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Ag & Hort Update

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I recently registered my livestock premises with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and took the first step towards a National Animal Identification system. The process was easy and painless. I simply filled out a form giving the location of the farm, types of livestock housed there, the type of operation, and some contact information, mailed it in and in a few weeks received a premise ID. I received a fancy card with my name and address, premises ID and a bar-code. I assume this will be for official use down the road when the program is in full use. Although the idea of premise ID is confusing as to the why's and how's of the program, it is the first step in having the ability to track animal diseases efficiently. We need to know who has livestock, and what herds could possibly be affected in a situation. Right now the program is voluntary here in Iowa, but if looking at states like Wisconsin (where as of Jan 1, 2006, it is the law) it will become mandatory in the near future.

Eric Rupnow

Upcoming Shelby County Events

Jan. 19 and Feb. 2—Private Pesticide Applicator Training at the First Assembly of God, Harlan, at 9:00, 1:30, and 7:00.

Jan. 25—Confinement Site Manure Applicators Training at the Portsmouth Parish Center from 1:30 to 3:30

Agricultural Marketing Resource Center Assists Ag Producers in Applying for USDA Value-Added Grants

AMES, Iowa -- The Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (AgMRC) is assisting producer groups in gathering information for use in applying for the USDA Rural Business Service (RBS) value-added agriculture grants recently made available.

AgMRC is a virtual library of agricultural value-added opportunities, business development and consulting resources for producers, located at www.agmrc.org.

"There is a direct link on the home page of the site to take producers directly to the federal notice of solicitation of applications, tips on writing grants and a directory of consultants and service providers," said Mary Holz-Clause, co-director of the center. "Additional resources for producers to develop their business or to find a new market opportunity for an existing business are also available."

The resource link on AgMRC for the value-added producer grants is listed at http://www.agmrc.org/agmrc/business/startingbusiness/grants.htm.

Producers can investigate specific commodity information on many different niche opportunities and can locate specific laws, consultants and individual contacts within their individual state to assist them in the grant application process.

"The consultant database available on the Web site includes specific commodity consultants, business development consultants and those consultants specializing in grant writing," said Don Hofstrand, co-director of AgMRC.

RBS announced the availability of $19.475 million in competitive grant funds for fiscal year 2006 on Dec. 21, 2005, to help independent agricultural producers enter into value-added activities. The grant will fund one of the following two activities:

1. Developing feasibility studies or business plans (including marketing plans or other planning activities) needed to establish a viable value-added marketing opportunity for an agricultural product; or
2. Acquiring working capital to operate a value-added business venture or an alliance that will allow the producers to better compete in domestic and international markets.

Value-added products are defined as follows:

1. A change in the physical state or form of the product (such as milling wheat into flour or making strawberries into jam);
2. The production of a product in a manner that enhances its value, as demonstrated through a business plan (such as organically produced products);
3. The physical segregation of an agricultural commodity or product in a manner that results in the enhancement of the value of that commodity or product (such as an identity preserved marketing system).

Value-added also includes using any agricultural product or commodity to produce renewable energy on a farm or ranch.

Applications must be completed and submitted no later than March 31, 2006.

Located at Iowa State University (ISU), AgMRC is a national center for value-added agriculture resources. Partnering institutions include ISU Extension, Center for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) at ISU, Kansas State University and the University of California. For more information, visit www.agmrc.org or call toll-free at (866) 277-5567.

Pesky Little Flies

By Laura Jesse
Entomologist, Iowa State University Extension

It is never fun to walk into the kitchen and notice little flies resting on the walls and cupboards. Where did these flies come from? And most importantly, how do I get rid of them?

There are a handful of common flies that we find in homes. Two of the common small flies are fruit flies and fungus gnats. Fruit flies have stout bodies and red eyes. Fungus gnats look like small mosquitoes. Both flies are less than one-fourth of an inch in size.

We consider these flies a nuisance pest because they don't damage anything. Like all flies, they have a complete life cycle with an egg stage, larval stage, pupal stage and adult stage. The adult flies are the annoyance, but it is the larval flies that we need to locate and control.

These flies get into homes from the outdoors or occasionally are brought in on rotting fruit. Household insecticide sprays labeled for fly control can be used to eliminate the adult flies that are present at the time of treatment, but this will be only a temporary relief at best. If you want to get rid of the flies you need to focus on locating where the larvae are feeding. Fly breeding areas are occasionally very difficult to locate and perseverance and imagination will be required. Regardless of where the flies originate, the adults will be seen at windows and sinks, as they are attracted to light and to moisture.

Fruit flies can reproduce anywhere there is fermenting organic matter that stays consistently wet or moist. Rotting fruit is one possibility, but it takes almost two weeks for larvae to develop into adult flies. If you are a better housekeeper than I am, it is likely you will have thrown away any rotten fruit or vegetables before the flies have time to complete their life cycle.

The most likely of such sites in the home is a slow-moving or seldom-used sink, bathtub, shower or floor drain in which a layer of slime (gelatinous film) has built up above the water line. One way to check individual drains is to cover the drain with a plastic film taped to the floor or fixture. If the flies are breeding in that drain, the adults will accumulate underneath the film within a day or two. Other moist accumulations of fermenting organic matter are possible and should be considered. These include wet areas under dripping pipes and refrigeration equipment, garbage containers and discarded bottles and cans.

The most effective method to eliminate fruit flies developing in drains is to clean the inside of the drain pipe to eliminate the organic matter. Clean slow-moving drains with a stiff brush or other tool. Drains that cannot be scrubbed can be rinsed with water under high pressure or "sterilized" by slowly pouring boiling water down along the sides of the drain pipe. Another possibility is the use of a bacterial drain treatment that biodegrades the organic matter. Follow label directions carefully for best results. There is no benefit to treating drains with bleach or ammonia.

