

# MICHIGAN FARM NEWS

MICHIGAN'S ONLY STATEWIDE FARM NEWSPAPER

MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU

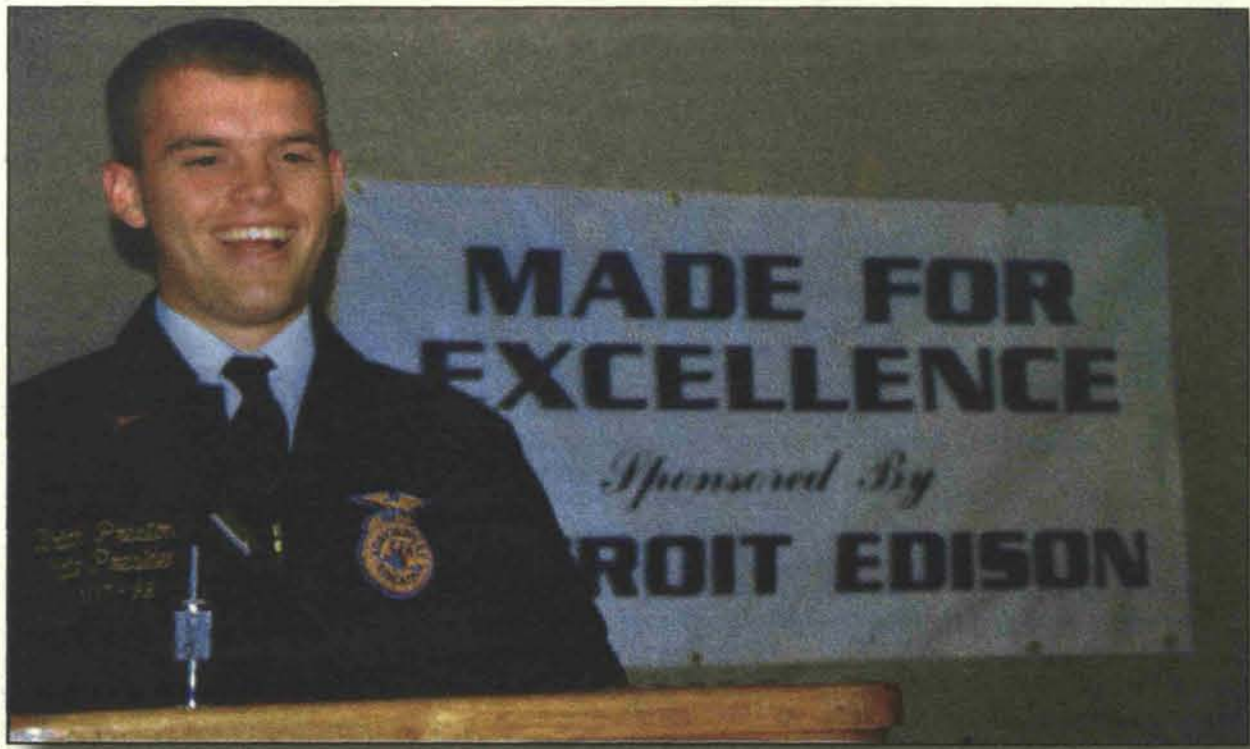


MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU

October 15, 1997  
Vol. 74, No. 17



## \$1 million raised for Michigan FFA Foundation



More than 180 FFA members recently attended the Michigan Association of FFA's Made For Excellence workshop, sponsored by Detroit Edison. At the conference, the Michigan FFA Foundation announced it had successfully matched a \$500,000 grant from the State of Michigan, therefore raising more than \$1 million to fund the foundation's Vision2000 campaign. Vision2000 will fund FFA programs and bring agriscience and natural resources education to all of Michigan's schools.

### ICMPA and MMPA join forces in push for state milk order

With two large users of fluid milk now officially out of the voluntary state over-order premium superpool, the state's two largest milk cooperatives have teamed up to push for legislation that would require all handlers of milk to participate in a state milk order. In a statement to the Michigan Ag Commission on Oct. 7, MMPA President Elwood Kirkpatrick explained the importance of requirement for pooling the over-order premiums. "The problem in the superpool is that it is voluntary in nature," he explained. "It does not have the enforcement of the Federal Order as far as participation and pooling. Recently, two bottling plants announced withdrawal from the superpool. Dairymen who ship to plants that are not part of the superpool — but which have a very high Class I use — have a marked advantage.

"Dairy farmers in Michigan produce about 5 billion pounds of Grade A milk annually," Kirkpatrick added. "Consumers in Michigan drink in fluid form about 2 1/4 billion pounds each year — someone then must handle and process the milk in excess of the fluid requirements and must maintain the where with all to balance the needs of the Class I markets from day to day.

"During this past year, MMPA delivered 700,000 pounds of milk to one of our bottling customers on many days, to meet that plant's needs for Class I milk. On other days, like weekends and holidays during the year, no shipments were ordered by the same plant. The milk that was not needed on those days had to be diverted to a manufacturing plant," Kirkpatrick continued. "The dairy farmers who produced the milk that was diverted still must meet the Grade A requirements and the milk must be available for the Class I market on other days. Thus, it is only equitable that the Class I premium be shared among all farmers rather than being paid to those farmers whose milk physically gets into the bottle."

ICMPA President Bob Naerebout added his organization's support by explaining their actions over the course of the last two months. "At our September board meeting, we moved to withdraw from the pool, but at that time we didn't have enough information to make a final decision and had to quickly submit our withdrawal in case the pool collapsed. We no longer consider ourselves withdrawn from the pool," Naerebout added. "We're in as long as the voluntary superpool is together."

What the cooperatives propose: "We are suggesting an initial Class I price of \$1.00/cwt. over the Federal Order Price," explained Kirk-

Continued on page 5

### Muskegon County looks to squeeze profits from cranberry production

County commissioners support further investigation into a large-scale cranberry-growing and processing operation

Fittingly, a creek running through southern Muskegon County is named Cranberry Creek.

Why? Because it runs through the site where a team of experts have formulated a plan to produce 1,000 acres of cranberries and eventually construct a processing plant on property located at the Muskegon Wastewater Treatment facility.

As part of its long range plan to add further profitability to the land base surrounding its wastewater treatment facilities, the Muskegon County Commissioners began searching for a suitable use for the more than 1,800 acres months ago.

"This one site was being proposed as part of an industrial park," explained Dr. David Skjaerlund, executive director of the Rural Development Council of Michigan. "The Muskegon County commissioners wanted to increase jobs and to look at industrial processing. Phase three of that industrial park would've taken this 1,800-acre site."

"It does have certain complications that would have to be overcome before we'd actually do it," explained Tim Westmann, Muskegon Wastewater facilities manager. "But it doesn't mean there will be application of wastewater to grow cranberries."

According to Skjaerlund, there is sufficient water through the county drain system for use in the cranberry beds. "We're not using any water that comes out of the wastewater facility — this is all surface water from other ditches, drainage ditches in the area that come

from other areas of the county. The water that actually would be used to replenish the reservoirs would not even come from water that came off those fields."

Economic development possibilities

"We got looking at the site and realized there was an opportunity to do economic development for Muskegon County, while maintaining productive farmland, Skjaerlund added, even to add value to that land from the standpoint of the county — as an alternative to an industrial park that would've wiped out probably the best site in Michigan for cranberry production.

"The site has very sandy soils that are naturally low in pH with a high water table," explained Skjaerlund. "These are ideal conditions for growing cranberries — a flat topography that's currently being farmed, which means that there's zero state or federal wetland permits needed."

At the Sept. 25 meeting of the county commissioner's Community Development and Strategic Planning Committee, they enthusiastically endorsed the idea of proceeding with the further research into the site and its feasibility for cranberry production. Eventually, planners would like erect a processing plant on the site to handle the estimated 1,000 acres of cranberry production.

