

# FIELD & FEEDLOT



NORTHWEST AREA EXTENSION

AUGUST 2008 ISSUE

## Never a Dull Moment

*By Beth Ellen Doran, ISU Extension Beef Field Specialist*

The cattle industry can be described with a lot of words, but “dull” is not one of them! High feed costs, volatile markets and COOL are just a few items that cattle producers are currently juggling.

**High Feed Costs** – Will feed prices continue to move steadily upward? Probably not, but then, the likelihood of cheap feed in the near future is also slim and none. Truth is – there is no “cheap” ration.

But, there are ways to control costs. There is a link on the front page of the Iowa Beef Center website (<http://www.iowabeefcenter.org>) to a special section on managing high feed costs. Some of the articles feature how to get more grass production from pasture, stretching hay supplies for the cow herd, the top ten ways to reduce feedlot costs, and the top 12 ways to reduce cow-calf costs.

There are also two assessment tools – one for cow-calf and one for feedlot – where a producer can rate their own operation. I would encourage you to complete these for your cattle operation. In an era of high feed costs, even small improvements in feed efficiency and reducing feed waste can pay big dividends!

**Cattle Prices** – It’s amazing how fed cattle prices have remained strong. Watch the spread between live cattle prices and feeder cattle prices. This has been narrowing. Some analysts suggest that perhaps these two prices could come together – which would be unusual.

To help producers protect their cattle prices, the Iowa Beef Center is offering several workshops dealing with tools and strategies to protect feeder calf and fed cattle prices. All workshops will be 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

The feeder calf (cow-calf) workshops will be August 6 at the Western Iowa Research and Demonstration Farm (Castana) and September 3 at the Social Center (Ruthven). The fed cattle (feedlot) workshops will be August 21 at the Sioux County Extension Office (Orange City) and August 28 at Vinny’s BBQ (Dakota City IA). For workshop and registration details, contact Beth Doran (712-737-4230) or Dennis DeWitt (712-336-3488).

**COOL** – Country of Origin Labeling will be mandatory September 30, 2008. There will be four labels:

- U.S. Country of Origin – cattle and beef products that are born, raised and slaughtered in the U.S.
- Mixed Country of Origin – cattle born, raised, or slaughtered in the U.S., but that have also spent time in another country (such as Mexican or Canadian feeder cattle).
- Imported for Immediate Slaughter – cattle imported within days of slaughter within the U.S. (such as fed cattle from Mexico or Canada).
- Foreign Product – slaughtered and processed beef imported from other countries.

Ground beef will be labeled to identify the countries used to make it.

The law states that records used in the normal course of business will count as permitted documentation. This could be health papers, import certificates, breeding papers or producer affidavits, purchase and sale invoices, etc. Keep a record of where and when you bought or sold cattle. However, stay tuned for the rules of implementation. There may be more specific details on what additional documents may be needed to verify origin.

The grandfather date for all cattle within the U.S. is July 15, 2008. Any animal on U.S. soil prior to July 15, 2008 will be considered part of the national herd and labeled “Product of the U.S.”

## Fungicides On Corn

*By Paul Kassel, ISU Extension Field Agronomist*

There has been a lot of interest in the use of fungicides to increase corn grain yields. There are two schools of thought on this. The first is that the strobilurin group of fungicides have some properties that may increase yield without disease. These effects are:

- Increased CO<sub>2</sub> uptake – more carbon to make starch with
- Less respiration – the use of starch.
- Better nitrogen use – greener plants.
- Higher rates of photosynthesis – or capture of sunlight

The second school of thought is that fungicides will control fungal diseases (which is what the word fungicide means) that destroy leaf area. More corn acres and more corn-on-corn acres may lead to more leaf disease. Most of the leaf diseases overwinter on crop residue (exception is common and southern rust), and then infect the new leaves of the corn plant. The severity of most of the corn leaf diseases is correlated with the amount of corn residue on the soil surface. Therefore, reduced tillage corn-on-corn fields are – at least theoretically - more susceptible to leaf diseases.

