Farm Bill, Fescue, and Efficiency to Headline 2015 Cornbelt Cow-Calf Conference

The premier educational event in Iowa for cow-calf producers is offering a comprehensive package of information to attendees next month. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach beef program specialist Patrick Wall said this year’s conference, set for Saturday, Jan. 31 at the Bridge View Center in Ottumwa, will continue that successful tradition.

Doors will open for this year’s conference at the Bridge View Center in Ottumwa at 8 a.m. on Jan. 31. The official welcome is at 9 a.m., followed by two general session speakers, lunch, and exhibit viewing. The afternoon begins with Congressman Lucas in the auditorium, followed by two repeating breakout sessions with five choices. Admission is free, and includes a copy of the show guide and conference proceedings. No pre-registration is necessary.

Manure Applicator Certification Requirements

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.

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. Commercial and confinement site applicators may meet certification requirements by scheduling an appointment with their local ISU Extension county office to watch a DVD or by contacting their local DNR field office to schedule an appointment to take the certification exam.

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<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
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<td>January 20, 2015</td>
<td>1:30 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>County Extension Office, Bloomfield</td>
<td>January 26, 2015</td>
<td>1:30 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>County Extension Office, Fairfield</td>
<td>February 12, 2015</td>
<td>9:30 AM</td>
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Landscaping Ideas

There are many interesting publications in the Extension On-line store. If you are thinking ahead toward Spring, below are some landscaping publications you may find interesting. They can be found at: https://store.extension.iastate.edu/

Deciduous Shrubs
by Richard Jauron
More than 110 photos plus descriptions of 75 deciduous shrubs (organized by height) will simplify your hunt for the right shrub for your landscape. A comparison chart identifies those with the most ornamental value. Recommendations also are given for specific planting needs, such as dry or wet soils, shaded sites, and food for birds and other wildlife.

Crabapples for Midwestern Landscapes
By Jeff Iles
More than 90 color photos showing 43 cultivars to match the correct tree to your specific site and personal needs. Choose from the cultivars to enjoy an avalanche of colorful, fragrant flowers each spring and a handsome, healthy tree throughout the year.

Home Landscape -- Understanding the Basics of Landscape Design
by Ann Marie VanDerZanden
Whether you want to do-it-yourself or are working with a professional, this guide offers a step-by-step approach to understanding the design process. Color photos and diagrams show how to use basic design elements to create a pleasing and functional space. Included worksheets can assist you in analyzing your site. An additional resource list and convenient index are also found inside.

Amaryllis

Amaryllis bulbs are often given as Christmas gifts. While many people discard the amaryllis after flowering, it is possible to get the bulb to bloom yearly.

After the flowers fade, cut off the flower stalk with a sharp knife. Make the cut 1 to 2 inches above the bulb. Don't harm the foliage. In order for the bulb to bloom again next season, the plant must replenish its depleted food reserves. The long, strap-like leaves manufacture food, which is stored in the bulb. Place the plant in a sunny window and water when the soil surface becomes dry. Fertilize every 2 to 4 weeks with a houseplant fertilizer.

The amaryllis can be moved outdoors in late May or early June. Harden or acclimate the plant outdoors for a few days. Once hardened, dig a hole in an area that receives partial to full sun and set the pot into the ground. Outdoors, continue to water the amaryllis during dry weather. Also, continue to fertilize the amaryllis once or twice a month through July. Bring the plant indoors in mid- to late September. Plants left indoors should remain in a sunny window.

Amaryllis bulbs need to rest before blooming. To induce dormancy, place the amaryllis in a cool, semi-dark location and stop watering the plant in late September/early October. Cut off the foliage when the leaves dry and turn brown. Then place the pot in a dry location with a temperature of 45 to 55 F and allow the bulb to rest for 2 to 3 months. The length of the rest period for amaryllis bulbs varies. After several weeks of rest, periodically check the bulbs for signs of new growth. When a bud or foliage appears, place the amaryllis in a warm, bright location and water to start the growth cycle again. If repotting is necessary, do so before watering.
Farmland Values Fall from Historic High

Land value survey shows decrease in value of $773 per acre

AMES, Iowa – Average Iowa farmland value is now estimated to be $7,943 per acre—a drop in value of $773, or 8.9 percent, per acre. Land values were determined by the Iowa Land Value Survey, which was conducted in November by the Center for Agricultural and Rural Development at Iowa State University. Results from the survey are similar to results found by the Realtors Land Institute and the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago.

