

# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY University Extension

[www.extension.iastate.edu](http://www.extension.iastate.edu)

## Washington County Extension

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# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

FEBRUARY 2009

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Cow-Calf Conference – February 28
- Annual Pork Producer’s Banquet-March 21
- BRANDS – Training Program
- Strategies to Manage Feed & Market Risk
- Chamber of Commerce Ag Breakfast Series
- Managing Through a Recession
- Commercial Pesticide Applicators Help Session
- Private Pesticide Applicator Certification Dates
- Forage & Bedding Prices
- Applying Manure? Check Your Certification
- Farm Financial Planning Assistance
- Pork Producers Regional Conference

## 38TH ANNUAL CORNBELT COW-CALF CONFERENCE – FEB. 28

The 38th annual Cornbelt Cow-Calf Conference in Ottumwa, Iowa — the largest such conference of its kind in the state — provides producers with the opportunity to learn and share ideas that will help make the cow-calf business profitable and competitive on a long-term basis. This year’s conference is Saturday, Feb. 28, 2009, from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Bridge View Center, 102 Church St., Ottumwa, Iowa.

The one-day event typically draws more than 500 people and costs just \$10 to enter. No preregistration is required, and all participants receive a copy of materials presented at the conference. The conference includes more than a dozen presentations in general and breakout sessions, as well as more than 70 exhibits, which will feature everything from live animals to mowers to feed. Key speakers this year include Dr. Don Ball, an extension specialist with the Auburn University, who will discuss forage production efficiency factors; Dr. John Lawrence, director of the Iowa Beef Center and Iowa State Extension livestock economist, who will join Dr. Derrell Peel of Oklahoma State University in a comparison of forage systems; and Dr. Daryl Strohhahn, Iowa State Extension beef specialist, who will discuss the big picture in cow-calf production. Producers will be leading sessions on value-added approaches and addressing animal welfare issues. There will also be two breakout sessions where speakers will discuss ethanol and ethanol byproduct use, including a demonstration on making ethanol.

For further information about the 2009 Cornbelt Cow-Calf Conference, contact Iowa State Extension beef specialist Byron Leu at 641-472-4166 or [bleu@iastate.edu](mailto:bleu@iastate.edu), or visit [www.iowabeefcenter.org](http://www.iowabeefcenter.org).

## JOHNSON COUNTY PORK BANQUET – MARCH 21

The 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Johnson County Pork Producers Banquet will be held Saturday, March 21, at the Eagles Club #695, Hwy 1, Iowa City, with dinner starting at 6:30 p.m. The cost per person is \$8. Tickets may be purchased in advance by calling 338-9799 (days) 351-1997 (evenings). Tickets are also available at the door.

## **“BRANDS” TRAINING PROGRAM – FEB. 2**

### **BRANDS: BEEF RATION AND NUTRITION DECISIONS SOFTWARE**

Iowa State University Extension is hosting the BRANDS training program at the Washington County Extension Office on Monday, February 2, from 7-9 p.m. The BRANDS program is a cattle ration & nutrition decision making software. Participants will have an opportunity to gain experience in:

- 1) DEVELOPING BEEF COW AND HEIFER RATIONS
- 2) DEVELOPING FEEDLOT RATIONS
- 3) BRANDS PROGRAM FEATURES
- 4) RATION EVALUATION

Presenters include Dr. Garland Dahlke, Iowa Beef Center and Byron Leu, ISU Extension Beef Specialist. A computer lab will be available. Seating is limited. Registration fee is \$10 per person, payable at the event. Contact the Washington Extension office at 319-653-4811 by January 30 to pre-register or Byron Leu at 641-799-2298 with questions.

## **STRATEGIES TO MANAGE FEED & MARKET RISK – FEB. 16**

Ames, Iowa, 1/20/09 – As Iowa’s livestock industry tries to overcome the struggles of 2008, members of the Iowa State University Extension team are looking ahead to help cattle and hog producers establish risk management strategies. The Iowa Beef Center and Iowa Pork Industry Center are partnering on an upcoming webcast on the topic, to be held Feb. 16, 2009, from 7-9 p.m. Interested individuals can view the webcast from home or at the Washington County Extension office by calling 319-653-4811 or email Tom Miller at [tmiller@iastate.edu](mailto:tmiller@iastate.edu) to pre-register or in Iowa County contact Deb Collum-Colderwood at 319-652-5504.

