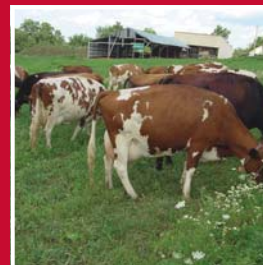


FIELD & FEEDLOT



ISU EXTENSION & OUTREACH—NORTHWEST REGIONS

JANUARY 2012 ISSUE

Extension Web Sites

Ag Decision Maker

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/>

Beef Center

<http://www.iowabeefcenter.org/>

Manure Management

<http://www.agronext.iastate.edu/immag/>

Pork Center

<http://www.ipic.iastate.edu/>

ISU Extension Dairy Team

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/DairyTeam/>

ISU Farm - On the Farm Research

By Joel DeJong, ISU Extension & Outreach Field Agronomist

ISU Extension and Outreach, ISU Research and Demonstration farms and the NW Iowa Experimental Association partnered together in 2005 to form the NW Iowa On-Farm Research Project. This started as a supplement to work conducted on research farms around Iowa. The ISU Research farms study lots of agronomic questions, but not all producers believe and adopt results from this work because it might not be local, and it wasn't done in field length trials. This project gives cooperators a chance to do some of the same replicated comparisons on their own farms. It also allows a chance to share these results with their neighbors in NW Iowa.

Since the inception of this project, we have had the chance to work with 33 different cooperators that have completed about 320 different replicated trials. Information has been shared widely in meetings and in published annual reports. Producer feedback has indicated that these results offer a useful tool for making agronomic decisions. This success has been recognized by others, and is starting to expand outside of the NW corner of Iowa. In the future, this program will be called ISU FARM – which stands for Farmer Assisted Research and Management.

Project Examples: One of the first projects was related to a recommendation that the ISU Soybean Specialist made in 2005 relating to lower soybean yields. Palle Pedersen indicated that if final soybean stands of 100,000 plants were uniformly found in soybean fields at the end of the growing season then no significant yield loss would occur from having too low of a population. Many producers were seeding 160,000 to 175,000 seeds per acre at that time, and were hesitant to follow that advice. As part of this project we worked with more than 20 comparisons of 125,000 and 175,000

seeding rates over 4 years. 22 of 23 sites making this comparison showed no significant difference in yield. Several of our cooperators have reduced seeding rates as a result.

Another set of comparisons on multiple sites has been comparing the response to using fungicides on corn and soybeans. Results have been mixed, and producers still are learning from continued studies. This past year a study comparing response to aerial vs. ground application vs. no fungicide was implemented. We plan to repeat that study next year if possible.

Many other projects looking to answer the questions farmers have about cropping practices have been completed. Look for some new projects on the list in 2012! Results from 2011 can be found on the Plymouth County Extension website (<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/plymouth/>) – but probably not until the end of January after all cooperators have had a chance to review the data. Results from 2010 projects can also be found there. Data from 2006-2009 can be found online at <http://ofr.ag.iastate.edu/>.

Water Testing for Small Feedlots

By Kris Kohl, ISU Extension & Outreach Ag Engineer

Iowa State University Extension and Iowa Department of Natural Resources are working together to help feedlot producers evaluate their own lots using water test kits.

The pilot project has been started in 20 counties in Iowa to help beef and dairy farmers evaluate their own feedlot runoff control systems by using a test kit that they can check out from the county Extension office.

The key points to this new program are as follows:

- The test kit checks for ammonia in the water which is very toxic to fish and comes from animal urine.
- There is only one kit per county in the counties that get them, so the Extension office will ask producers for their name and phone number so that they can be contacted to return the kit when another farmer requests its use.
- There is no charge for using the kit and no request for any of the results. The results are a change in color in test tube they should be emptied out soon after the participant

sees them. They are meant for the feedlot owner's eyes only. If additional help is requested I (Kris Kohl) will be glad to discuss the results and offer suggestions.

- Farmers from other counties can use the kits but because of the pilot project there are not enough water tests to go everywhere, but NW Iowa has gotten more than its fair share. My belief is that feedlot operations will make the best discussions if they know what impact their feedlot is having.
- There is a short DVD instruction on how to use the test kit that comes with it. This can be viewed at the Extension office if the farmer doesn't have one at home or has any questions.
- Counties are: Sioux, Lyon, Osceola, O'Brien, Cherokee, Plymouth, Buena Vista, Clay.

