



Shelby County Extension

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Upcoming Events:

December 15th- Beef Handling Clinic at Armstrong Research Farm in Lewis

December 18th- Beef Weigh In, 9-11

December 23-24th – Extension Office Closed for Christmas Holiday

December 29th- FSQA Training, 10 AM

December 31st – Extension Office Closed for New Year's Eve

January 4th – Private Pesticide Applicator Training at 1:30 and 7:00 PM

January 11th- 4 State Beef Conference

As we settle into the winter months, planning and continuing education come to the top of the list of things to get done before the next planting season is upon us. Many upcoming programs/events are highlighted in this month's newsletter, and more opportunities will become available as we head into 2011. Please plan to take advantage of some of these great programs to improve your operation for the seasons ahead!

-Kate Olson, Program Coordinator

DID YOU KNOW??

Ag and Hort News is also available online!! The current and past issues are archived on our county homepage: www.extension.iastate.edu/shelby.

Online newsletters also contain active links to get you to websites and publications mentioned in the articles! If you would like to receive an email when the latest issue is posted online, just email me at keolson@iastate.edu!

Ask the ISU Garden Expert

Get answers to all your yard and garden questions at www.yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu. For specific questions, call the Hortline at (515) 294-3108, or email hortline@iastate.edu, Monday-Friday from 10 a.m. to noon and 1:00 to 4:30 p.m.

Why doesn't a pile of leaves decompose quickly?

It's best to have a mix of various organic materials in a compost pile. Dry leaves are high in carbon. The microbes that do the decomposing require a certain amount of nitrogen for their own metabolism and growth. Without a nitrogen source, decomposition will be slow. To hasten decomposition, mix grass clippings in with the leaves. Grass clippings are high in nitrogen. Shredding the leaves will also speed up the composting process.

How long can I store sweet potatoes?

If properly harvested and stored, sweet potatoes can be stored for four to six months. Optimum storage conditions are a temperature of 55 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit and relative humidity of 85 to 90 percent.

Where is a good location for African violets in the home?

Place African violets in a location that receives bright, indirect light. A site near an east or north window is often a good location. Do not place African violets in direct sun. If a suitable window isn't available, place African violets under a fluorescent light fixture containing two 40-watt fluorescent tubes. Suspend the fixture 12 inches above the plants and leave the lights on for 12 to 15 hours per day. The ideal temperature range for African violets is 60 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit. In winter, keep African violets away from cold drafts and heat sources.

Do tree peonies need winter protection?

Tree peonies are small woody shrubs. Unlike herbaceous peonies, the stems of tree peonies do not die back to the ground in fall. Tree peonies can be successfully grown in USDA Hardiness Zones 4-8.

Cold winter temperatures can damage young tree peonies (especially those in northern portions of Iowa.) Rabbits can also damage plants in winter. Rabbit damage can be prevented by encircling each plant with chicken wire or hardware cloth in fall. Fill the enclosure with a light, airy material, such as straw or pine needles, to protect young plants from cold winter temperatures.

Protective materials should be in place by mid to late November. Remove the materials in early to mid-April.

How should I care for my garden tools in fall?

Proper care of garden tools and equipment prolongs their lifetime, prevents costly repairs and improves their performance. In fall, remove caked-on soil from shovels, spades, hoes and rakes with a wire brush or a stiff putty knife. Wash the tools with a strong stream of water, then dry. Sharpen the blades of hoes, shovels and spades. Wipe the metal surfaces with an oily rag or spray with WD-40. Sand rough wooden handles, then wipe with linseed oil to prevent drying and cracking. Hang or store the tools in a dry location. Drain water from garden hoses. To prevent kinking, store hoses on reels or coil and place on a flat surface.

I still haven't gotten my tulip bulbs planted. Should I plant them now or wait until spring?

The tulip bulbs should be planted as soon as possible. Tulips and other spring-flowering bulbs can be planted as late as December if the soil is not frozen. After planting, cover the area with several inches of straw, pine needles or leaves. Mulching will give the bulbs additional time to root before the ground freezes.