As farmland values do not rise or fall uniformly across the state, the survey examines values by crop reporting districts; each of the 99 counties individually; low, medium and high grade farmland; and also averages the state as a whole. The $7,943 per acre and 8.9 percent drop in value represent the state as a whole.

While this year marks the largest decline in farmland values since 1986, it is only the second year since 1999 that the survey has shown a decline in farmland values. After hitting a historic peak in 2013, values have returned to a mid-point between 2011 and 2012 values. In spite of the decrease, farmland values are more than double what they were 10 years ago, 81 percent higher than 2009 values, and 18 percent higher than 2011 values.

“I think we have seen a peak for the time being,” said Michael Duffy, a retired ISU economics professor and extension farm management economist, who conducted this year’s survey. “Commodity prices and farm income are settling back to more expected levels, and I think land values will probably move sideways for a while,” he said. “Many people think this report indicates the beginning of another farm crisis, but land values are still considerably higher than they were just a few years ago.”

Scott County reported highest values

For the second year in a row, Scott (eastern) and Decatur (south-central) counties reported the highest and lowest farmland values, respectively. Decatur County reported a value per acre of $3,587, a drop of $41 per acre from last year’s report. While Scott County reported the highest value at $11,618 per acre, prices there declined about $795 per acre, or about $22 per acre more than the statewide average.

“Scott County typically has the highest value primarily due to the location on the (Mississippi) river and good soil,” Duffy said. The largest decrease in farmland value was in southwest Iowa, which reported a drop of 13.5 percent. Worth County, located in the northeast portion of the state, however, reported the largest percentage drop in value for any one county at 15.2 percent. The value of all grades of farmland fell, with high-grade farmland taking the largest hit and losing a full 9 percent ($974 per acre) of its value.

“The reason high-grade farmland fell in value faster than low- or medium-grade farmland is because it had increased in value faster over the past few years,” Duffy said. Medium- and low-grade farmland fared slightly better, losing 8.5 percent ($688 per acre) and 7.9 percent ($420 per acre), of their values, respectively.

The only crop reporting district to show an increase in values was southeast Iowa, which reported values at 3.2 percent higher than last year. Keokuk Co., located in the southeastern portion of the state, reported the largest percentage increase for any single county at 2.4 %.

Drop in commodity prices influences farmland values

Corn and soybean prices started falling in 2013, and as a result farm income dropped. The most recent USDA net farm income estimate showed a record high income in 2013, but a 23 percent drop in net farm income for 2014. Falling commodity prices, along with a drop in farmland value, could make problems for some farmers.

“The drop in farmland value is due to the drop in commodity prices,” Duffy said. “Pressure could come if farmers incurred debt in anticipation that commodity prices would continue. I think all farmers will have a cash flow problem for the next 18 months or so. If farmers still have equity in their land they should be able to refinance, but farmers who got over-extended will be in trouble.”

Of respondents that listed positive and/or negative factors influencing farmland values, low interest rates were the most commonly cited positive factor, and lower commodity prices were the most frequently cited negative factor. Other negative factors mentioned included high input prices and an uncertain agricultural future.

The survey was initiated in 1941 and is sponsored annually by Iowa State University. Only the state average and the district averages are based directly on the ISU survey data. The county estimates are derived using a procedure that combines the ISU survey results with data from the US Census of Agriculture. Beginning this year the survey is being conducted by the Center for Agriculture and Rural Development in the Economics Department at Iowa State University.

The survey is based on reports by licensed real estate brokers and selected individuals considered to be knowledgeable of land market conditions. Respondents were asked to report for more than one county if they were knowledgeable about the land markets. The 2014 survey is based on 428 usable responses providing 608 county land values estimates.

For additional resources, including maps and historical survey data, please see [http://www.card.iastate.edu/land-value/2014/](http://www.card.iastate.edu/land-value/2014/).
A few months ago, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) mailed letters to farmland owners and their producers with a summary of covered commodities. This was actually the start of a 3-step process for the new commodity crop program.

