The following is a shortened summary of some points on nitrogen (N) application when time is limited. This information was adapted from an article that John Sawyer originally wrote for Integrated Crop Management news.

Most nitrogen applications were made before corn planting this season. However, there are always questions on nitrogen application. Sometimes excessive rains, inadequate nitrogen rates and less than expected nitrogen contributions from manure can create the need for in-season N applications.

Sidedress application may be loosely defined as an N application that can be made with the same equipment that can be used for preplant N applications. These applications can be made anytime after corn planting is complete – as long as the corn rows are visible.

The following is a list of products – in order from most preferable to least preferable:

- Injected anhydrous ammonia (NH₃), urea ammonium nitrate solutions (UAN) or urea.
- Broadcast urea
- Surface dribble application of UAN
- Broadcast urea.

Injection of NH₃ can be injected into the middle of the row and does not need to be placed in close proximity to the row. Corn roots will reach the middle of the row at a small growth stage.

Broadcast application of urea across growing corn may cause some spotting where fertilizer granules fall into the corn whorl. This leaf spotting can be considered cosmetic. Rainfall of around a half-inch is desired to move the urea into the root zone to reduce the chances of volatile loss of N.

Broadcast application of UAN across growing corn has the potential to cause leaf burn and reduce early growth. Research has shown that crop injury was less of a problem if the UAN application was made to corn at the V3 stage (or earlier) and the rates where less than 60 lb/a.

Nitrogen rates for sidedress applications can be adjusted by using the late-spring soil nitrate test. Soil samples are collected from a 12-inch depth when corn is 6-12 inches tall for this test.

Nitrogen can also be applied in the mid-to-late vegetative stage. This stage may be defined as when the corn gets too tall for normal sidedress equipment and requires high clearance equipment. The N source typically will be UAN. The UAN application can be dribbled between the rows or injected with coulter-disc attachment.

Yield loss may occur when N is applied at this stage especially if soils are dry. Dry soils may prevent the N from getting into the root zone.

Record Pork Prices and PEDv
Dave Stender, Swine Program Specialist

Consumers are wondering why pork prices in the grocery stores have reached record highs. During the last two weeks of April the supply of market hogs is lower than last year by a couple of percentage points. However, average carcass weight is up by over 5 percent. The result is that we currently have a pork supply that is similar to last year. Average pork retail prices are averaging $3.84 per pound in March compared to $3.52 during March 2013 – a 9 percent year over year price increase.

The increase in pork prices results from a combination of factors. First, beef supply is down due to cow herd reductions over past years. High feed prices plus lower pasture output (due to drought conditions in cattle-raising country for the past few years) has resulted in substantial cow herd reduction. Lower beef production has raised retail beef prices – and this has led to an upward trend in pork prices since pork meat can be substituted for beef.

The second reason for the higher pork prices is likely due to the new swine disease (nicknamed PEDv) that has impacted US pork production. PEDv only impacts pigs and carries no human health risk. It causes severe diarrhea in pigs of all ages. However, PEDv is generally only lethal for young suckling pigs. Some analysts for the...
swine industry estimate that over 2.5 million sows have been infected. Annual loss per infected sow is estimated at 2.7 pigs. Using those numbers, there is a shortfall of market pigs coming up in the late summer. See Table One below:

Table One: New cases of PEDv per month

The March USDA hog report does not reflect as many infected pigs as the industry estimate, so the shortfall in market hog numbers may be less than some industry experts predicted. We will find out soon enough as it takes about six months to get a hog to market. Therefore, as we study the graph it becomes evident that the swine industry is just beginning the market hog sales time period corresponding to the months with the highest number of new PEDv cases. The disease was most active for sows farrowed in January through April. Pigs that died during that time period will not be missed until six months later, as those pigs would have been marketed in the mid-June through October time frame. The height of the columns shown in Table One indicate that the biggest impact on market hog numbers from PEDv is still in front of us. The market volatility over the past several weeks is from the unknown regarding how many pigs were lost during the peak of PEDv activity last winter. For example, pork belly prices in early May were over 30% lower than one month earlier.

Market hog prices that reached $130 in March are now back in the $110 to $115 range. Producers and retailers will be closely watching marketing numbers in the coming weeks to determine the true fallout from PEDv.