Swine Update

By Dave Stender, ISU Extension & Outreach Swine Program Specialist

The year of 2011 was a respectable year for pork producers, on average there was opportunity for reasonable levels of profitability. Producers are in for a ride in 2012 as the highs and the lows for next year have fluctuated radically this fall. The outlook for 2012 changed by over \$25 per head in less than 6 weeks from mid-August to early October as feed prices dropped and lean hog futures increased. There are on-line sessions currently being held for swine producers interested in learning more about managing risk. Contact the Cherokee County Extension office for more information. (712)225-6196.

Even with continued high feed prices, profit for the pork producer has been positive because of very high hog prices, breaking record levels at times this summer. The financial position of most swine producers has been improving over the past months, but still has not recovered fully from the financial problems of 2008. Producers are working hard to increase competitive position as productivity is still increasing. The average litter size is now over ten pigs per litter and feed conversion gains are common with improvement genetics and health.

We may see some building construction this coming year, mainly because older buildings are being retired. The life of a building is 30 to 40 years and it takes a lot of building to finish out over 100 million pigs a year. On average, several hundred buildings need to be replaced each year; however, building investments usually come in spurts as financial conditions dictate. Building has been minimal for the past few years, so we are due for increased interest in new facilities. The other factor in the decision to invest in swine facilities is the value of the manure. As fertilizer prices increase, so does the value of swine manure as a crop fertilizer. Sometimes the decision to invest in newer facilities is based on the value of recycling nutrients through the swine back onto the lands with manure application.

Next year promises to be an interesting one for pork producers. Profits will continue to be depending on demand, especially export demand and the health of the world economy. No sizeable expansion coming, total swine numbers will be slightly greater than 2011. Most of the increase in number will continue to come from continued improvement in weaning averages. As we close the book on 2011, swine producers are cautiously optimistic about 2012 prospects.

Farm Employee Management: Put Job Descriptions to Work on Your Farm

Melissa O'Rourke – ISU Extension & Outreach Farm & Agribusiness Management Specialist morourke@iastate.edu
712-737-4230

Do you become aggravated with employees who simply do not seem to know what they are supposed to be doing? Have you ever had high hopes for a new employee who just did not last on the job because they did not understand what was expected of them?

Whether your farm has two employees or twenty-five, the effective development and implementation of job descriptions might be a tool that could be put to good use on your dairy farm. Job descriptions help workers know what is expected of them and serve as a fundamental basis for employee communication and development.

Job descriptions summarize the overall function of a position, and detail the qualifications and duties expected of the employees. While developing job descriptions might seem like just one more thing to do in farm operation, there are significant benefits to consider.

Recruitment: When you have taken the time to analyze the essential duties of a position, you are more likely to recruit appropriate applicants. If you are looking for an employee with experience in handling livestock, operating implements, equipment mechanics or operation or computer skills, you will identify these needs if you have job descriptions for the positions on your farm. This will help to attract applicants who have the skills you seek.

Hiring and Selection: A good job description is an essential aid in the interviewing and selection process. During the interview, you can go over the necessary qualifications and duties of the position with each applicant, asking about training and past experience. This serves to keep you on task as you interview, compare and evaluate job applicants. This process also serves to communicate with potential employees what will be required of them. The applicant receives guidance on what will be expected of them and gives the applicant keys on questions that need to be asked. Because you have reviewed the requirements of the position with applicants, you are likely to make a better new employee selection.

Training and Employee Development: All new employees need job orientation and training. When you have reviewed the requirements of a position with a new employee, you have a good idea of the individual's past experience and well as the training needs for that new employee. Similarly, as experienced employees move into more advanced work, you can continue positive training and employee development experiences. This increases employee satisfaction and productivity.

Evaluation: All employees like to know what is expected of them, and whether they are meeting expectations. Properly developed job descriptions are tools that can be used in the employee evaluation process. By reviewing the elements of the original job description – and combining these with performance criteria – both you and the worker can periodically determine whether expectations are being met and where improvement or additional training is needed. You will also evaluate whether the employee's actual duties have changed or evolved over time. This is also a good time to update position descriptions.