Tulips and other spring-flowering bulbs can be stored for several weeks. However, long term storage of spring-flowering bulbs is difficult. By early spring, the tulip bulbs are likely to have rotted or shriveled and died.

I recently received a flowering mum plant from a florist. Can I plant it outdoors?

Florist or greenhouse mums are sold throughout the year at floral shops, supermarkets and other retailers. Unfortunately, florist mums do not perform well when planted outdoors. Most florist mums will not survive the winter when planted outdoors in Iowa. Those florist mums that manage to survive the winter typically don't bloom outdoors. Florist mums bloom rather late in fall. Often freezing temperatures destroy the flower buds before they are able to fully develop and open. It's usually best to toss a florist mum in the compost pile after blooming. If you would like to plant mums in your garden, purchase garden or hardy mums at a local garden center in spring. Garden mums are much hardier than florist mums. They also bloom earlier than florist mums.

Winter Feeding Decisions for the Cow Herd

During most Iowa winters, hay is an adequate choice to meet nutritional needs of gestating beef cows when fed free choice. However, this summer's continual rain caused over-mature or otherwise damaged hay, resulting in decreased feed value. Iowa State University (ISU) Extension beef specialist and Iowa Beef Center IBC) interim director Dan Loy said the problem is widespread.

"Almost one-half of the forage samples submitted to date through our forage testing project are marginal in energy and nearly 20 percent are marginal in meeting the protein needs of a mature beef cow in late gestation," Loy said. "It's important to know the nutritional value of your available forages so you can make good feed and feeding decisions this winter."

ISU Extension and IBC are hosting meetings in several Iowa locations this winter designed to help producers learn how to make these nutrition-based decisions. In addition to providing a current summary of the forage testing project and to-date results, ISU Extension beef program specialists will present information on allocating feed inventory, sample rations to meet cow nutrient needs and tools to control feed cost and waste. *(continued)*

“The specialists also will work through various ration examples using results from the forage test project and the Beef Ration and Nutrient Decision Software, or BRaNDS, from IBC,” Loy said. “The beef cow is an amazing animal that’s able to utilize almost any forage as long we know the nutrient content and balance it correctly. We’ll work with you to design the rations that meet the needs of your herd.”

To find the location of a winter feeding decisions meeting near you, check the IBC website at www.iowabeefcenter.org or contact your [ISU Extension county office](#). **Note: we are looking for more beef producers in Shelby County to participate in this forage testing program!! If you are interested, please contact Kate in the office!!**

New Publication Helps Farmers Improve Energy Efficiency in Hog Buildings

Wasted heating energy due to excessive ventilation is a costly problem for hog producers during the winter months. A new publication from Iowa State University Extension illustrates examples for evaluating minimum ventilation to improve energy efficiency in hog buildings.

“[Sizing Minimum Ventilation to Save Heating Energy in Swine Housing](#),” PM 2089J, is available to download from the Extension Online Store at www.extension.iastate.edu/store/.

Eighty to ninety percent of heat loss in swine housing during the winter months is due to over-ventilation, according to Jay Harmon, ISU professor in Ag and Biosystems Engineering.

“Unfortunately, over-ventilation during the winter months is more common than you would think,” said Harmon. “In particular, wean-to-finish buildings present one of the greatest challenges to efficient winter heating and proper ventilation.”

Proper sizing of minimum ventilation and use of variable speed fans can improve overall energy efficiency. This publication addresses recommendations regarding air flow, fan speed and wind protection. It also describes factors that affect fan performance.

“Weather conditions this fall have allowed farmers to catch up on many outdoor projects that may have fallen through the cracks in years past,” said Dana Petersen, ISU Extension program coordinator. “Investing time to winterize livestock buildings can improve efficiency and conserve energy during the coming months.”

