

There are a few crucial elements of a farm newsletter. Key elements are discussed in more detail below. Other considerations include a readable font, clear and concise wording, a reasonable length, (preferably front and back of one page), and a friendly tone to keep the reader/landowner interested.

Key Elements of the Farm Newsletter

At the minimum, a farm newsletter should include the following.

Title - The title should be catchy, yet not wordy. The title of the newsletter should be used for several years, so the landowner does not develop the impression that the tenant is indecisive.

Tenant Contact Information - As with any communication between tenant and landowner, information pertaining to how to contact the tenant is important. Including contact information in the newsletter allows the landowner to feel as though the tenant is always willing to visit with the landowner.

Informational Content - The informational content provides the “what is going on” information about the farm. This is the section of the newsletter where the tenant helps the landowner become more familiar with the tenant’s farming operation.

Overview of happenings since the last newsletter - This section should be a short synopsis of what has happened since you sent the last newsletter. General statements should be used in this section. For example, “We wrapped up harvest on the second week of November. The much-needed rain in mid July must have helped out because there was about average production.” The tenant may also want to report in this section about to land improvements/habitat enhancements undertaken since the last newsletter.

Crop progress/pasture condition/livestock development - Particularly if the rental arrangement is a commodity-share (or flexible cash) agreement, the landowner be interested in knowing about crop progress or livestock development. And, even if the

rental arrangement is a cash rental arrangement, the landowner will feel more a part of the farming operation. What landowner doesn’t like to discuss, or even brag, about the land he or she owns? Land ownership to some is a social activity and a conversation piece. Thus, the tenant should give the landowner “something to talk about.”

Weather update - Farmers and non-farmers always have one area of interest in common, weather. Everyone understands the impact of not enough, average, and above average rainfall. Also, if the landowner is not aware of the effects of severe weather, e.g., high winds and hail, then he or she needs to be made aware of the impact of severe weather.

Commodity prices - The tenant could also provide a brief synopsis of relevant commodity prices and price trends, and discuss what futures markets are suggesting for prices in the future. The tenant should relate current prices to historical prices and remind the landowner of the historical variability in prices.

Technology - The tenant could use this section as an educational section to help landowners better understand technology change in the farming operation.

Upcoming events - In this section the tenant could let the landowner know what is being planned for the upcoming months. For instance, a winter newsletter may discuss planting intentions and the crop acreage mix being considered. Also, if there are important forthcoming community events, they should be mentioned.

Conclusion

This article provides some examples of what Extension farm management specialists can suggest as contents for a farm newsletter. Again, the goal of the newsletter is to build, or continue, a working relationship between the tenant and landowner. Thus, suggesting that a tenant produce a farm newsletter may be among the best advice an Extension specialist can give. For an example farm newsletter, readers can contact the lead author.