Fungus gnats are frequently quite plentiful outdoors in fungi, damp soil and decayed vegetable matter. Though fungus gnats occasionally wander in from outdoors, a persistent problem with this nuisance in the house indicates an indoor breeding site. The immature stage of the fungus gnat is a small white maggot that lives in very moist areas high in decaying organic matter. This habitat may occur indoors with houseplants or in slow-running drains, moisture-accumulating cracks and crevices, refrigerator drain pans and other places where fungi and slime accumulate.

When houseplants are infested, it is often because they are overwatered. Fungus gnats cannot survive in houseplants if the soil is permitted to dry out almost to the leaf-wilting point between waterings. Otherwise, houseplant insecticide spray can be applied to the surface of the soil and around the edges of the pot.

2005 Soybean Crop Performance Data Available

AMES, Iowa – Results of the 2005 Iowa Crop Performance Test for soybeans are now available online at the Iowa Crop Improvement Association (ICIA) Web site: http://www.agron.iastate.edu/icia/. Published bulletins will be available in the December issue of the Iowa Soybean Review and in the Dec. 24 issue of Iowa Farmer Today. Results may also be requested by contacting the Iowa Crop Improvement Association at (515) 294-6921 or the ISU Extension Distribution Center (https://www.extension.iastate.edu/store/) or (515) 294-5247.

2005 Hybrid Corn Performance Data Available

AMES, Iowa -- Results of the 2005 Iowa Crop Performance Test for hybrid corn are now available online at the Iowa Crop Improvement Association Web site: http://www.agron.iastate.edu/icia/.

Published bulletins will be included in the Dec. 10 issue of the Iowa Farmer Today and available at ISU Extension county offices starting about Dec. 21. Copies also are available from the Iowa Crop Improvement Association at (515) 294-6921 or the ISU Extension Distribution Center (https://www.extension.iastate.edu/store/) or (515) 294-5247.

4-State Beef Conference Set for January 11 & 12

Area cattlemen should mark the dates of January 11th and 12th on their calendars and make plans to attend the 22nd 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 2006 conference are as follows: Dr. Dan Moser, Kansas State University Animal Science Department – “Simple Sire Selection – Interpreting EPDs”; Dr. Bob Weaber, University of Missouri

Animal Science Department – "Maker-Assisted Selection – Marbling and Tenderness"; Dr. Gerald Stokka, Pfizer Animal Health – "Calf Health – Minimizing Losses"; Dr. Rick Rasby, University of Nebraska Extension Beef Specialist – "Reducing Summer Feed Costs".

The conference is scheduled for Wednesday, January 11th and Thursday, January 12th, 2006. The Wednesday morning session will begin at 10:00 a.m. in Tecumseh, Nebraska at the Community Building, and the afternoon session will begin at 4:00 p.m. in Holton, Kansas at the Jackson County Fair Building. The Thursday morning session will also begin at 10:00 a.m. in Savannah, Missouri at the Clasbey Center, and the afternoon session will start at 4:00 p.m. in Lewis, Iowa at the ISU Armstrong Research Farm.

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 January 6th, 2006. The fee includes a beef meal and a copy of the conference proceedings. For more information, contact your local county extension office, or visit our website at: www.extension.iastate.edu/feci/4StBeef/.

Free Crop Fair in Guthrie County

The Iowa Corn Promotion Board, Iowa Corn Growers Association and ISU Extension, Guthrie County have teamed together to host a FREE Crop Fair. The Crop Fair will be held on January 9, 2006 at the Guthrie County Extension Office in Guthrie Center. It will be held from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm with a free lunch provided. A flyer with the agenda can be found at http://www.extension.iastate.edu/guthrie/news/freecropfair.htm.

Guthrie County Extension will be hosting the Private Pesticide Training in Panora at the Panorama High School Auditorium on January 9, 2006. The training will begin at 1:30 pm with blood pressure checks by Public Health provided prior to the class. Plan to spend a funfilled day with lots of good information and training.

Contact Linda Lilly at the Extension Office for further information. 641-747-2276

Grazing Conference Slated for Jan. 28 in Creston

CRESTON, Iowa -- Southern Iowa's beef producers are invited to attend a graziers' conference at the Southwestern Community College campus in Creston on Saturday, Jan. 28.

The conference features a wide variety of presentations on topics including grazing basics, fescue management, feedlot regulations, alternative land uses, contract grazing, weed and brush control and government programs.

"In addition to a great mixture of topics, we have excellent speakers to present on these issues," says Joe Sellers, Iowa State University (ISU) Extension field specialist. The speaker list includes Dr. Craig Roberts of the University of Missouri, Shawn Shouse, ISU Extension ag engineer, Jane Hansen of Dow Agri-Sciences, NRCS staff and Iowa beef producers. Two producer panels will discuss contract grazing and the use of CRP buffers.

The conference begins at 8:30 a.m. with registration and exhibits, and the program begins at 9:30 a.m. with a welcome by Lee Faris, National Cattlemen's Beef Association Environmental Stewardship regional winner.

Registration is $5 at the door, which includes a lunch provided by the Union County Cattlemen's. The event is being sponsored by local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, ISU Extension, the Iowa Beef Center at Iowa State University, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

For more information, visit the Calendar page at www.iowabeefcenter.org, contact Joe Sellers at sellers@iastate.edu or (641) 774-2016, or contact your local Extension or NRCS office.