According to Skjaerlund, the initial report by the steering committee is just the beginning of a decision to bring cranberries to Muskegon County. Before the first spade of dirt is moved for the cranberry beds, detailed analysis of the site needs to be done.

"We put together an initial feasibility proposal

Continued on page 4

### COVER STORY Fund-raising drive gives FFA a million-dollar boost

Vision2000 is no longer a vision... it is reality, thanks in no small part to the state of Michigan and the generous support of Michigan industry and individuals.

In a historical move, the Michigan FFA Foundation raised enough money in its Vision2000 campaign to match a special \$500,000 grant issued to them from the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA). The spectacular part about the \$1 million raised is the final \$147,000 was raised completely during the month of September.

"Vision2000 has been an initiative of Gov. Engler and MDA," explains Bob Craig, MDA's Office of Agriculture Development director. "When we found there were going to be dollars in the agriculture and equine development fund that were going to lapse, we quickly began to put things into motion for use in Vision2000.

"It was exciting to have a total of \$500,000 offered up from the public," he adds. "But the requirement was that there had to be a one-to-one match in total pledges."

"The money from MDA was secured at the beginning of September," explains Jack Laurie, president of the Michigan FFA Foundation, when we were sure that \$500,000 could come within this budget year — giving us our 30-day September challenge to match it."

"We were pleased to see that the state of Michigan found a way to make public dollars available to help us do the things we do for young people through the FFA," explained recently retired state FFA advisor Rich Karelse, now volunteers with

Continued on page 4

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE OF THE MICHIGAN FARM NEWS

News in Brief .....	2
Capitol Corner .....	3
Muskegon County looks to squeeze profits from cranberry production .....	4
MMPA President Emeritus Lake passes away at age 82 .....	5

Market Outlook .....	6
Neighbors unite in time of need .....	8
Business Strategies .....	10
Weather Outlook .....	12
Precision Agriculture .....	13

Weed Strategies .....	14
Equipment leasing offers advantages .....	20
Hunter, landowner cooperation and coordination crucial components for successful whitetail hunt .....	16
Discussion Topic .....	17

Sell products and services in the Michigan Farm News classifieds—Page 18

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## STATE

**Drain Code correction**

The following is a synopsis of Drain Code amendments and Farm Bureau positions:

- 1) Requires an evaluation of natural resource impacts that identifies appropriate practical measures to minimize adverse impacts.

**Farm Bureau will support this change.**

Farm Bureau policy supports reducing adverse impacts on natural resources.

- 2) Allow for a petition to enhance or improve natural resources which may include additional assessments by the drain commissioner.

**Farm Bureau will oppose.**

The Drain Code gives drain commissioners the powerful authority to assess landowners based on use of the drain which is very important and is the very reason why Michigan's Drain Code works. However, having the ability to assess landowners in order to enhance natural resources along a drain should never be a role given to a drain commissioner. It begs the question of how would the drain commissioner actually determine the natu-

ral resources benefits to each landowner in order to assess them their fair share.

- 3) Clearly defines and distinguishes between maintenance and improvements.

**Farm Bureau supports and considers this to be one of the most important issues.**

Maintenance of drains must continue to be a simple process in order to solve problems quickly and economically. Improvements to drains must only include clear expansions of drains.

- 4) Establishment of a comprehensive watershed management program.

**Farm Bureau supports the concept of watershed management.** However, the current Chapter 22 amendments pose many complicated questions and challenges especially with funding. Farm Bureau recommends Chapter 22 be dropped and taken up as a separate issue following passage of the other Drain Code amendments. One option may be to establish a watershed management program through the conservation districts. ■

## STATE

**Drain Code public hearings**

The House Agriculture Committee will hold a series of public hearings around the state to take testimony on proposed revisions to the Drain Code (H.B. 4337). Agricultural interests, county drain commissioners, state officials and others have been working to update the code, which establishes rules for drainage districts and construction and maintenance of drains, sewers, pumping equipment, bridges, culverts, fords and other drain structures.

The hearings are scheduled for:

- 6 p.m., Thursday, October 16, Vienna Township Hall, 3400 W. Vienna, Clio
- 6:30 p.m., Monday, October 20, Frenchtown Township Hall, 2744 Vivian Road, Monroe
- Noon, Friday, October 24, Sanilac County Conference Room, 37 Austin, Sandusky
- Noon, Friday, November 7, County Commissioners Chambers, 201 W. Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo
- 6 p.m., Monday, November 10, Masonic Hall, 514 N. New Street, Stanton.

MFB contact: Scott Everett, ext. 2046. ■

**\$1 million raised for Michigan FFA Foundation**

Continued from page 1

the Michigan FFA Foundation and Michigan FFA alumni. "Once they made the challenge, the only slight twist was that we needed to match it."

"I'm just so amazed and impressed that the private sector not only rose to the challenge," adds Craig. "But came up with dollars and actually exceeded the total of \$500,000, which is great news and in such a short time — that's just incredible to be able to do that."

"It shows the strong support from the agricultural community for the FFA Foundation and all the programs and services that are going to be funded," he adds. "It's an endowment fund, as opposed to the annual operating dollars, it's really an endowment fund to provide security for the financial future."

"When we needed to make that final push of about \$150,000," explains Karelse. "We sat down and looked at the names of people that I've rubbed shoulders with in my tenure as state advisor, parents of former state officers, American Farmer candidates, people that I've worked with in communities that we've worked together to maintain agriscience programs. These folks have seen the benefit of FFA and what it does for young people."

**How Vision2000 began**

Two years ago, the 17-member Michigan FFA Foundation board of directors expanded their idea of agriscience education beyond just the high school FFA programs and the idea of Vision2000 began.

"The directors expanded their vision to in-

clude funding and creating financial security for the Michigan FFA," adds Laurie. "Now we can work to provide K-12 agricultural education experiences to young people throughout the state."

According to Laurie, Vision2000 is based on the belief that every citizen should have a minimum level of knowledge of the food and fiber segment of Michigan's economy. A second, and equally important goal is attracting and educating the human resources needed to assure the continued growth and vitality of the agricultural and natural resources industries.

"The \$1 million will be used in terms of communicating with the young people about the importance of the food and ag industry," Craig adds. "There needs to be leadership development for FFA students, and we hope also it will increase the understanding of agriscience. There are a lot of jobs in the future, that people need to have the right training and skills to be employed in the food, ag, and natural resource industry."

**The continuing challenge**  
**"We're not done raising money by a long shot."**

According to Karelse, the fundraising isn't finished with the \$1 million goal being met. "We need to look at what to do to continue to raise funds to do the ongoing FFA awards."

"All the leadership contests, the skills activities," he adds, "those awards need to continue to be funded, we're going to continue to need some contributions to that operating fund as well." ■

**Muskegon County looks to squeeze profits from cranberry production**

Continued from page 1

that basically concluded that it's a great site," he adds. "There's 500 jobs that can be created, 20-plus million dollars in income to the county, but in order to bring this to the stage where we can get investors, we need to do a more detailed feasibility study specific to that site and develop an investor prospectus. We're asking the county to put up the money to do that, the secondary feasibility study, and hopefully through this fall we will have an investor strategy."

"The 500 jobs are just associated with the production and the processing solely," explains Bill Johanson, lake shore area manager for Consumers Energy. "That doesn't include the multiplier effect of new busi-

nesses and suppliers that would come into the area."

"The bottom line will be revenue," adds Johanson. "Economic development has a generous payback at times, but it's usually long-term. We have always felt that as the communities which we serve develop and grow more prosperous, more businesses come in and that will generate certainly kind of an economic development multiplier factor that will bring more people in, more suppliers, more periphery businesses. Bottom line is there's going to be more electricity sold to this vast audience."

According to Skjaerlund, the cranberry market has exponentially increased during the last 20 years, outpacing domestic supply. "While the production of cranberries

has double since 1975, the price of cranberries has increased more than four-fold," he adds. "The industry is currently 40 million pounds short and has sent prices as high as 50 percent more than growers were paid two years ago."