As part of their discussion on risk management for cattle and hog producers, the speakers will focus on feed costs risk, covering strategies for managing feed costs and the role of alternative feedstuffs. They will also discuss outlook for feed and livestock, and strategies for managing price risk using futures, options and insurance products. Members of the Iowa State Extension team who will offer their expertise during the webcast include the following:

- Chad Hart, grain economist, • John Patience, swine nutritionist
- Dan Loy, beef nutritionist • John Lawrence, livestock economist

Additional viewing sites can be found at [www.iowabeefcenter.org](http://www.iowabeefcenter.org). There is no charge for attending the meeting but attendees need to preregister by February 13. Extension office host sites will have further discussion and activities during the webcast. Attendees can also choose to tune into the webcast from their own homes by going to <http://connect.extension.iastate.edu/outlook>. The webcast archive will also be made available shortly after the event on both the Iowa Beef Center Web site ([www.iowabeefcenter.org](http://www.iowabeefcenter.org)) and the Iowa Pork Industry Center Web site ([www.ipic.iastate.edu/](http://www.ipic.iastate.edu/)). For more information on the upcoming webcast, you can contact your county extension office or Iowa Beef Center Director John Lawrence at 515-294-6290 or [jdlaw@iastate.edu](mailto:jdlaw@iastate.edu).

## **BREAKFAST SERIES SCHEDULE ANNOUNCED**

The 2009 Agribusiness/Bioscience breakfast series in Johnson County has been announced! The programs are hosted by the Agribusiness/Bioscience Committee of the Iowa City Area Chamber of Commerce with support from Eldon C. Stutsman, Inc., and First Trust & Savings Bank. The series is an annual event with topics that impact agriculture. This year the schedule is as follows:

Friday, February 27 Operations of an Alternative Energy Farm; Chuck Peters, President & CEO, Gazette Co.

Friday, March 27 Wind Energy; Representative Larry Marek, Iowa Legislative

All programs will be held at Hills Bank & Trust, 1401 South Gilbert St., Iowa City. Programs will be from 7:30-8:30 a.m. The fee is \$7 per event or \$20 for the series. RSVP to [rsvp@iowacityarea.com](mailto:rsvp@iowacityarea.com) by the Wednesday before each event.

## **MANAGING THROUGH A RECESSION: OPTIONS FOR OPERATORS**

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The agricultural sector seems like an island of tranquility in the midst of worldwide financial and business collapses, rising unemployment, record home foreclosure rates and government deficits. Farm producers and managers, who have enjoyed historically high farm net worth values and real U.S. net farm income significantly above 1990s levels, are beginning to see economic conditions influence their business. Iowa State University Extension agricultural economists have advice for crop producers as they face higher inputs costs and selling prices well below the peaks of 2008. Their advice also holds for livestock producers who have had to endure many months of thin or negative margins.

“The future is extremely uncertain and managers need to prepare by thinking in terms of contingencies – having plans for a number of possible situations that will be revealed later in the year,” said Robert Jolly. “Farmers and lenders need to think in terms of contingencies – what should be done if conditions worsen, asset values decline or if rural and agricultural lenders start to experience liquidity problems.” Jolly and William Edwards, another ISU Extension agricultural economist, describe in recent [Ag Decision Maker \(AgDM\) articles](#) what they know about the current financial condition of farmers in Iowa and suggest a few options for managing through some very difficult and uncharted waters. In his article, Edwards offers a list of possible financial management practices and strategies that could come in handy, including:

**Prepare an accurate set of financial statements.** Highly variable inventory prices and increasing land values will make this year’s balance sheet look quite different from last year’s. And for grain farmers, a net income statement for 2008 may be something to share with your lender.

**Prepare a detailed cash flow budget.** Many crop farmers will have a hard time meeting all their cash commitments from sales in 2009. Higher input costs and rents will increase operating line requirements. Livestock farmers will need to budget feed purchases carefully

**Shop around for inputs.** Depending on when suppliers booked fuel, fertilizer, pesticides and other inputs, prices may vary dramatically. Consider both cost savings and yield effects when applying inputs. For example, cutting back on nitrogen fertilizer when costs are high makes sense, but only up to a point.

**Know your costs of production.** When profitable selling opportunities arise, lock them in. Watch for opportunities to price crop inputs, feed and feeder livestock, as well.