Regional Meetings - Swine producers are asking questions about PEDv including the mandatory reporting requirements, the likelihood of a reoccurrence, the new strains, the survival of the virus this summer and more. Producers should plan to attend a Regional Iowa Pork Environment and Health Meeting on July 15 at the Le Mars Convention Center, or July 17 at the Carroll Swan Lake Conservation Education Center. The program starts at 1 p.m. in both locations. Call the Iowa Pork Producer Association to register (800) 372-7675.

Farm Employee Management: Bonus or Incentive Programs
Melissa O’Rourke, ISU Extension Farm & Agribusiness Management Specialist

Regional surveys of farm employers indicate that a sizable share of farm employees are paid some part of their compensation in the form of a bonus or incentive payments.

For example, on Wisconsin dairy farms, 36 percent of the employers offer some kind of bonus or incentive plan; and of those that do, 59 percent base such incentives on the somatic cell count (SCC). See Wages and Benefits for Farm Employees, University of Wisconsin Extension (2013). On Iowa farms, 65 percent of full-time employees are paid some type of a bonus. See Bonus Plans for Farm Employees (2011). In the swine industry, 61 percent of respondents in a National Pork Board study reported paying some kind of bonus to employees. See Employee Compensation in Pork Production (2011).

These examples indicate that bonus or incentive pay systems are an important part of compensation across the ag sector and are worth consideration and review in any farm operation.

Bonus or Incentive? While these terms are used somewhat interchangeably, there is a slight difference. A bonus would generally be described as extra reward for contributions to a successful year in farming. Bonuses may be performance-based or based on some percentage of an employee’s base wage. An incentive compensation plan is more often tied to some specific measures of performance or productivity. Such plans are intended to motivate employees to work toward specific goals and reward for various levels of achievement.

Criteria for Bonus / Incentive Pay: Studies show that farm bonus or incentive compensation systems are most frequently based on one or a combination of four factors: work performance; productivity (volume), longevity or profitability.

Performance criteria would pay employees based on meeting goals that lead to increased overall profitability. Examples could include decreasing pig loss, reducing dairy somatic cell count, or maintaining preventive maintenance schedules on equipment or implements. Plans of this sort are most effective where employees or employee teams had direct responsibility and control over activities upon which the additional pay is based. Such factors may be measured on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis.

Volume criteria are related to a unit of output on the farm. Swine operations may make a payment for each pig weaned or sold, while a beef operation may pay based on calves sold or cattle weights at sale. Crop operations may make payments based on yields. Dairy operations may tie pounds of milk sold (including increases) to additional incentive payments. The employee understands that compensation increases when the employee takes actions that make the farm more productive.

Longevity: Employee turnover is one of the greatest costs of doing business in all industries, including agriculture. So payments based on longevity are another way of rewarding the long-term employee. Such payments recognize the value of experience and expertise on the farm. Newer, entry-level employees may be rewarded for completing the year or staying through a harvest or production season.

Profitability is a result of the contributions of all employees, albeit
some more than others. A profit-based incentive allows employees to share in the financial risk and reward of the farm enterprise. When employees act to control expenses and increase production, they have contributed to profit. All employees, or perhaps just more key employees may be paid an incentive on this basis.

**Discuss in Advance:** Bonus or incentive plans work to motivate employees when the employees understand the plans and how they work. Such plans can help employees to be more motivated and instill the belief that they play an important role in the operation. This requires communication, discussion, and a team spirit. When bonus or incentive pay plans are well-planned and communicated, they can be a win-win tool for both the employee and the farm business.

For more information on this topic, see the Ag Decision Maker File C1-61 – Bonus Plans for Farm Employees at [www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/pdf/c1-61/pdf](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/pdf/c1-61/pdf)

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

**News for Cattle Producers**

*Beth Doran, Beef Program Specialist*

**Farm Bill Aid** - The new Farm Bill will aid livestock producers. Three livestock disaster programs have been extended indefinitely and are retroactive to Oct. 1, 2011. Affected livestock producers are encouraged to contact their county Farm Service Agency for specific criteria pertaining to each program. Fact sheets for each program are available at [fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov)

The **Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP)** provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered grazing losses due to drought on native land or improved pastureland with permanent vegetative cover or that is planted specifically for grazing.