Skjaerlund adds that the cranberry industry estimates another 6,000 acres are needed through the year 2000 to meet current demand alone.

"Cranberry production is a very viable and profitable industry," Skjaerlund adds. "But it's also very capital-intensive — even

though you can get \$12,000 to \$15,000 an acre in income, you need about \$25,000 to start for each acre of cranberries. The payout is great, but it takes money and investment to do it up front."

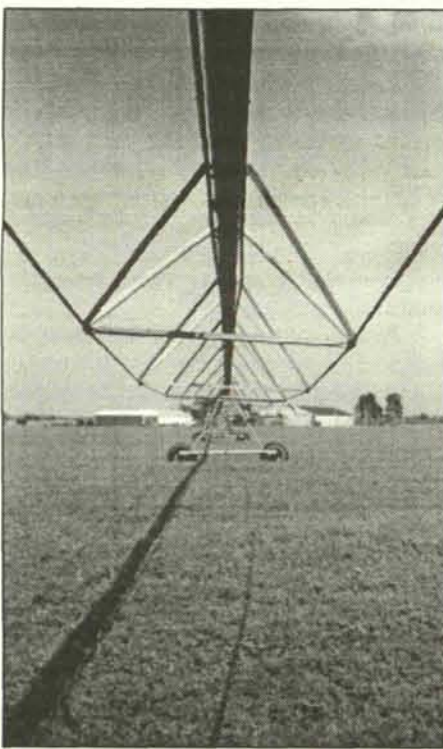
The 13-member steering committee outlined three important steps for the county commissioners to take in order to move ahead with the cranberry project, including:

1. Establish a cranberry steering committee of commissioners to work on the project.
2. Participate in a two-day Wisconsin cranberry tour to visit production beds and processing plants during harvest this month.
3. Request for proposals to complete a second phase feasibility study, site design and layout for presentation as a proposal to potential investors.

"I think we're pretty optimistic as a team," says Johanson, "This is probably one of the best production sites in the state of Michigan for large-scale production; it looks like all the preliminary soil conditions with the production criteria are there in place. We want to reconfirm that and develop an investor prospectus. That's the reason why we've spent all the work and we felt confident to go to the county commissioners that this is a viable project. But you're looking at a \$25 million investment for a thousand acres of cranberries. That's not a small amount of investment." ■



During the Sept. 25 meeting of the Muskegon County Commissioner's Community Development and Strategic Planning Committee, county Administrator Frank Bednarke explains the proposed site's topography. Consumers Energy Economic Development Director, Doug Buikema (right) and the first person to advocate cranberry production at the site Prein and Newhof, Engineer Bruce Kadzban (center) look on.



Currently, the Muskegon wastewater facility uses its treated water to irrigate hundreds of acres of alfalfa, soybeans and corn.

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# MMPA President Emeritus Lake passes away at age 82

One of America's most influential leaders in the dairy industry died Sept. 25, 1997. Glenn Lake, president emeritus of Michigan Milk Producers Association, succumbed to congestive heart failure at the age of 82. As a dairy farmer in Michigan, Lake served his fellow farmers on several state and national boards. His leadership, insight and determination earned him the respect of many including state governors and presidents.

In Michigan, Lake served as president of the Michigan Milk Producers Association from 1955 until 1981. During his tenure he developed Great Lakes-Southern Milk, Inc. the first of its kind to emphasize the now familiar role of regional milk marketing to increase dairy farmers bargaining power.

During his time as MMPA president he faced obstacles such as milk strikes, acquisitions and mergers, member unrest and a growing and changing dairy industry. From the late 1950s to the early 1970s the Michigan dairy industry was enduring great growing pains. As the diversified small farm grew to a more specialized dairy farm, the membership needs and concerns also grew. Lake was able to successfully lead the cooperative members through these changing times. It was his combined sense empathy for the small farmer and his realistic view of the future that garnered respect from the MMPA members and the dairy



The late MMPA President Emeritus Glen Lake (right) worked closely with Michigan Farm Bureau during his tenure as MMPA president. In this 1969 photo, he congratulated MFB President Elton Smith on Michigan Farm Bureau's 50 years of dedicated service to Michigan Farm Bureau members.

industry as a whole.

Lake served as president of the National Milk Producers Federation from 1960-1976. Serving as president of MMPA and NMPF simultaneously gave Lake a broad view of the dairy industry. Through his leadership both organizations were able to set precedents in terms of

dairy policy and milk marketing.

Lake was also instrumental in the formation of the United Dairy Industry Association, a national organization providing nutritional information regarding dairy products to consumers. He was the first president of this organization and served in this position for 13 years.

Lake received numerous recognitions during his life for his contributions to the agriculture and dairy community. Among one of his top honors was being appointed by President John F. Kennedy to the National Agricultural Advisory Commission, representing the nation's dairy farmers. He also was awarded an honorary doctor of agriculture degree by Michigan State University in December 1973 for his accomplishments in the dairy industry.

His recognitions include: Michigan State University's Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award (1961) and Dairy Farmer of the Year (1965), Michigan State Grange Outstanding Service to Agriculture Award (1961), the American Dairy Science Association's Distinguished Service Award (1969), and the Michigan Minuteman Award for Distinguished Service to the State of Michigan (1970).

Lake was born Dec. 10, 1915 at North Branch, Michigan. He and his brother, Clare, operated a dairy farm in North Branch.

Lake is survived by his daughter, Arlene Lake Ogden; son-in-law James Ogden; brother Al Lake, sister-in-law Imogene Lake and sister-in-law Sandra Lake.

Lake was preceded in death by his wife, Anne; and brothers, Charles, Jack and Clare.

Memorial contributions can be made in Glenn Lake's name to: the Michigan Dairy Memorial and Scholarship Foundation; Michigan 4-H Foundation; the Lion's Club, the Leader Dog for the Blind Program and St. Bedes Church. ■

## MDA director presents Hart with infrastructure grant to assist Gray & Company innovation

Recently, Dan Wyant, Director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) presented a \$735,000 economic development infrastructure grant to the city of Hart, Michigan, on behalf of the Michigan Jobs Commission, to assist Gray & Company's funding of a new process for rinsing cherries.

Gray & Company is one of the world's largest producer of cherry products. The company processes over 30 million pounds of sweet cherries annually and currently serves 80 percent of the top grocery wholesalers and retailers.

The grant, funded through the Michigan Renaissance Fund, will be used to implement electro-dialysis in its rinsing process. Electro-dialysis is a way of rinsing cherries with electricity instead of water, and it offers the company several benefits. By using this new process, developed by Michigan Biotechnology Institute (MBI) International of Lansing, the processing plant will not discharge as much wastewater into the city of Hart's wastewater treatment system. The electro-dialysis will also allow for more recovery of the natural sugars that are lost when the cherries are rinsed with water prior to processing. Because Gray & Company will recover more of the cherry's natural sugars, the company will not have to purchase as much corn sweetener as it does now.

"Innovation and technological advances, such as

electrodialysis, will help pave the way as the agricultural industry moves into the 21st century," said Wyant. "MDA is privileged to partner with the Michigan Jobs Commission, MBI International, Gray & Company and the city of Hart in this cutting edge process."

The total cost of the project is \$2.3 million. In addition to the state grant, the city of Hart will be contributing \$80,000 and Gray & Company will be expending \$1,500,000 over the next two years on capital improvements. This project is expected to create 75 new jobs.

"This is a project that was first brought to our attention by representatives from the Michigan Department of Agriculture. We have worked extensively with the department and representatives from the city of Hart and Gray & Company. We are pleased to be able to help support this innovative technology which will result in job opportunities for Michigan residents," said Doug Rothwell, Chief Executive Officer and Department Director of the Michigan Jobs Commission.