**Document yields for a possible crop insurance or SURE payment.** Many crop producers will receive an insurance indemnity payment due to falling prices in 2008 as well as from damage caused by rain or floods. Additional payments may be available under the SURE disaster program in the new farm bill.

**Increase crop insurance coverage for 2009.** Higher production costs may require higher levels of protection to assure a breakeven level of revenue.

**Consider enrolling in ACRE.** Under the new farm bill program, Average Crop Revenue Election, crop producers can substitute a gross revenue protection plan for the current price counter cyclical program, with guarantees based on higher price levels and current yields.

**Use flexible lease agreements.** Tying cash rents to a formula that takes into account both yields and prices will help protect margins.

**Defer capital purchases and income taxes.** When margins are narrower, replacing machinery, putting up new storage bins or bidding on more land may have to wait. Replacement parts and overhauls are cheaper in the short run.

**Compare financing rates and consider refinancing long-term obligations.** Federal interest rates are at historic lows. There may be wide differences among agricultural lenders. Marketing loans from the Farm Service Agency also are available for short term financing. Compare possible interest savings to the costs of rewriting the loan. It may be a good time to convert variable rate loans to a fixed rate.

**Keep assets liquid.** If gross revenue is not enough to cover production costs and family living expenses this year, keep funds in savings or short-term investments rather than assets that would be hard to convert to cash. Use equity in land, livestock and equipment. If cash reserves aren’t enough, talk to your lender about borrowing against fixed assets, with a multi-year repayment plan.

Agriculture has always been a cyclical industry. A good financial manager learns to balance the profits and losses to ensure long-term survival. Financial management tools to support the practices and strategies mentioned in this article are linked in the [January Ag Decision Maker article](#) at [www.extension.iastate.edu/AgDM/crops/outlook/edwfeb09.html](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/AgDM/crops/outlook/edwfeb09.html).

## **2009 IOWA PORK REGIONAL CONFERENCE**

AMES, Iowa -- Iowa pork producers are invited to learn more about improving their swine production operation at one of the 2009 Iowa Pork Regional Conferences scheduled for late February. The Iowa Pork Industry Center (IPIC), Iowa Pork Producers Association (IPPA) and Iowa State University (ISU) Extension cosponsor this annual series of meetings at different sites around the state. The fee for those preregistered at least two business days in advance is \$20 per person, which includes the noon meal and materials. Walk-in registration is \$30 per person. All fees are payable at the door. Information is available on the IPIC Web site at [www.ipic.iastate.edu/events.html](http://www.ipic.iastate.edu/events.html) People can preregister by calling IPIC at (800) 808-7675 or (515) 294-4103. ISU Extension program specialist Colin Johnson with IPIC said this year's speakers will help producers learn how to apply financially sound lessons and strategies to their own operations.

“Producers will hear about the tactics that support pork industry survival and development in Canada and learn how to have a greater sense of control over their feed costs,” Johnson said. “Presenters also will share approaches to assessing the magnitude of disease risks and evaluating whether investments to reduce risks are justified.” In addition, participants will learn about handling techniques and their importance for public confidence and exceptional meat quality, Johnson said. Speakers include ISU associate professor of swine nutrition John Patience and assistant professor of food supply veterinary medicine Derald Holtkamp. ISU Extension swine field specialists also will present a session on animal husbandry and well-being. “This is the ninth year for this cooperative effort between IPIC and IPPA,” Johnson said. “It’s sure to be a great learning opportunity for producers.”

\* Monday, Feb. 16, Ainsworth, Marr Park Conservation Center, 2943 Highway 92. Contact Terry Steinhart, (641) 622-2680, [tsteinha@iastate.edu](mailto:tsteinha@iastate.edu)

## **COMMERCIAL PESTICIDE APPLICATOR TEST HELP SESSIONS**

All commercial pesticide applicators must take exams in order to become initially certified and some choose to become re-certified by exam rather than by attending continuing instructional courses. With the increased interest in fungicide applications on corn and soybeans, many commercial applicators are considering adding agricultural diseases (category 1C) to their certification so that they can apply fungicides. The training session is designed to help prepare individuals for the commercial pesticide applicator examinations will be offered in SE Iowa. A session will be offered in Bettendorf on Monday, March 9 in the Scott County Extension Office, 875 Tanglefoot Lane. Training will begin at 9:00 a.m. at both locations.

