



Acreage Living

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<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Pages/webster/acreage>

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WATCH FOR THE SMV

By Shawn Shouse, ISU Extension Field Specialist/Ag Engineering

This is the time of year when driving in Iowa can be both a joy to the senses and a risk to your life. Fall brings out the vibrant colors of the harvest season, but it also brings the steady stream of slow moving vehicles and farm equipment traffic.

Over 300 traffic collisions involve farm vehicles in Iowa each year. Many of these farm vehicle collisions occur during harvest season. October has nearly twice as many collisions as any other month. The most common time of day for collisions is between 4 and 8 p.m. Collisions with left-turning farm vehicles and rear end collisions with farm vehicles top the list of accident scenarios.

To protect yourself and others, watch for the orange and red triangle that indicates a slow moving vehicle.

The SMV (Slow Moving Vehicle) sign is required on the back of any farm vehicle or implement that travels the road at less than 25 miles per hour. Be alert for farm traffic and slow down well in advance when you approach.

For more information, ask the Webster County Extension Office for bulletin Pm-1629, Safety on Iowa Roads, or check out the webversion at:

<http://www.exnet.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1629.pdf>



STRETCHING FUEL DOLLARS

By Mary Beth Kaufman, ISU Extension Field Specialist/Family Resource Management

The high price of gasoline may have you wondering what you can do to save money on vehicle fuel costs. While you may not have a lot control over gasoline prices, you

can take steps to use fuel more efficiently. Here are some ideas offered by the U.S. Department of energy.

Properly Inflate Tires. Car manufactures must place a label in the car stating the correct tire pressure. If the label lists a psi (pounds per square inch) range, use the higher number to maximize fuel efficiency.

Maintain the Engine. Change the oil as recommended and replace the air filter regularly.

Observe the Speed Limit. At speeds above 55 mph, fuel economy decreases rapidly. Using cruise control on highway trips can help you maintain a constant speed and, in most cases, will reduce your fuel consumption.

Plan Trips. Combining errands into one-trip saves you time and fuel costs.

If you're in the market for a different vehicle look for a fuel efficient one.

You can compare the fuel economy of any vehicle on the interactive Fuel Economy website <http://www.fueleconomy.gov/>. You'll also find a printable fuel economy guide, a listing of the most and least fuel-efficient vehicles and other gas mileage tips.



BATS IN THE BELFRY?

By Jim Pease, ISU Extension Wildlife Specialist, Ames Phone: 515-294-7429 – e-mail: jipease@iastate.edu

Decades of bad press and centuries of legends of Dracula have given bats a bad name. Bats really are fascinating wild creatures often misunderstood and, unfortunately, mistreated by unknowing people. While you may not want to share your house with them, they are extremely valuable to have around.

Bats are not “flying mice” and are more closely related to insect-eating shrews. All nine species of Iowa bats are important insect eaters, often consuming hundreds of insects each in a single night’s flight! Bats are not blind, though eyesight is not important in their search for food. They have excellent hearing and large ears.

During winter bats in Iowa either migrate south or hibernate in hollow trees, caves or human-made structures, including house attics, walls, and basements.

While most people do not desire bats in their homes, their insect-eating habits make them extremely valuable to have around. There are no federal or state-registered “baticides.” Excluding bats with proper screening and caulking is the method of choice. However, exclusion should be done ONLY during months in which young bats are not likely to be trapped inside to starve to death. That means doing exclusion only during April to mid-May or after August 15th. Exclusion must be done at night, while bats are out flying, or by placing a one-way door over their entrance for several days, allowing them to escape.

For more information on bats, contact the Iowa DNR for a copy of A Guide to the Bats of Iowa, a publication of the Iowa Wildlife Diversity Program. You may also contact Bat Conservation International on the web at www.batcon.org.



MANAGING THROUGH THE BACK-TO-SCHOOL CRUNCH TIME!

By Barb Wollen, Family Resource Management Field Specialist ISU Extension, Hamilton County, Phone: 515-832-9597

Back to school time presents financial challenges to most families with school-aged children. While there are no magical solutions to those challenges, here are four key actions that will make it a little easier to meet those challenges.