Communication: As indicated, the job description is a good tool for communication between employer and employee. However, it also aids communication among employees. When all employees understand their job duties, they have a better idea of where they fit into the overall operation, and how they relate to one another.

Organizational Development: Your farm is a growing, developing organization – whether you always think of it that way or not. Taking the time to analyze your labor needs and develop job descriptions is a huge step in helping your farm to be a more efficient, effective and profitable business. Your farm operation will run more smoothly when you and your employees understand their role on the farm. Just like players on a well-coached football team, employees who understand their role in the organization are more likely to work as a team.

Job descriptions are just one more tool increase farm efficiency. When staff people understand their jobs and relationships on the farm, it is easier to work toward excellence because everyone knows who is responsible for what tasks. Now that you have been convinced to take the time to develop job descriptions, it would be helpful to know how to go about the analysis and assembly. That will be the topic of our next employee management article. In the meantime, you might want to take a look at this publication from the University of Nebraska Extension on "How to Write a Dairy Job Description" www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/pages/publicationD.jsp?publicationId=692

As always, feel free to contact me with any of your farm employee management questions.

AG DECISIONS 2012

February 1, 2012 - 9am to 3pm

Sioux Center, Iowa

An Agriculture Risk Management and Outlook Event

WHO SHOULD ATTEND? Producers and agricultural support industries in the region will not want to miss this event intended to focus on risk management strategies and the agricultural outlook in northwest Iowa.

WHERE WILL AG DECISIONS 2012 TAKE PLACE? In Sioux Center at the New Life Reformed Church conference center – two blocks east of the WalMart stoplight on Highway 75 in Sioux Center.

HOW TO PRE-REGISTER? *Seating will be limited!* Pre-register by calling the Sioux County Extension Office at **712-737-4230** or e-mail xsioux@iastate.edu. Reserve your seat by sending the \$25 registration fee – which includes a roast beef & pork buffet lunch – to:

ISU Extension – Sioux County
400 Central Ave NW, Orange City IA 51041

WHY ATTEND? Ag Decisions 2012 is your opportunity to get the latest information and updates on the outlook for agriculture – globally and locally! Ag Decisions 2012 features a **keynote address** by **JASON HENDERSON**, vice president and Omaha Branch executive with the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City who speaks frequently to a wide range of business, financial and policy audiences across the United States and internationally.

WHAT ELSE? Ag Decisions 2012 features breakout sessions on ag outlook and risk management topics of interest to producers and agribusiness interests. Sessions include:

- ▶ USDA-NASS Director—Iowa Office: *How the National Agricultural Statistics Service Works for You*
- ▶ Director—Center for Farm Financial Management: *2012 Crop Insurance Program – How Much is Enough?*
- ▶ South Dakota State University Livestock Specialist – *Livestock Outlook for 2012*
- ▶ Iowa State University Ag Economist & Grain Marketing Specialist: *2012 Markets Outlook*
- ▶ Iowa State University Agronomist: *Economics of Soil Fertility*
- ▶ University of Minnesota FinPack Specialist: *Putting Together Your Farm Financial Picture*

Don't miss this opportunity to get information you need to make 2012 your best year yet!

For more information, contact Farm & Agribusiness Management Specialist Melissa O'Rourke at the Sioux County Extension Office (712-737-4230) or e-mail morourke@iastate.edu.

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

Commercial Manure Applicator Training

January 5, 9a.m. - Noon
Pocahontas County Extension

Confinement Manure Applicator Training

February 8, 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.
Pocahontas County Extension

Private Pesticide Continuing Education

February 15, 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Rialto Theater, Pocahontas

Pesticide Applicator Testing

March 7, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Expo Center, Pocahontas

EVALUATING YOUR ESTATE PLAN

- ◆ February 7 - Hardin County Extension Office, Iowa Falls, 641-648-4850
- ◆ **February 15 - Plymouth County Extension Office, Le Mars, 712-546-7835**
- ◆ February 16 - Upper Iowa University, Student Center Ballroom, Building 19, Fayette, 563-425-3331
- ◆ **February 22 - Adair County Extension Office, Greenfield, 641-743-8412**
- ◆ February 23 - Linn County Extension Office, Marion, 319-377-9839

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Cooperative Extension

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