**Making fungicides pay.** Iowa State University Extension personnel and Corn Soybean Initiative Partners conducted 34 field scale trials in 2007 to evaluate corn fungicides as a way to increase corn grain yield. Information on the level of leaf disease, stalk rot and crop rotation was also gathered with these field scale trials. Several of the trials were in northwest Iowa. Read more at <http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/icm/2007/12-10/foliarfun.html>

The results showed a positive 3.3 bushel per acre yield increase. About three-fourths of the plots showed a positive yield response and about one-third of the plots showed a profitable response to the fungicide application.

The greatest yield responses came from areas that had the most leaf disease. Most of the plots did not have a great deal of leaf disease.

**Using this data for 2008.** The data from these ISU plots and others like it in the Midwest show that corn fungicides are the most beneficial when leaf disease is present. It appears that the corn fungicides – as a general statement – do not increase yields that much without the presence of leaf disease.

Therefore, a farmer can decide in season to use a fungicide based on the level of leaf disease that is present.

**Fields that are the most likely to benefit from fungicide are:**

- Corn on corn fields
- Fields with susceptible hybrids
- Fields with a high yield potential

**Scouting for leaf disease.** Check fields for leaf disease if the above criteria are present.

Hybrids that are susceptible (or moderately susceptible) to leaf diseases:

- A fungicide application may be warranted if disease is present on or above the third leaf below the ear leaf on 50 percent of the plants at tasseling.

Hybrids that are intermediate in their susceptibility to leaf disease (applies to many hybrids).

- A fungicide need only be applied if conditions are favorable for disease development. Conditions that favor disease development occur when disease is present on or above the third leaf below the ear leaf or higher on 50 percent of the plants at tasseling time, the weather is warm and humid, and the field has a history of GLS.

**Northwest Iowa.** The trials that were conducted in northwest Iowa showed some response to corn fungicides –about a 4 - 5 bu/a yield increase. However, there were very low levels of leaf disease present in the plots. Typically, northern Iowa has less corn disease than other parts of the state – because of rainfall occurrence, relative humidity levels and relatively low nighttime temperatures.

**Learn more about leaf diseases.** Check-out <http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/icm/2007/2-12/diseases.html> for more information on diseases with corn on corn.

## Cash Rent

*By Roger Jensen, ISU Extension Field Specialist*

The question on the mind of many tenants and land owners is where are cash rents going for the 2009 crop year? If we just look at the price of what grain has done these past few months we would say yes, it must go higher. However, there are other factors to take into consideration.

- Price increases for corn and soybeans since mid-April have been mostly a result of poor weather rather than an increase in demand, and probably should not be expected to last until harvest of the 2009 crop.
- Inputs for fertilizer, seed, fuel and herbicides have also taken a big jump.
- Risk of uncertain prices and yields.
- The quality of the land needs to be taken into consideration. Some ground will produce more bushels/acre.
- Size of fields and the ease of planting and harvesting is a factor.

The fluctuating prices and uncertain yields may make it difficult to arrive at a fair cash rental rate for the coming year. Because of this some tenants and land owners are turning to a flexible cash rent lease.

Flexible leases have the following advantages:

- The actual rent paid adjusts automatically as yields or prices fluctuate.
- Risks are shared between the owner and the tenant, as are profit opportunities.
- Owners are paid in cash--they do not have to be involved in decisions about crop inputs or grain marketing.

Flexible cash rent as well as other forms of leases will be discussed at an upcoming Farmland Leasing Meeting held throughout the area. Contact your local County Extension Office for the times and locations.

A very important factor to take into consideration when drawing up a lease and setting a cash rent is communication. Land owners and tenants need to sit down and discuss their ideas and goals. A lot of misunderstanding and disagreements can be avoided by talking.