The Michigan Jobs Commission, which administers the Michigan Renaissance Fund, works in partnership with local communities and Michigan businesses to retain and expand job opportunities and improve Michigan's overall business climate. For more information on the Michigan Renaissance Fund, call the Michigan Jobs Commission at 517-335-4590. ■

## ICMPA and MMPA push for state milk order

Continued from page 1

patrick. "The \$1.00 premium has been the average value of the voluntary superpool. It has been as high as \$1.75 and as low as \$.80/cwt. over the past five years. We are not suggesting levels which will increase the consumer price," he added. "The store price of milk will be unaffected by this order as compared to the voluntary superpool that had operated from December 1992 to August 1997."

Ron Nelson, MFB legislative counsel, related that "Farm Bureau policy strongly supports the concept that all Class I sales in Michigan be subject to the over-order premium as established by the voluntary superpool. But given that the voluntary superpool does not

have the participation of all fluid milk handlers in the state," he added, "we will support enabling legislation to establish a State Milk Order, lending stability to the market and equalizing returns to all Michigan dairy farmers."

"Without a state order — either voluntary or legislated — the entire industry loses," added MFB Livestock and Dairy Specialist Kevin Kirk. "Milk sold out of the state also reaps the benefit of an over-order premium since it must compete with prices paid in Michigan."

Naerebout agrees, "We truly feel this helps all dairy producers in Michigan. We can't pay any more than what the competition is paying." The Michigan Ag Commission did not vote on the issue at its October meeting. ■

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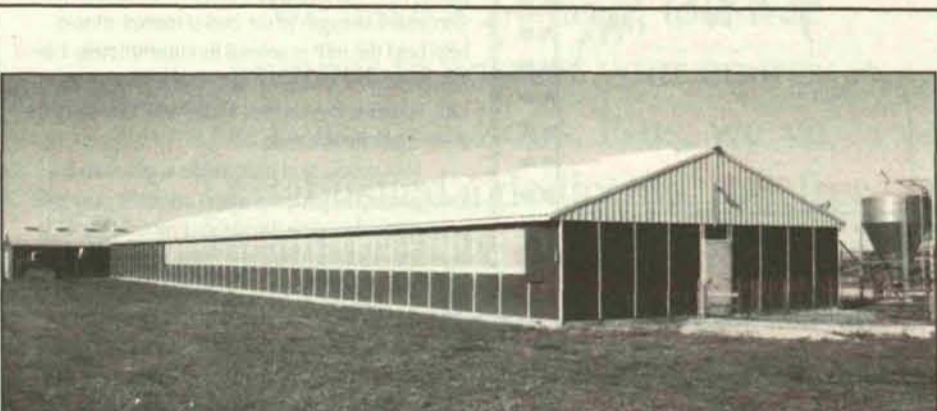
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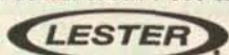
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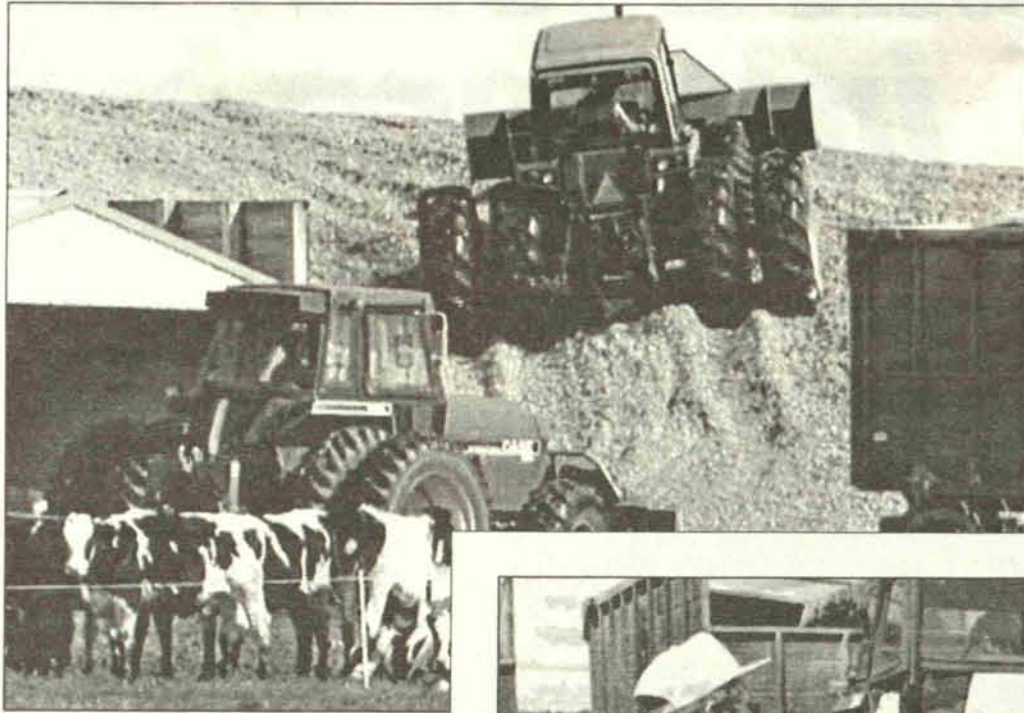
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# Neighbors unite in time of need

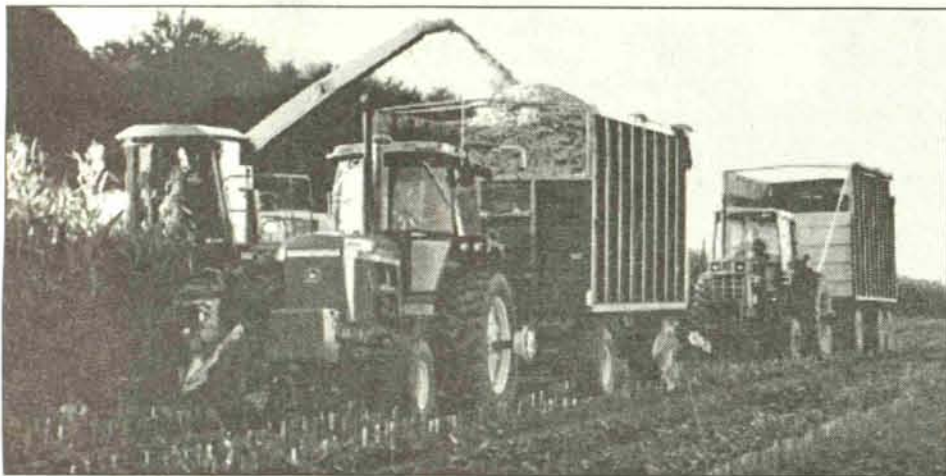
Since a farming accident in early August, Clinton County dairy farmer Mel Pohl and his wife Pam have had to face many challenges. Thanks to the generosity of nearly 25 Fowler-area farmers, however, harvesting their corn silage wasn't one of them. A fleet of tractors and dump wagons, and two self-propelled forage harvesters put away nearly 2,100 tons of corn silage in Mel's bunker silo in just 20 hours. In addition to volunteers providing time and equipment, a local fuel vendor supplied all of the necessary fuel to keep everything running. The event was organized by neighboring dairy farmers Ken Halfman and Cliff Thelen.

Pohl, who was injured attempting to start a tractor from the ground when it was in gear, spent two weeks at the Detroit Medical Center to repair the damage to his pelvic area. Although he has returned home, Pohl now gets around with the aid of a walker, while he continues another six months of rehabilitation at home.

The modest volunteers received a great deal of media attention for helping their neighbor in time of need, including a front-page story in the *Lansing State Journal*, and a story on WLNS TV-6, which named the entire work crew their "Unsung Heroes" during their evening news program.