Now, farmland owners by FSA farm number have a one-time opportunity to: (1) maintain the farm’s 2013 base acres of covered commodities through 2018; or (2) reallocate base acres among those covered commodities planted on the farm during the 2009 to 2012 crop years. There are important decisions coming up this fall and winter for both landowners as well as current producers on the farm. Here’s a summary of the three-step process:

1. **UPDATE:** The first step is whether you want to update base acres and yields. The landowner makes that final decision and signs the appropriate FSA form. The landowner has between Sept. 29, 2014 to Feb. 27, 2015 to update base acres and/or yields by FSA farm number. The second and third steps involve the current producer(s) on the farm. The second step is the determination of whether or not to elect ARC or PLC. ARC is a revenue-based program. PLC is a price-loss program.

2. **ELECTION:** Current producer can make a 5-year election by FSA farm number for ARC-CO, ARC-IC, or the PLC program. This decision has to be made Nov. 17, 2014 to March 31, 2015.

3. **ENROLLMENT:** The third step is enrollment. Producers enroll the farm for the program elected. They can do this from mid-April through summer 2015. They will then enroll for 2014 and 2015 crop years concurrently.

For more information, plan to attend one of more than 100 scheduled Farm Bill meetings. Additional meetings and additional farm bill related information are posted on the ISU Ag Decision Maker farm bill web page http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/info/farmbill.html Consider contacting your local county Extension office if you are interested in attending one of these meetings. Also, visit Farm Service Agency ARC PLC Programs for more information www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=arpl&topic=landing
Emerald Ash Borer Confirmed in Five Counties in Southern Iowa

Larvae discovered in Appanoose, Lucas, Mahaska, Marion and Monroe counties; brings total to 18 counties with confirmed infestations

DES MOINES – Emerald Ash Borer has been positively identified in Appanoose, Lucas, Mahaska, Marion and Monroe counties in southern Iowa. EAB kills all ash tree species and is considered to be one of the most destructive tree pests ever seen in North America.

The discovery of this series of infestations started when a forestry contractor found many dead ash trees with heavy woodpecker flecking while completing a timber stand improvement project on privately-owned woodland on the far eastern edge of Lucas County. The infestation appears to have been in place for several years. The larvae were located only 3/8 of a mile from Monroe County. EAB team members continued to examine trees in the area and additional larvae were found in an ash tree on public property in Monroe County, near the Lucas site.

In Marion County, larvae were found in a heavily-flecked ash tree on state property on the edge of Marysville. In Appanoose County, larvae were found in a tree along train tracks in Moravia. And, in Mahaska County, larvae were collected from a tree on private property on the north side of Eddyville.

Eighteen Iowa counties now have confirmed EAB infestations. A statewide quarantine, issued on Feb. 4, 2014, remains in place and restricts the movement of hardwood firewood, ash logs, wood chips and ash tree nursery stock out of Iowa into non-quarantined areas of other states.

“Woodpecker-flecked ash trees are a great calling card when investigating an insect infestation. The damage symptoms on ash trees are very visible during the winter months. Woodpeckers feed on more than EAB, but when we find woodpeckers focusing on ash trees in an area, it’s a red flag that begs for further investigation,” said State Entomologist Robin Pruisner of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

“We urge Iowans to be vigilant, reporting suspicious symptoms in counties that are not yet known to be infested to a member of the Iowa EAB Team. And we continue to urge citizens to keep firewood local, don’t pack a pest to a new area,” said Mike Kinter, IDALS EAB and Gypsy Moth Coordinator.

The Iowa EAB Team provides EAB diagnostic assistance to landowners and includes officials from Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service and the USDA Forest Service.

The Iowa EAB Team strongly cautions Iowans not to transport firewood across county or state lines, since the movement of firewood throughout Iowa or to other states poses the greatest threat to quickly spread EAB and other plant pests. Most EAB infestations in the United States have been started by people unknowingly moving infested firewood, nursery plants or sawmill logs. The adult beetle also can fly short distances, approximately 2 to 5 miles.

