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FOR THE WEEK OF September 26, 2005

Harvest Time

Harvest season is here again and that means that there will be a lot of farm machinery and other slow moving vehicles on the two-lane highways in Iowa. Drivers need to allow distance between their vehicle and farm equipment in order to avoid collisions. At dusk and at night it is sometimes hard to identify the type of vehicles you meet on a rural highway. Please slow down, be alert, and be prepared to stop. Lets all do our part to keep our roads safe during this harvest time. Also please take the time to talk to your young drivers about the dangers on rural roads during harvest time.

Nov. 14, Iowa Organic Conference, Ames

The 5th Annual Iowa Organic Conference will be held at the Scheman Building, Iowa State University, Ames, IA. This conference provides an excellent opportunity for farmers, educators, and others interested in or involved with organic agriculture to share their knowledge and experience for the advancement of organic agriculture in Iowa and the rest of the world. The keynote speaker for this year's conference is Katherine DiMatteo the executive director of the Organic Trade Association. Featured sessions include: Farmer-Chef Connections, Flax Production, Grant Writing, Marketing Innovations, Organic Fruits, Organic Greenhouse Production, Organic Livestock, Producing for the Market. For more information or to register, please visit <http://www.ucs.iastate.edu/mnet/organic05/about.html>

Asian Lady Beetles

Asian lady beetles and boxelder bugs are accidental invaders. The best way to deter Asian lady beetles and boxelder bugs is to prevent their entry by caulking and sealing cracks and gaps. A lawn and garden insecticide such as Sevin can be used outside on boxelder bugs along the foundation in the fall. For large infestations of Asian lady beetles, spraying a pyrethroid insecticide to the outside of buildings when the beetles appear may help prevent pest entry. Remember to read the label and follow all directions. Unfortunately, there is no easy cure for eliminating Asian lady beetles or boxelder bugs already inside the house. A control for bugs already in the house is to remove them as they appear by vacuuming or sweeping.

Minute Pirate Bugs

You will know you have met the pirate bug when you feel a painful bite, look to see what got you, and see a small black bug walking across your skin. Pirate bugs are about 1/10 of an inch long, oval to triangular in shape, somewhat flattened and black with whitish markings on the back. They are beneficial as predators, feeding on small insects and the eggs of other insects. Pirate bugs are present all summer in fields, woodlands, gardens and landscapes. In the late summer, however, they migrate from fields and woodlands and begin the disagreeable behavior of biting humans. Their bite is surprisingly painful for such a small insect as they probe their short blunt beak into the skin. They do not feed on blood or inject a venom or saliva. Control of minute pirate bugs is not practical, in part, because their presence and abundance is temporary and variable from year to year. Further, widespread control is not desirable because of the beneficial role they have in the environment. Wearing dark clothing on very warm days when pirate bugs are abundant may help. Repellents are generally not effective though you may want to try them to see for yourself if they work or not for you.