It took neighbors a little more than two days to fill Mel Pohl's 12' x 60' x 100' bunker silo. It took two packing tractors (left) to keep up with the constant flow of dump wagons and corn silage harvested with self-propelled forage harvesters (lower left). Two different crews worked each day to complete the job in record time. There was also time for a little comradery between neighbors (below) at the end of the job. As one farmer put it, "This is what community is all about!"



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Further, I recognize that I can have only one primary long-distance company for a given telephone number, that I will no longer be pre-subscribed to my current long-distance carrier's services and that my local telephone company may impose a charge for this and any later change. I also understand that The Farm Bureau® Connection's<sup>SM</sup> name will appear on my long-distance bill as a result of this switch and that this only affects my 1+ long-distance services.

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Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

County Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Farm Bureau Membership #: \_\_\_\_\_

#### For Office Use Only

Signature of Authorized Rep: \_\_\_\_\_ Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Business Strategies

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**F**inancial statement analysis using ratio measurements and trend analysis assists farm managers to make informed judgments and decisions about the entity's financial condition and results of operations. The financial measures in this article are split into five sections — liquidity, solvency, profitability, repayment capacity and efficiency. For each section, financial measures and ratios provide meaningful relationships between individual values in the financial statements.

This article defines the financial criteria and ratios and provides values for 17 Michigan hog farms for the 1996 calendar year. Previous articles have given similar data for cash grain and for dairy farms; both had bigger sample sizes. The source of the financial data is records analyzed for swine farmers by the Telfarm record program through Michigan State University Extension. Additional data about these swine farms, broken into size groups, can be found in Agricultural Economics Staff Paper No. 97-30. This is available from county Extension offices, or from me, or at my home page at <http://www.msu.edu/user/nott/>. The data provides managers of hog farms of comparable size with industry standards to compare the results from their business. Your local Extension livestock agent can arrange for your farm to do an analysis using the same format to ensure the comparability of your individual ratios.

The data in Table 1 summarizes the measures for 17 swine farms and the average for the high and low 36 percent of the operations based on net farm income. In addition to the five financial sections, farm size measures describe the operations. Nearly 87 percent of the cash sales on these farms came from raised hogs and feeder pigs. Another 6 percent came from cull boar and sow sales. Family labor provided about one third of the labor hours for the 17 farm average.

**Liquidity** measures the ability of a business to meet financial obligations as they come due in the ordinary course of business, without disrupting the normal operations of the business. The current ratio indicates the extent current assets cover current liabilities. Working capital is the amount of funds available to purchase inputs and inventory items, or make advance payments on debts. The current ratio on the high income farms was negative compared to \$75,496 on low income farms on the last day of 1996. Despite having lower net income, the average low income farms were in a better defensive position to finance operations in the early months of 1997. The generally poor liquidity ratios likely result from the feed situation that existed a year ago.

Many of the ratios, such as the current ratio, were calculated with values from the average balance sheet at the end of 1996. A rule of thumb is that the current ratio should be 2.0 or higher to be

## Financial measures vary on Michigan swine farms

classified as safely liquid. Table 1 indicates that at the end of 1996, the hog farms in this group had current debt commitments that were barely covered by cash, crops and feeder pig inventories.

The **solvency** criteria measures the amount of borrowed capital used by a business relative to the amount of owner's equity. Three ratios showing the relationship of debts, assets and equity to each other and measuring the financial position of the business and the creditors' and owners' claims against the assets are given in the table. The average hog farm had 52 percent debt and 48 percent equity at the end of 1996. The average for all farms throughout the U.S. is about 28 percent debt and 32 percent equity. The lower income farms had a better debt to asset ratio than did the high income farms. Did these six farmers deliberately choose lower income for a better percent equity position?

**Profitability** measures the extent to which a business generates a profit from the use of land, labor, capital and management. The rate of return on assets and equity applies all of the residual income to capital after charges are made for family labor and management. The operating profit margin is a ratio of profit before interest charges are made for family labor and management. The operating profit margin is a ratio of profit before interest charges to revenue. The average hog farm returned 9.1 percent on assets and 11.5 percent on equity. High profit farms had a rate of return on assets of 12.8 percent during 1996. Low income farms made better returns than pass-book savings rate. Since the high and low profit farms are sorted by net farm income, the other profitability factors show very positive values for high profit farms

and less favorable numbers for low profit hog farms. Low profit farms need to determine the causes of their lower income if improvements are desired.

**Repayment capacity** measures the ability of borrowers to repay debt from income. The term debt coverage ratio is a measure of the ability of the business to cover all short term debt payments. A number greater than 100 indicates the business generated enough cash to pay all term debt payments. For example, a coverage ratio of 200 shows that the firm generated twice the cash needed to make debt payments. The capital replacement margin shows how much cash is available above the amount needed to pay operating expenses, taxes, family living costs, and scheduled debt payments. The high profit farms were in a strong position to service debt commitments and finance growth from cash flows during 1996. It appears some of the six arms in the low income group were unable to make the all the short term debt payments they committed themselves to at the start of 1996. They also averaged negative capital replacement margins.

**Efficiency ratios** measure the degree of effectiveness in the use of land, labor and capital. The asset turnover ratio measures how efficiently assets are being used to generate revenue. A high number says that less capital is needed to generate a dollar of sales, while a low number indicates farms require more capital to raise a dollar of revenue. In most cases, a business is more profitable if it can generate more revenue from fewer dollars invested in machinery, inventory, land and other assets. The other efficiency ratios are a comparison of expenses, depreciation or interest expense to revenue. Lower expense ratios should result in more residual income to the business. ■

### FINANCIAL GUIDELINES MEASURES, 1996

Michigan Swine Farms (Farms sorted by Net Farm Income)

	Average for all Farms	Average for low 36%	Average for high 36%
<b>NUMBER OF FARMS</b>	17	6	6
<b>SIZE</b>			
Cash Farm Sales	\$864,971	\$605,785	\$1,390,660
Total Farm Assets	\$1,526,194	\$1,295,499	\$2,374,938
No. of Sows	549	n/a	844
Pigs Weaned per Sow	14.4	n/a	14.2
<b>LIQUIDITY</b>			
Current Ratio	1.02	1.49	0.88
Working Capital	\$5,491	\$75,496	-\$86,236
<b>SOLVENCY</b>			
Farm Debt to Asset Ratio	52%	48%	107%
Farm Equity to Asset Ratio	45%	55%	83%
Farm Debt to Equity Ratio	50%	50%	100%
<b>PROFITABILITY</b>			
Rate of Return on Farm Assets	9.1%	5.3%	12.8%
Rate of Return on Farm Equity	11.5%	3.6%	19.3%
Operating Profit Margin	24.1%	18.9%	30.5%
Net Farm Income	\$118,237	\$64,005	\$241,142
<b>REPAYMENT CAPACITY</b>			
Term Debt Coverage Ratio	15%	79%	214%
Capital Replacement Margin	\$39,861	-\$12,218	\$130,890
<b>EFFICIENCY</b>			
Asset Turnover Rate (market)	37.9%	28.0%	41.9%
Operating Expense Ratio	80.6%	82.7%	78.8%
Depreciation Expense Ratio	5.4%	13.0%	2.7%
Interest Expense Ratio	5.4%	6.5%	4.4%
Net Farm Income Ratio	8.6%	-2.2%	14.1%

## Buying weaned beef calves

**M**any cow-calf producers sell their calves at weaning time with little or no pre-conditioning program. The health of the calves is generally not in jeopardy prior to weaning. Problems occur after calves are weaned, shipped and purchased by the new owner.

Weaning and exposure to the local sale barn is arguably the most stressful time in the life of a beef calf. Removal from his mother, possible exposure to disease, and being introduced to a new home with new feed and water sources are all contributors to a possible bad experience. Losing calves is bound to happen in the above scenario.