The publication is part of a series of [farm energy conservation and efficiency educational materials](#) being developed through the Farm Energy Conservation and Efficiency educational initiative. The purpose of the initiative is to increase farmers’ awareness of farm energy conservation practices. Sponsored by a grant from the Iowa Energy Center, it is also helping farmers explore alternatives to reduce farm energy demand and to improve their farms’ overall profitability in a rapidly changing energy environment. To find other publications in the series, search the ISU Extension Online Store, www.extension.iastate.edu/store, for “farm energy”

Organic Grain and Livestock Outlook

Meetings Scheduled

Organic production has grown nationally at a rate of nearly 20 percent per year for the last seven years. Industry experts continue to forecast a slowing but steady growth for organic production. However, weather patterns and the volatility of organic markets and prices the past few years have affected both profitability and stability for organic growers.

Five organic outlook meetings planned for mid-December are an excellent opportunity to learn more about market demand and managing risk in organic operations. The meetings are sponsored by the Iowa State University Extension Value Added Agriculture Program and the Iowa Organic Association.

The meetings will include a presentation by Catherine Greene, USDA Economic Research Service, that offers a historic look at national organic markets and an outlook of organic markets for 2011 and beyond. The buyers' perspective will be shared by grain merchandising companies and organic cooperatives. Joe Ward, president of the Iowa Organic Association and a livestock

nutritionist, will give an overview of the recent changes to the National Organic Program's pasture rule and how it affects organic producers.

Each meeting will have a producer panel discussing how to manage risk with the use of enterprise mix, crop rotation, crop insurance and government programs. Panel members also will share their marketing strategies for organics.

Meeting dates and locations are:

Dec. 10, Tripoli

Bremer County Extension Office
720 7th Ave SW
Tripoli, IA 50676

Dec. 13, Fairfield

Argiro Student Center
Festival Hall, 2nd floor
Hwy # 1 and Dr. Keith Wallace Drive
Maharishi University of Management
Fairfield, Iowa 52556

Dec. 14, Nevada

Story County Extension Office
4-H Hall
220 H Avenue
Nevada, Iowa

Dec. 16, Atlantic

Cass County Extension Office
805 West 10th Street
Atlantic, IA

Dec. 17, Storm Lake

Buena Vista Extension Office
824 Flindt Drive
Storm Lake, IA

All meetings are scheduled for 1 to 4 p.m. There is no charge for the meetings and pre-registration is not required. For more information, contact Joe Ward at JWard722@aol.com, 319-447-1188 or 319-361-3047 or Margaret Smith at mrgsmith@iastate.edu or 515-290-4456.

..and justice for all

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Many materials can be made available in alternative formats for ADA clients. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC

Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating.

Beef Checkoff Offers Programs on Proper Livestock Handling Methods

The beef checkoff-funded Iowa Beef Quality Assurance program is bringing Curt Pate back to Iowa the week of December 13, 2010. The tour will be in the southern part of the state with stops at the Armstrong Research Farm near Lewis on Wednesday, December 15th, the Chris Petty Feedyard south of Leon on Thursday, December 16th and at Knoxville Regional Livestock Market on Friday, December 17th. The programs will start late morning and conclude early in the afternoon.

"The Stockmanship & Stewardship Tour" travels the country and uses live cattle-handling demos to inform cattlemen about the importance and benefits of proper cattle handling—and its critical role in increasing consumer confidence in beef. The tour includes special hands-on training sessions at livestock auction markets and other venues where cattle producers meet to discuss improved stockmanship methods, as well as the pivotal role producers play in sustaining beef quality for consumers. Curt Pate has been conducting livestock handling programs nationally and internationally, for over 10 years. More information about Pate and his program can be found at www.effectivestockmanship.com.

Brian Waddingham, director of industry relations for the Iowa Beef Industry Council (IBIC), will also be participating in these programs. He will be discussing the tools that are available for cattlemen to improve animal care and well-being on the farm. "Pate's program is a real eye opener for producers as it allows them to see first-hand the benefits of moving cattle with minimum stress and the positive impact it has on both the cattle and those moving them," said Waddingham.