The next window for preventive treatment measures (trunk injection, soil injection, soil drench or basal trunk sprays) will open early spring 2015 (mid-April to mid-May). If a landowner is interested in protecting a valuable and healthy ash tree within 15 miles of a known infestation, he or she should use the winter months to have landscape and tree service companies bid on work, and these bids can be reviewed before next spring.

Please contact Iowa EAB Team members to have suspicious-looking trees checked in counties not currently known to be infested. The State of Iowa will continue to track the movement of EAB on a county-by-county basis. Before a county can be officially recognized as infested, proof of a reproducing population is needed and an EAB must be collected and verified by USDA entomologists.

To learn more about EAB and other pests that are threatening Iowa’s tree population, please visit www.IowaTreePests.com.
PRIVATE PESTICIDE APPLICATOR DATES SET

The 2014-2015 private pesticide applicator continuing instructional courses have been scheduled for Appanoose, Davis, Jefferson, Lucas, Monroe, Van Buren, Wayne, and Wapello. 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 for the session. A private pesticide applicator may attend a class offered in any county. Pre-registration is not required in most counties, but you may want to check if you are going out of your county.

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<tr>
<td>1/12/15</td>
<td>Wapello</td>
<td>7-9 pm</td>
<td>Wapello County Extension, PH: 641-682-5491</td>
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<td>1/13/15</td>
<td>Van Buren</td>
<td>1:30-3:30 pm</td>
<td>Robert’s building, PH: 319-293-3039</td>
<td>Keosauqua</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/13/15</td>
<td>Van Buren</td>
<td>7-9 pm</td>
<td>Robert’s building, PH: 319-293-3039</td>
<td>Keosauqua</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/15/15</td>
<td>Appanoose</td>
<td>All Day</td>
<td>Honey Creek Resort Crop Advantage Series, must attend entire day</td>
<td>Moravia</td>
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<td>1/20/15</td>
<td>Davis</td>
<td>7-9 pm</td>
<td>Davis County Extension Office, PH: 641-664-2730</td>
<td>Bloomfield</td>
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<td>1/23/15</td>
<td>Lucas</td>
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<td>Lucas County Extension Office, PH: 641-774-2016</td>
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<td>1/27/15</td>
<td>Wayne</td>
<td>1:30-3:30 pm</td>
<td>Wayne County Courthouse meeting room, PH: 641-872-1755</td>
<td>Corydon</td>
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<td>2/5/15</td>
<td>Monroe</td>
<td>7-9 pm</td>
<td>Monroe County Extension Office, PH: 641-932-5612</td>
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<td>Wapello</td>
<td>1:30-3:30 pm</td>
<td>Wapello County Extension, PH: 641-856-3885</td>
<td>Ottumwa</td>
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<td>2/16/15</td>
<td>Davis</td>
<td>1:30-3:30 pm</td>
<td>Davis County Extension Office, PH: 641-664-2730</td>
<td>Bloomfield</td>
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2015 SPRING COMMERCIAL PESTICIDE APPLICATOR CONTINUING INSTRUCTIONAL COURSES

Below is the schedule for the 2015 Commercial Pesticide Applicator Continuing Instructional Courses (CIC’s). Starting in 2015, the Ornamental and Turfgrass program statewide time will now be at 9 am. This is the same as all the other statewide program start times.

| CIC & Category                                                                 | Date   | Begin Time | End Time | TYPE:Live/DVD | Location         | Regist. Fee | Late Fee |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|----------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Commercial Ag Weed, Insect, and Plant Disease Management 1A, 1B, 1C, 10          | 2/10/15| 9:00 am    | 11:45 am | DVD           | Participating county offices                     | $35         |
| Seed Treatment 4, 10                                                            | 2/18/15| 9:00 am    | 11:30 am | DVD           | Participating county offices                     | $35         |
| Shade Tree Course 2, 3O, 3OT, 10                                                | 2/25 & 2/26 2015 | 9:00 am | 11:30 am | Live          | Scheman Bldg. Ames, IA                  | $35         |
| Ornamental and Turf Applicators 3O, 3T, 3OT, 10                                 | 3/4/15 | 9:00 am    | 11:30 am | DVD           | Participating county offices                     | $35         |
| Certified Handlers                                                              | 3/24/15| 9:00 am    | 11:30 am | DVD           | Participating county offices                     | $35         |
Crop Advantage Series Provides Latest Crop Production Information

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach will offer the Crop Advantage Series to producers at 13 locations across Iowa during January, including one session in Burlington on January 9th. Crop Advantage Series provides the latest information to promote profitable decision-making for upcoming growing seasons.