What can you do as a beef backgrounder or feedlot owner to ensure your calf morbidity and mortality are minimized? Here are a few general rules:

- Try to buy pre-conditioned calves (vaccinated, dehorned, castrated, started on hay and grain prior to weaning) and be sure to develop your own vaccination program with your local veterinarian before you buy calves. Pre-conditioned calves are worth \$3 to \$4 cwt. at a minimum.
- Keep stress to a minimum when shipping and receiving new calves. Weaned calves will often refuse feed for several days, circling the perimeter of the pen looking for a way out.
- Develop a feeding program to stimulate calves to begin eating as soon as possible. Good-quality, free-choice grass hay and limited feeding of grain

with mineral and vitamin supplementation will work best to stimulate calves to eat.

- Handling facilities are vital if you are to detect sickness and treat as needed.

Calves not eating or eating only marginal amounts of their dry matter requirement are losing ground. Their immune system is already overloaded, and without adequate nutrition, little progress

will be made to fight disease. Remember, reduced stress will pay you back in heavier and healthier cattle in your operations.

Consult your local veterinarian about the proper vaccination program for your management needs. Other reliable sources of information include pharmaceutical companies, feed dealers and your MSU Extension livestock agent. ■



## Electric deregulation could mean lower prices for consumers

**D**eregulation of the electric power industry could have users paying significantly reduced rates. Michigan Farm Bureau, the state's largest farm organization, warns however, that careful preparation is necessary before a phase-in of the program. Regulatory approvals and the passage of state legislation are now in the works. If completed by the end of the year as expected, electric deregulation could soon be a reality.

Rather than pay one price for power and its delivery, consumers would be able to buy electricity from an alternative supplier and receive it from their existing company. While the power generation would be largely unregulated, the delivery and related services would continue to be regulated.

"Power lines as we know them — either the large towers or the ones that come into our homes — will stay the same," said Ron Nelson, Michigan Farm Bureau legislative counsel. "They will remain regulated.

"The whole concept here is to allow the user to shop for the best price," Nelson said. But with separate companies generating the power and delivering it, and the fact that electricity cannot be stored, the whole process could be tricky. According to Nelson, that's especially true for agriculture.

"We have to be concerned that the usage may vary considerably throughout the day," he said of farmers and their use of electricity. "For instance, the dairy farmer who milks two or three times a day is probably going to see a spike in the electric usage."

That means power companies will need to have enough capacity to service those peak times, but there will be excess capacity at other times. A question of who will pay for that "stranded cost" is yet to be answered. "With agriculture's demand peaks from day to day and throughout the season, it does complicate the issue somewhat," Nelson said.

Other concerns include who will pay for the costs of the transition from a regulated to deregulated electric industry and how companies will secure their costs. ■

## North Korea on brink of "massive mortality"

**A** United Nations report warned in mid-September that a risk of "massive mortality" exists in North Korea following a sample testing that showed about 17 percent of young children are seriously undernourished.

Catherine Bertini, head of the United Nations' World Food Program, said the study confirms her program's greatest fear: That the communist nation is starving and drastic measures are needed.

"Without adequate assistance, we can expect massive mortality in the coming winter," said Bertini. "Nutritionally, North Koreans are already pressed to the limit.

"Because of the severe winter that will set in soon, people will need additional food to combat the cold."

North Korea, which has been hesitant to accept outside help, faces a grain shortage of 1.9 million tons over the next year. Reports say between 500,000 and 2 million North Koreans have starved to death. ■

## Grain officials call for river repair

**G**rain producers and shippers in the Midwest are expressing concern about the condition of the Mississippi River's lock and dam system. In 1995, 82 percent of the corn, 77 percent of the soybeans and 32 percent of the wheat grown in the 10 Midwest states bordering the Illinois, Mississippi and Ohio rivers moved by barge, and almost all that grain went to the export market, according to the Midwest Area River Coalition 2000.

Coalition President Christopher Brechia says 85 percent of the river system is more than 50 years old and needs upgrading and repairs, which would cost \$750 million to \$1 billion. Al Anderson of Harvest States Cooperative says without the barges to move the grain, farmers would have to pay \$1 billion in extra freight costs. One barge carries as much grain as 15 rail cars or 60 semi-trailers. ■

# HEALTH HARVEST

## Hey Mom! Look what I brought home from school!



### Common contagious infections and how to deal with them

**C**reepy, crawly things — enough to send a shudder through any parent. Add to that skin inflammations and eye infections. Your child frequently is at risk from them while at a place you normally consider safe: the day-care center or elementary school. Insect infestations like **head lice** and **ringworm**, contagious infectious diseases like **impetigo** and **pink eye** — all are commonly found in environments where they can be easily transmitted by direct contact among children.

These diseases also tend to carry a bit of social stigma. Parents typically react with horror when they realize their child is infected: "How could my child have head lice? We keep her so clean!"

Parents needn't worry about their children's cleanliness, according to Kathy Trczinski, RN, MSN, CRNP, a nurse practitioner at the duPont Hospital for Children. These diseases are quite common among all socioeconomic groups and are transmitted simply because children are together in close quarters, which increases the exchange of germs. If your child becomes infected, don't worry about how or from whom she got it. Concentrate on getting her well. Here Trczinski gives you the scoop on some unpleasant (but curable!) infections your child may bring home from school or daycare.

#### Ringworm (*Tinea corporis*)

**What it is:** A fungal infection that usually

appears on the skin of exposed areas such as the face, upper extremities and trunk as reddish patches, often scaly or blistered. Ringworm on the scalp can cause destruction of the hair shaft, resulting in bald patches.

**Causes:** Most often transmitted by skin-to-skin contact, or the sharing of combs, brushes, towels, etc.; animals also transmit ringworm, though rarely.

**Treatment:** Prolonged use of an antifungal cream is usually completely effective.

Some of these creams are over the counter, others by prescription. Your doctor or pharmacist can advise you. The cream will not produce immediate results; treat for up to three continuous weeks. Make sure the child bathes thoroughly with soap and water and dries off completely since fungus thrives in moist areas. If the scalp is affected, oral medication will be required — and treatment is rather prolonged — many weeks, in fact. Your physician can prescribe an appropriate antifungal medication.

**Return to day care/school:** 24 hours after treatment begins.

#### Head lice

**What it is:** A grayish, wingless, flat parasite

that lives on the host's blood. The lice hatch eggs (nits) that attach to the shafts of hair on the head, eyebrows and even lashes. Lice are hard to notice unless you look closely. If your child seems to be scratching his head vigorously, make an inspection.

**Causes:** Transmitted by sharing of combs, brushes, hats, ponytail holders, barrettes, etc. Lice can also live for one to two days on a couch or chair.

**Treatment:** To get rid of the lice, the eggs (nits) must be removed. There are a number of over-the-counter shampoo treatments that work well. Ask your pharmacist for a recommendation. Most kits also contain a fine-tooth comb used to comb the dead nits out of the hair after shampooing. In reading the package information, be sure the shampoo kills both eggs and lice.

**Return to day care/school:** After treatment, the child can go to school the next day.

#### Impetigo

**What it is:** A contagious skin inflammation caused by streptococcal or staphylococcal infection. Impetigo usually results when the skin is broken by a bite, scrape, burn or scratch. It is marked by blisters that become pus-filled, erupt

and form yellow crusts.

**Causes:** Direct contact with the moist discharge of the lesions.

**Treatment:** The infection, if mild, may usually be controlled successfully with topical antibiotic ointment, which your physician can prescribe. Keep the skin around the lesions clean and expose the skin to the air to encourage drying. If the infection is widespread, severe or near the mouth where the antibiotic cream could be licked off, an oral antibiotic will be prescribed.

**Return to day care/school:** Usually 24 hours after treatment has begun.

#### Conjunctivitis (Pinkeye)

**What it is:** Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the transparent mucous membrane (the conjunctiva) lining the eyelids and eyeballs. It is either a viral or bacterial infection, an allergic reaction or — in newborns — caused by tear ducts that don't completely open. When it's bacterial or viral, it's dubbed "pinkeye" and may be highly contagious. The infection results in red, watery, often itchy eyes, which omit secretions that crust and can cause the eyelids to stick together.