The **Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)** provides benefits to livestock producers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather. Livestock owners will need to record all pertinent information on the losses and provide supporting documentation.

**Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-Raised Fish (ELAP)** provides emergency assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honey bees and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, adverse weather or other conditions, such as blizzards, not covered by LFP and LIP. Specifically, ELAP provides assistance for livestock grazing, feed and death losses. Beginning in 2014, it will cover losses related to the cost of transporting water due to an eligible drought.

**Pasture Management** - All of NW is in various stages of drought ranging from abnormally dry to moderate drought. Coupled with this, cool temperatures have delayed pasture growth. There are several recommendations for managing these conditions.

First, consider reducing stock rates by 20-30%. Second, evaluate your pasture stand. If the cover is 70% or more, but soil moisture is short, consider a split application of nitrogen, applying 50 pounds per acre now and a later application this summer, if soil moisture improves. Third, consider an annual forage, such as hybrid pearl millet or a sorghum-sudangrass hybrid. ISU has a good publication regarding forage species that can be downloaded from [https://store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/Selecting-Forage-Species](https://store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/Selecting-Forage-Species)

**New Software Programs** – Two new software programs are available for beef producers.

The **Estrous Synchronization Planner** may be downloaded free of charge from [www.iowabeefcenter.org/estrus_synch.html](http://www.iowabeefcenter.org/estrus_synch.html) and is an excellent tool cow-calf producers can use to plan the estrous synchronization system, manage labor inputs and compare costs between different synchronization protocols.

The Iowa Beef Center also has a new version of the popular ISU **Feedlot Monitoring Program (FMP)** that allows for individual animal monitoring and projections. To learn about the new version, two workshops will be offered in Northwest Iowa to demonstrate the features of the new program and allow participants hands-on experience in entering data and using the program. The workshops will be June 10 at the Sioux County Extension office. The morning session (9 a.m. to noon) is geared toward participants who have limited-to-no experience in FMP; the afternoon session (1 p.m. to 4 p.m.) is for participants who have experience with a previous version of FMP. Cost to attend either session will be $10 per person. All participants will use an ISU computer, but may bring their own computer if they wish to purchase and install the new version and transfer their existing data files into the new version. To register, call the Sioux County office at 712-737-4230.

**Livestock Producer Water Quality Workshops** – are being offered to help producers improve their technologies and practices. Workshop topics include: open lots, manure stockpiles, compost piles, animal mortality areas, feed storage, feed processing and spilled manure.

Why attend? Over the next five years, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will assess the potential environmental impact of more than 8500 livestock operations. For some, this may only involve a desk-top assessment; for others, it may involve both the desk-top assessment and an on-site inspection. The workshops will help producers prepare for either.

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**Livestock Producer Water Quality Workshops**

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Pre-registration is required, as each workshop is limited to a maximum of 20 participants. Workshops will not be held at sites having less than 10 participants. To pre-register, call the number for the location you plan to attend.

**International Beef Cattle Welfare Symposium**

July 16-18, 2014

Hansen Agricultural Student Learning Center, ISU

[www.extension.iastate.edu/registration/events/conferences/beefwelfare](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/registration/events/conferences/beefwelfare)
Hotlines Available For All
Iowa Concern (800-447-1985)
Farm On (877-BFC-1999)
Teen Line (800-443-8336)
BETS OFF (800-BETS-OFF) (800-238-7633)

Hotlines Available to Iowa Residents Only
Families Answer Line (800-262-3804)
Hortline (515) 294-3108
Iowa Healthy Families (800-369-2229)
PORKLine (800-808-7675)

June 2  IDALS Pesticide Testing • Primghar
June 10 Feedlot Monitoring Computer Workshop
       Orange City
June 16 Swine Ventilation Workshop 1
       Research Farm • Calumet
June 17 Swine Ventilation Workshop 2
       Research Farm • Calumet
June 18 PQA Plus Certification Training • Cherokee
June 20 Cherokee County Farm to Fork Tour • Cherokee
June 25 Northwest Iowa Research Farm Field Day • Calumet
June 26 Iowa Swine Day • Ames

It’s almost county fair time! Mark your calendars now for your local county fairs! Stay tuned!
www.extension.iastate.edu/yourcountyname

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