ISU Extension field agronomists will present program topics focusing on local needs and production issues. Topics include crop management, pests, soil fertility, and farm management, from which attendees can choose to make their own learning experience. The meeting is also approved for Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) continuing education credits at no additional cost.

Early registration is $50 until January 1; late registration is $60. Registration includes lunch, printed proceedings, and private applicator recertification. Online registration and additional information is available at www.cropadvantage.org

Crop Advantage Series is presented by ISU Extension and Outreach with support from the Iowa Soybean Association and from the North Central SARE Program—Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education. For questions, contact ANR Program Services at (515) 294-6429, anr@iastate.edu, contact Mark Carlton at marltn@iastate.edu or Virgil Schmitt at vschmitt@iastate.edu or (563) 263-5701.

High Tunnel Program Offered at Annual Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association

ANKENY, Iowa – “High Tunnel: Beyond the Basics” will be offered at the Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association’s annual conference in Ankeny. The half-day program, set for Jan. 29 from 1 p.m. - 5 p.m., will be led by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach horticulture specialists Ajay Nair, Diana Cochran, Patrick O’Malley and Joe Hannan.

The workshop will focus on tools and equipment that measure the environment for making smarter, more informed decisions when managing summertime plant stress. Participants will have the opportunity to showcase the tools and equipment they find most important for the successful operation of their high tunnels.

“The conference provides an opportunity to share up-to-date research with fruit and vegetable growers across the state,” said Joe Hannan, extension program specialist. “This session is especially beneficial to participants as they will hear new research and have an opportunity to share ideas about their high tunnel operations.”

Featured speaker Ajay Nair will discuss new research on how colored plastics affect plant growth and development in high tunnels and how growers can use colored plastics to their best advantage. In addition, Diana Cochran, extension fruit specialist, will discuss the potential for growing peaches and cherries under high tunnels in Iowa.

Pre-registration is required
The session has been developed for growers who already have a high tunnel and will include small group work, large group discussion and lecture. As in previous years, pre-registration is required to attend. Participants can register online at https://ifvga.eventbrite.com or access a registration form at www.ifvga.org. Space in the course is limited and registrations will be accepted on a first come, first served basis.

The Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association conference will be held Jan. 29-30 at the FFA Enrichment Center on the Des Moines Area Community College campus, 1055 SW Prairie Trail Parkway, Ankeny. The two-day conference includes a variety of speakers and informative sessions for fruit and vegetable growers from production through marketing. A trade show will include more than 30 exhibitors with their latest seeds, supplies, equipment and products.

Conference details and registration information can be found at the Iowa Fruit and Vegetable website at www.ifvga.org. Registration for the conference is $75 a day through Jan. 22. After Jan. 22, conference fees increase to $90 a day. The conference and workshops are open to non-members.

For more information about the high tunnels tract, contact Joe Hannan at jmhannan@iastate.edu or 515-993-4281.
VISIT AG DECISION MAKER

The Ag Decision Maker link at http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/ contains information on current topics and timely updates. Corn drying, shrink and storage decisions will come into play with high yields and declining cash prices. Hot topics such as the Farm Bill, 2014 Pro-Ag Management Seminars with dates and locations.

VARIETY TRIALS

Illinois: http://vt.cropsci.illinois.edu/corn.html
Iowa: http://www.croptesting.iastate.edu/
Minnesota:
  Corn silage: http://sROC.cfans.umn.edu/prod/groups/cfans/@pub/@cfans/@sroc/@research/documents/article/cfans_article_492079.pdf
North Dakota: http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/varietytrials
South Dakota: http://igrow.org/agronomy/other-crops/oat-variety-trial-results/
Wisconsin: http://fyi.uwex.edu/fieldcroppathology/university-of-wisconsin-variety-trials/

Would you like to receive the Ag Newsletter electronically? Call 641-872-1755 or email kmartley@iastate.edu and provide your email address!