**Causes:** Colds and poor hand washing habits, sharing of eye makeup in adolescents.

**Treatment:** Your physician can prescribe antibiotic drops or ointment.

**Return to day care/school:** Once the infection has subsided, usually after a day or two, the child can return to school. ■

# A better way to check your weight



**K**nowing what you weigh is one thing, but getting a reasonable idea of how much of your weight is body fat ranks as a better gauge of your risk of health problems. One body fat measure frequently used by researchers is the body mass index (BMI). This number is an estimate of whether your body fat is high enough to put you at risk for such chronic conditions as heart disease and diabetes. BMI is calculated by dividing weight in kilograms by height in meters squared. But to save you the trouble of getting out your calculator, the following chart allows you to find your BMI at a glance.

Scientists differ in their opinions of what makes the exact cut-off point for an unhealthfully high BMI. In general, most agree that a BMI of 19 to 25 is fine. From 26 to 27 is pushing the envelope, while BMIs greater than 27 indicate that a person is overweight.

To be sure, BMI is just one measure, and some people with high BMIs may not be "fat." A bodybuilder whose weight is mostly muscle may score high on BMI charts even though his proportion of actual body fat is low. In addition, where on the body a person carries fat plays a role in health risks. Fat deposited around the abdomen, creating an "apple" body shape, is more detrimental to health than fat carried around the hips and thighs, making a "pear" shape. ■

BMI	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	35	40
4'10"	91	96	100	105	110	115	119	124	129	134	138	143	167	191
4'11"	94	99	104	109	114	119	124	128	133	138	143	148	173	198
5'	97	102	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	179	204
5'1"	100	106	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	185	211
5'2"	104	109	115	120	126	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	191	218
5'3"	107	113	118	124	130	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	197	225
5'4"	110	116	122	128	134	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	204	232
5'5"	114	120	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	210	240
5'6"	118	124	130	136	142	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	216	247
5'7"	121	127	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	223	255
5'8"	125	131	138	144	151	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	230	262
5'9"	128	135	142	149	155	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	236	270
5'10"	132	139	146	153	160	167	174	181	188	195	202	207	243	278
5'11"	136	143	150	157	165	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	250	286
6'	140	147	154	162	169	177	184	191	199	206	213	221	258	294
6'1"	144	151	159	166	174	182	189	197	204	212	219	227	265	302
6'2"	148	155	163	171	179	186	194	202	210	218	225	233	272	311
6'3"	152	160	168	176	184	192	200	208	216	224	232	240	279	319
6'4"	156	164	172	180	189	197	205	213	221	230	238	246	287	328

Source: Tufts University Health and Nutrition Letter



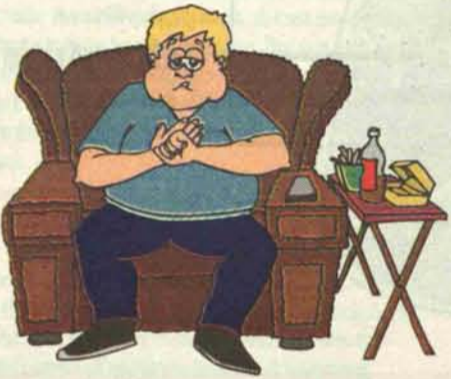
# Health Bits

## Use antibiotics wisely

Misusing antibiotics promotes the development of drug-resistant bacteria, which pose a danger to both the user and the public. To minimize the risk:

- Don't take antibiotics for a viral infection such as a cold, flu, or minor respiratory illness; antibiotics don't work against viruses.
- When your doctor diagnoses a bacterial infection ask for an antibiotic that specifically targets the likely strain, rather than a "broad-spectrum" drug. Taking a bacterial culture of the infected tissue or fluid can further improve the match between the drug and the bug.
- Take the full course of antibiotics that your doctor prescribes, since stopping prematurely can encourage the development of resistant bacteria. But overly long treatment can also promote resistance; so ask your doctor whether a briefer course might eradicate the infection.

## IS IT ONLY HEARTBURN?



**H**earthburn, that uncomfortable burning sensation behind the breastbone that most commonly occurs after a meal, affects almost everyone at one time or another. But when heartburn occurs frequently, it could signal a bigger problem known as Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), which is a backflow of acid from the stomach into the esophagus. In some individuals this reflux is frequent or severe enough to cause significant problems, ranging from ruining tooth enamel to much more serious damage to the esophagus, vocal cords, and lungs.

- Heartburn (uncomfortable, rising, burning sensation behind the breastbone).
- Regurgitation of gastric acid or sour contents into the mouth.
- Difficult and/or painful swallowing.
- Chest pain.

If you suspect that you have GERD or have been diagnosed by a doctor as having the condition here are some tips that could alleviate some of your distress:

- Keep track of foods that seem to trigger your symptoms and avoid those that give you the most problems.
- Avoid milk and milk products. Many GERD sufferers report that their symptoms are often brought on by the lactose in dairy products. Opt for non-lactose varieties of milk and cheese that can commonly be found at various health food stores.
- Avoid lying down right after a meal.
- Tight-fitting clothing, especially around the waist/stomach area, can cause problems for some people. Such clothing may limit the digestive process. Choose your wardrobe accordingly.
- Certain activities, such as bending over or lifting things, seem to trigger GERD symptoms.
- Take note of any over-the-counter or prescription drugs that bring on acid reflux. Talk to your doctor about alternatives.

Unfortunately, GERD, in general, cannot be cured at present. However, it can be managed with medications, lifestyle changes and, in some cases, surgery. If you suspect that you have GERD, consult with a doctor who can evaluate the condition and advise on an appropriate treatment plan. ■

## Low-fat common sense

In a nutrition study, when people were told that the lunch they were eating was "low-fat," they consumed more calories the rest of the day than they would normally. But when they were told that their lunch was a "normal lunch," they



ate less during the rest of the day. (In reality, the nutritional content of the lunches was the same.)

**Conclusion:** The amount of food people eat is partly determined by their knowledge of the food, not simply by their body's regulation of hunger and satiety.

## Prevent athlete's foot

Keep your feet clean and dry, especially in hot weather. Snug, poorly ventilated shoes and damp, sweaty socks provide an ideal breeding ground for the fungus that cause athlete's foot. Daily washing with soap and water is a good idea, but be sure you dry thoroughly, especially between the toes (you can use a hair dryer on low heat). When you can, go barefoot. Next best thing is to wear sandals. When you wear shoes, wear clean socks, preferably ones that "wick" away moisture. Air your shoes between wearings — don't wear the same pair day in, day out. Powder or even a spray antiperspirant, can help keep feet dry; if you already have athlete's foot, try an over-the-counter antifungal product.



When you wear shoes, wear clean socks, preferably ones that "wick" away moisture. Air your shoes between wearings — don't wear the same pair day in, day out. Powder or even a spray antiperspirant, can help keep feet dry; if you already have athlete's foot, try an over-the-counter antifungal product.

## Injecting insulin through clothing

People with diabetes who use the "rogue" practice of injecting insulin through their clothes are not necessarily risking safety, according to a study in *Diabetes Care*.

Michigan researchers asked 42 diabetics to

## Is it true that people really should eat breakfast?

**Nutritionists might disagree on a lot of things**, but this isn't one of them. You've heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and you'd be hard pressed to find a dietitian who disagrees with that.

Why? Because people generally don't eat when they're fast asleep. It may not seem this way when you get late-afternoon hunger pangs, but the longest period between any two meals is from dinner to breakfast. By the time you wake up, your blood sugar is low. It should be restored to give you the energy you need for your mind and body to get moving.

