. All farm safety efforts must include taking specific steps to better cope with the stress that operators and their families are likely to experience!

How do farmers and their families cope with stress?

During the last couple decades, researchers have learned how successful farmers and families effectively manage their stress by discussing their stress management methods with them. The actions described in this guide come directly from those discussions as well as suggestions from the larger agricultural community. Some of these actions involve preparing ourselves physically and emotionally to deal with stress. Other actions, such as planning and education, involve minimizing confusion and ambiguity and bolstering our levels of "hope" and perceived control. It is important to recognize that it is impossible to totally eliminate all stress in any job, but effective management is possible. More information and this full article can be found at <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/farmstress/>

**EXTENSION
AGRICULTURE
AGENTS/
AREA OF FOCUS**

Dunn County

Katie Wantoch
Farm Financial Management
3001 US Hwy 12 East, Suite 216
Menomonie, WI 54751

Phone: 715-232-1636
Fax: 715-231-6687
Email:
katie.wantoch@wisc.edu

Eau Claire County

Lyssa Seefeldt
Dairy and Livestock
227 1st Street W
Altoona, WI 54720

Phone: 715-839-4712
Fax: 715-839-6277
Email:
lyssa.seefeldt@wisc.edu

Chippewa County

Jerry Clark
Crops and Soils
711 North Bridge Street
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

Phone: 715-726-7950
Fax: 715-726-7958
Email:
jerome.clark@wisc.edu

**Chippewa, Dunn, Eau
Claire & Polk Counties**

Margaret Murphy
Horticulture
711 North Bridge Street
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

Phone: 715-726-7950
Fax: 715-726-7958
Email:
margaret.murphy@wisc.edu

Winter 2019

Local & Statewide Calendar of Events

January 2020

- 7 Farm Bill ARC/PLC Update, 1-3pm, Rusk County Library, Ladysmith
- 9 Western Wisconsin Ag Lenders Conference, Sleep Inn & Suites Conference Center, Eau Claire
- 10 Farm Bill ARC/PLC Update, 1-3pm, Anson Town Hall, Jim Falls
- 14 Taking the Pulse on your Farm Business, Extension St. Croix County, Baldwin
- 14 Produce Safety Rule Grower Training, Best Western, Black River Falls
- 21 Automated Milker System, Robotic Milker Seminar, Abbotsford
- 23-25 GrassWorks Conference, Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells
- 26 Produce Safety Rule Grower Training, Kalahari Conference Center, Wisconsin Dells
- 29 Farm Succession Series—Session One, Extension Dunn County, Menomonie
- 29 Pesticide Applicator Training, Security Financial Bank, Bloomer

February 2020

- 5 Taking the Pulse on your Farm Business, Extension St. Croix County, Baldwin
- 5 Pesticide Applicator Training, Extension Dunn County, Menomonie
- 12 Taking the Pulse on your Farm Business, Extension St. Croix County, Baldwin
- 19 Farm Succession Series—Session Two, Extension Dunn County, Menomonie
- 19 Taking the Pulse on your Farm Business, Extension St. Croix County, Baldwin
- 25 Pesticide Applicator Training, Extension Dunn County, Menomonie
- 29 Dunn County 4-H Dairy Judging Fundraiser, Dean & Sue's, Menomonie

March 2020

- 3-4 Eau Claire Farm Show, Chippewa Valley Expo Center, Eau Claire
- 18 Farm Succession Series—Session Three, Extension Dunn County, Menomonie
- 12 Red Cedar Watershed Conference, UW-Stout, Menomonie
- 21-22 Farm Couples Weekend Getaway, Eau Claire
- 31 Pesticide Applicator Training, Chippewa Valley Dairy Supply, Stanley



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