The training sessions will cover the Iowa Core Manual and categories 1A (Agricultural Weed Management), 1B (Agricultural Insect Control), 1C (Agricultural Crop Disease Management), 3O,T, and G (Ornamental, Turf, and Greenhouse Pest Management), 4 (Seed Treatment) and 6 (Right-of-Way). Training on the Iowa Core Manual will be from 9:00 to 10:45 a.m. Training on the other categories will begin at approximately 10:45 a.m. and conclude in early afternoon. There is a \$25 fee per person at each training session. These training sessions do NOT qualify as continuing instructional courses. For more information, please contact Jim Fawcett at (319) 337-2145, Patrick O’Malley at (319) 337-2145, or Virgil Schmitt at (563) 263-5701.

## **FARM FINANCIAL PLANNING ASSISTANCE**

The services of the Farm Financial Planning Associates will temporarily be provided at no charge. Farm families in disaster affected counties are invited to use this program to evaluate their farm business in response to flooding, delayed planting, and/or rising livestock feed costs. Farm Financial Planning is Iowa State University Extension's farm financial analysis program. It consists of one-on-one financial counseling, a computerized analysis of the farm business, and referral to other extension programs or outside services that may be useful. Farm Financial Planning helps answer three basic questions of sound business management. Where am I today? Where do I want to be in the future? How do I get there? For more information on the associates serving your county, visit our web site at: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/farmanalysis/>

## APPLYING MANURE? CHECK YOUR CERTIFICATION

Manure applicators that haul or handle manure from a confinement site facility with more than 500 animal units and all commercial manure applicators are required by Iowa law to be certified to apply manure in Iowa. “My best estimate based on historical numbers of certified applicators is somewhere between 300-800 applicators still need to attend training this year to maintain or renew their licenses to apply manure before the fall application season,” says Angie Rieck-Hinz, Extension program specialist. Confinement site applicators must attend two hours of annual training to maintain their three-year license. Applicators must pay certification and education fees. After March 1 of the current year, applicators that are renewing their certificates must also pay a late fee. Commercial manure applicators must attend three hours of training or take and pass an exam annually. Commercial applicators that need to renew their licenses after March 1 will need to pay a late fee in addition to the certification fee and education fee. Commercial manure applicators are reminded they must be associated with a commercial manure service.

“Although manure applicators sometimes complain about having to take annual training, they also say that the training has helped them respond quickly and well to a spill, or learn about law changes that affect their business,” said Jen Christian, DNR environmental specialist. Commercial and confinement site applicators may meet certification requirements by scheduling an appointment with their local ISU Extension county office to watch a videotape or by contacting their local DNR field office to schedule an appointment to take the certification exam. Four certification programs will be offered this winter for confinement site and commercial manure applicators:

- **Confinement site certification is scheduled for Thursday, February 12, 2009, 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. at Washington County Extension Office**

For information about manure applicator certification requirements contact Greg Brenneman, Ag Engineer, at [gregb@iastate.edu](mailto:gregb@iastate.edu) or 319/337-2145 and Tom Miller, Program Specialist [tmiller@iastate.edu](mailto:tmiller@iastate.edu) 319-653-4811.

## PRIVATE PESTICIDE APPLICATOR PROGRAMS SCHEDULED

The 2008-2009 private pesticide applicator continuing instructional courses have been scheduled for Iowa, Johnson and Washington County. If you wish to recertify by training and not by exam, you must attend a CIC session each year. Remember, you always have the option of taking the exam. There is a \$20 fee per person. A private pesticide applicator may attend a class offered in any county. Pre-registration is not required.

Date	Time	County	City/Area	Location
February 11	1:30 p.m.	Iowa	I-80, Exit 216	Kinze Mfg.
February 11	4:15 p.m.	Iowa	I-80, Exit 216	Kinze Mfg.
February 16	1:30 p.m.	Johnson	Hills	Hills Community Center, Hills
February 16	7:00 p.m.	Johnson	Hills	Hills Community Center, Hills
March 12	1:30 p.m.	Washington	Washington	Washington County Extension
March 12	7:00 p.m.	Washington	Washington	Washington County Extension
March 16	7:00 p.m.	Iowa	Victor	KC Hall, 210 Washington St.
April 15	1:00 p.m.	Johnson	Iowa City	Johnson County Extension
April 15	7:00 p.m.	Washington	Washington	Washington County Extension