Joe Sellers, Iowa State University Extension Livestock Program Specialist is helping coordinate the tour. Sellers will discuss disposition scoring and the impact of cattle temperament on cattle performance and carcass quality at the Leon site. "Proper cattle handling and husbandry are critical to both cattle health and performance and producer safety. This workshop will be of great interest to innovative Iowa producers," said Sellers. Darrell

Busby of the Tri County Steer Carcass Futurity will review TCSCF data on the impact of cattle disposition on feedlot performance and carcass quality at the Armstrong farm location.

Schedule for December 15th session at Armstrong Research Farm located near Lewis, Iowa, at 53020 Hitchcock Avenue:

Pate's program will begin at 10:00 a.m. Pate will discuss the best handling practices while unloading livestock, sorting them, bringing them into working facility, and loading them to leave the farm. We will break for lunch and then hear from Darrell Busby about disposition scoring and the impact of cattle temperament on cattle performance and carcass quality. Brian Waddingham will be discussing the tools that are available for cattlemen to improve animal care and well-being on the farm. The meeting will conclude at 2:00 p.m.

Please RSVP by December 13 to help with meal plans by contacting Brian Waddingham at 515-296-2305, Joe Sellers at 641-203-1270 or Clint McDonald at 712-355-1034 for more information.

Area Cattlemen Should Make Plans to Attend 27th Annual 4-State Beef Conference

Area cattlemen should mark the dates of January 11th and 12th on their calendars and make plans to attend the 27th Annual 4-State Beef Conference. The conference planning committee has designed an excellent program that should have something of interest to all beef producers. Speakers and their topics for the 2011 conference are as follows: Dr. David Patterson, State Beef Extension Specialist, University of Missouri – *“Show-Me-Select Multi-year Selection Impact.”*; Dr. Dale Blasi, State Beef Extension Specialist, Kansas State University – *“Benefiting from Feeding on Pasture.”*; Daren Williams, Executive Director of Communications, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association – *“Understanding and Addressing Threats to the Industry.”*; Dr. Rick Funston, Reproductive Physiology Specialist, University of Nebraska – *“Low Input Heifer Development”*.

The conference is scheduled for Tuesday, January 11th and Wednesday, January 12th, 2011. The

Tuesday morning session will begin at 10:30 a.m. in Tecumseh, Nebraska at the Community Building, and the afternoon session will begin at 4:30 p.m. in Lewis, IA at the ISU Armstrong Research Farm. The Wednesday morning session will also begin at 10:30 a.m. in Holton, Kansas at the Jackson County Fair Building, and the afternoon session will start at 4:30 p.m. in King City, Missouri at the Eiberger Building. Producers need only attend one of the times/locations listed, as the same topics are presented at all locations.

The 4-State Beef Conferences are designed to give beef cattle producers in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska an annual update on current cow-calf and stocker topics. The conferences provide a forum of Extension Specialists from four of the USA’s leading beef cattle land grant universities.

The registration fee is \$25.00 per person and reservations are requested by, Friday, January 7th, 2011. The fee includes a beef meal and a copy of the conference proceedings. To keep registration fees affordable in the future, please help us by calling in your reservations. For more information or to register for the conference, contact your local county extension office, or call Clint McDonald ISU Extension Beef Specialist at 712-355-1034. If you wish to register online via PayPal go to our website at: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/feci/4stbeef/>.

Tis the Season for Questions!!

Winter is in the air and as the seasons change we often run into tasks that we only do once a year. Don’t forget a great source for answers to many of your seasonal questions: ISU Answerline! With answers on everything from inside and outside cleaning projects to cooking turkey and roasting pumpkin seeds, as well as energy and safety tips for your home, this valuable resource has answers to many common household questions on cleaning, safety, cooking, energy-use and more! Check out the Frequently Asked Questions page online at: www.extension.iastate.edu/answerline or if you don’t find an answer to your specific questions, give them a call at 1-800-262-3804 (toll free from anywhere in Iowa!) or email answer@iastate.edu.