## Buying & Selling Manure

By Kris Kohl, ISU Extension Ag Engineer Field Specialist

Animal manure has been a substitute for commercial fertilizer for a long time, but the high cost of energy has rapidly changed the standards by which it changes hands. In the past, manure was often free for the hauling at the livestock facility for the lower value manures. Money only changed hands with high concentrated manure like poultry and finishing swine. In 2007-2008, fertilizer prices have tripled while the cost of hauling has increased 30% -50% making many manures worth much more than the cost of hauling.

During these volatile times, more crop and livestock farmers need to have flexible agreements that match the supply and demand for the crop nutrients they need for production. To meet this need, ISU Extension is planning a program to address the concerns of both parties when buying and selling manure. The topics will include:

- Determining the crop need
- Requirements in a DNR manure management plan
- Compaction and calibration
- Valuing the manure and agreements

The program will be offered at these times:

- Friday, August 22, 2008, 1:30 pm at the Carroll Extension Office
- Tuesday, August 26, 2008, 9:00 am at the Western Iowa Community College in Cherokee
- Tuesday, August 26, 2008 @ 1:30 pm at the Northwestern Iowa Community College in Sheldon

Program registration fee is \$25.00 if postmarked by Monday, August 18, 2008 or \$35.00 payable at the door. For more information, contact Kris Kohl @ 712-732-5056.

## The Manure on Frozen Ground Issue—An Update

By Chris Mondak, ISU Extension Dairy Field Specialist

There has been much talk and concern lately about possible changes in rules regarding application of manure to frozen ground. Here is a **brief status report on this issue** from Angie Rieck-Hinz, the ISU agronomist who coordinates the Iowa Manure Management Action Group (IMMAG):

- The DNR staff person assigned to this topic is still researching the topic, and will not have a draft proposed rule out until September at the earliest.
- Once a draft proposed rule is formed, it will go for review to EPC (Environmental Protection Commission, an advisory board appointed by the governor.)
- From the EPC meetings, the proposed rule change then goes to Public Hearing.
- All of this takes time, and given this timeline, there will not be a new rule in place that will affect Winter 2009 manure application.

The key point here is that proposed rule change is a PROCESS, and a process that allows input from concerned citizens. Here is what agriculture producers and concerned stakeholders can do:

- Attend the Public Hearings on this topic and proposed rule change.
- Talk to those who represent you or who serve agriculture: elected legislators at local and state level, producer groups (i.e., Western Iowa Dairy Alliance, Iowa Cattlemen, Iowa Pork Producers, IFBF, Coalition to Support Iowa Farmers, Iowa Manure Management Action Group).
- Be informed: Learn more science-based information about winter manure application and water quality protection at 2009 Manure Certification Workshops hosted by ISU Extension at numerous locations throughout our region. Your local ISU Extension county office is a good point of contact for details about meeting dates and locations.

## New NW Iowa Dairy Hosts OPEN HOUSE—August 16, 2008

By Chris Mondak, ISU Extension Dairy Field Specialist

**The Van Ess family invites all to an OPEN HOUSE on Saturday, August 16,** to view their recently completed 4000 -cow dairy located near Sanborn, Iowa. From Sanborn, go 2 miles east on Hwy 18, and 2 miles north on Sorrel Avenue. **The Open House and guided tours run 11am – 3pm, with lunch available 12-2 pm.**

**What you will learn about at this new dairy:**

- Cross-ventilation system to achieve comfortable environment in cow housing area
- Sand-lanes that separate sand bedding from manure solids, and cleans the sand for re-use again as bedding material in the cow housing area
- The logistics of a 24/7 milking schedule that focuses on providing excellent cow care, good working environment, and efficient production of quality milk.

Although this new farm is larger than most of the farms in Iowa, it still adheres to commonly held principles of good cow care and environmental stewardship that are prevalent through today's dairy industry. **This is a good opportunity to learn about the value system and priorities of Iowa's dairy producers.**