1. **Identify and prioritize needs.** When it comes to kids' clothing, the picture is always changing, because kids grow and clothes wear out. Make a list what additional items you need or want, and mark which are the most important. You might also divide your list according to which things that you could buy used and which you need to buy new.
2. **Use all available resources.** In any "crunch situation" it is smart to use all the resources at your disposal. Take advantage of hand-me-downs from friends and relatives, check out what is available at garage sales and thrift stores, and use sewing skills to mend or alter clothing to meet your needs. *Caution: even though it is smart to take advantage of sales, that doesn't mean that an item on sale is always a good buy. Resist the temptation to buy items just because they're "on sale". A lot of money can be wasted that way.*
3. **Make a Back-to-School Spending Plan.** Begin with normal monthly essentials. Even with special needs, your basic living expenses must come first. Also, don't forget to plan for *special expenses* that may be scheduled for these months - bills or expenses that don't come every month, but that need to plan for, like license tags, birthdays, subscriptions. Place priority on your household's basic needs.
4. **Communicate well within your family.** Talk with your partner and your children about the fact that there are limits on what you can spend. Include them in the decisions about what purchases are most important. Children or teens will often be more satisfied with the results if they are involved in (or even in charge of) the decisions about their back-to-school clothing and supplies. In these discussions, be sure to avoid making your children feel worried or guilty about family finances. Instead, simply present the information in a matter-of-fact way, and ask for their suggestions and ideas. Be optimistic that together you can meet the challenges of the back-to-school crunch!



THICKENING PASTURES

By Carroll Olsen, ISU Extension Field Specialist/Crops

This a good time of year to be checking on your pasture's health and your pasture management. And it's one of the two best

times to do interseeding if you want to introduce new species of forages into your existing pasture to increase production.

Increasing production in this way also helps control weeds by filling in the blank spots and increasing plant competition.

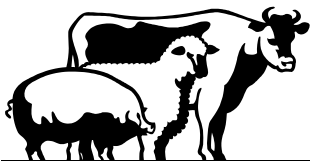
First, your management. Most of us use cool season forages and if they are ever vulnerable to drought and moisture stress this would be the time. Have you given the plants a chance to regrow, allowing some leaves to remain so as to manufacture food for the plants? Are you controlling the grazing patterns, not letting the livestock grub the plants into the ground in one area and letting plants go to seed in other areas.

Now for “thickening” a pasture. If the need is there to introduce other species into the pasture, it probably should be done before September 1. We need to get the root of the new seedling down and allow as much growth as possible before the first killing frost. You’ll need to make a judgment as to whether you feel there is enough moisture available in the soil to start the plants. Seedlings are expensive and you might want to wait until next spring.

Select the species for specific needs and purposes. You don’t need to get too fancy with the mixtures. I usually use smooth brome grass as a base and go from there. Brome grass plants seem to be able to take a lot of abuse and still come back. And, it will produce very well with high levels of management.

We’re always reading about some “new” forage that is going to revolutionize our forage capabilities. You need to check out how these miracle plants do in your area. Some graziers are adding perennial ryegrass because it produces very high quality forage. However, it may be best adapted to southern Iowa because of over wintering problems.

No matter what you plant or when you plant it, seed-soil contact is the key. The best is to have the area looking like a garden, the worst is to do nothing – just throw out the seed. Somewhere in between will help get the seed started. Don’t forget to schedule proper rains with Mother Nature.



LIVESTOCK & PET SAFETY INDEX FOR HEAT

By Shawn Shouse, ISU Extension Field Specialist/Ag Engineering

Animals suffer when summer temperatures and humidity rise together. The combined effect of high temperature and humidity limits the animal’s ability to get rid of excess body heat. Severe heat stress can lead to loss of performance and even death.

The Livestock Safety Index classifies weather conditions into alert, danger, and emergency situations for livestock. The following table shows minimum relative

humidity levels for each index category at different temperatures.

Temperature:

80° -	55% Alert, 90% Danger
85° -	30% Alert, 60% Danger, 90% Emergency
90° -	15% Alert, 35% Danger, 65% Emergency
95° -	n/a, 20% Danger, 45% Emergency
100° -	n/a, 10% Danger, 30% Emergency

Welcome!!!

The "Acreage Living" newsletter is being brought to you by the Webster County Extension Office. This resource will be published bi-monthly beginning in August, 2002.

The information will address frequent questions asked by residents of Webster County living outside incorporated areas. Examples include:

- Maintaining adequate quality water
- Landscaping/windbreaks
- Pest control
- Energy & wildlife conservation
- County zoning and sanitation
- Family, Finance, Nutrition & Health

This newsletter is available:

1. The Webster County Extension Web-site
2. The Webster County Extension Office
3. E-mail
4. Standard mail delivery

Sincerely,

James L. Patton
County Extension Education Director

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