If you don't eat breakfast on a regular basis, your body tends to use the fuel it has in storage much more efficiently. In this case, being that efficient isn't necessarily a good thing. It means your metabolism slows down, and your body gets a lot better at storing fat. Many nutritionists believe that skipping breakfast is a sure-fire way to thwart any diet plans you might have.

## Lifting weights lifts depression

A new study has shown that strength training can reduce depression in older people.

Unlike antidepressant drugs, which some older people cannot tolerate, strength training has essentially no side effects, and provides numerous additional benefits. These include increased vitality, strength, mobility, and balance; improved weight control; stronger bones; lower cholesterol levels; and improved bowel function.



## Did Cinderella have bunions?



Women are four times more prone to foot problems than men, due to their lighter bone structure, the effects of pregnancy, and hormonal changes. High

heels and tight shoes greatly exacerbate this tendency.

- Many women accept sore feet as "a fact of life."
- 56 percent of women believe that having bunions is "normal."
- 88 percent of women squeeze their feet into shoes that are too small by a "significant degree."



## Spinach and strawberries — an antioxidant recipe

Eating certain fruits and vegetables can be just as effective as taking a large dose of vitamin C in helping the human body defuse oxygen radicals that can cause cell damage.

That's the latest finding from researchers with USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS), based at the USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University in Boston.

Last year, strawberries and spinach scored highest in total antioxidant capacity among 40 common



fruits and vegetables, based on a highly sensitive chemical assay developed by ARS scientists. Next, the scientists wanted to find out whether those protective com-

pounds could be absorbed by the human body through diet in sufficient amounts to boost the blood's antioxidant profile.

The researchers analyzed the blood of eight women in their 60s and 70s before and after eating five test meals. Each woman first ate a control meal with a low antioxidant content. Then, over the course of two months, the researchers added either a strawberry extract, a spinach extract, red wine or 1,250 milligrams of vitamin C to the control meal.

The strawberry and spinach extracts — drinks that were the equivalent of 8 to 10 ounces of the produce — boosted the ability of the women's blood to defuse the oxygen radicals another 20 percent over the effect of the meal itself. That's as much protection as the women got from taking the vitamin C. Red wine boosted antioxidant capacity by 15 percent above the control level.

# Office Calls

What might surprise you is that dietitians don't insist on toast or cereal as the ultimate breakfast foods. While those are fine choices, a slice of leftover pizza would do just as well. It's a good idea to consume some sort of fruit in the morning, too — a small banana or a 6-ounce glass of orange or grapefruit juice first thing in the morning will help you meet your goal of eating five fruits and vegetables a day, and supply you with vitamins and minerals you might not otherwise get.

One thing breakfast won't do is make your child into a genius. While research suggests that children who eat breakfast tend to have better test scores, a study published in the October 1996 issue of *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* suggests that this only may be true when the meal is eaten just before an exam. The Israeli study included 569 children aged 11 to 13, and found that eating breakfast two hours before a test did not improve perfor-

mance, but eating breakfast 20 minutes before the test did. While one study doesn't prove anything, it's good advice for your children to crack the books as well as the eggs to do well in school. ■



# Medical Focus



## Cardiologists develop new laser surgery for angina

**F**or people disabled by the crushing chest pain of angina despite repeated angioplasty or bypass surgery, drilling a series of tiny holes into the heart with a laser may bring surprising relief. The procedure, called transmyocardial revascularization or TMR, is still considered experimental, but several reports presented at the American Cardiology meeting in March suggest that it may provide a promising new alternative for patients who have exhausted other treatment options.

Angina occurs when the hard-working heart muscle doesn't receive enough oxygen-rich blood. Most often, this reduced blood flow, called ischemia, results from cholesterol-laden plaque narrowing the coronary arteries. The pain of angina usually comes on during exercise or as a result of emotional stress, although it can also occur with routine activity.

In TMR, a surgeon uses a computer-controlled laser to drill 20 to 40 channels in the wall of the heart's main pumping chamber, the left ventricle (see illustration). The computer synchronizes the laser's pulses to fire between heartbeats, hitting the left ventricle when it is engorged with blood. The holes, about a millimeter in diameter (about the size of a toothpick), allow blood to flow into the channels, bringing oxygen to the tissues. The holes on the heart's surface seal shut with clotted blood in minutes and heal within days, but researchers speculate that the interior channels remain open so that blood continues to flow into the heart's muscular wall with each contraction. TMR has been referred to as the "snake heart" procedure, because the original idea for the surgery was based on the physiology of reptile hearts, which have similar — but natural — channels to carry blood from the ventricle chamber to the tissues.

TMR offers several advantages over conventional treatments. Unlike bypass surgery,

which requires stopping the heart and relying on a heart-lung machine to pump the patient's blood during the procedure, TMR is performed with the heart still beating. In addition in TMR, surgeons reach the heart through a four-inch incision between the patient's ribs, rather than by splitting the breastbone as in so-called "open-heart" procedures. This means that recovery time is quicker, and the surgery costs about a third as much as bypass.

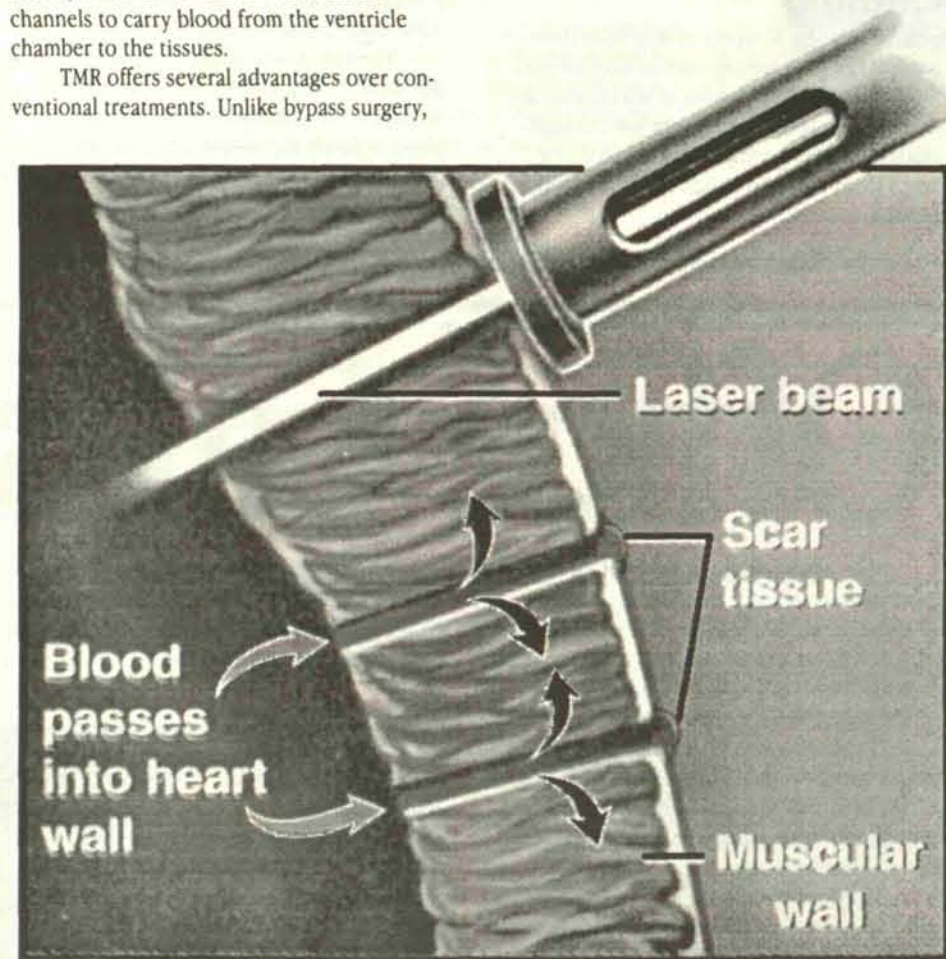
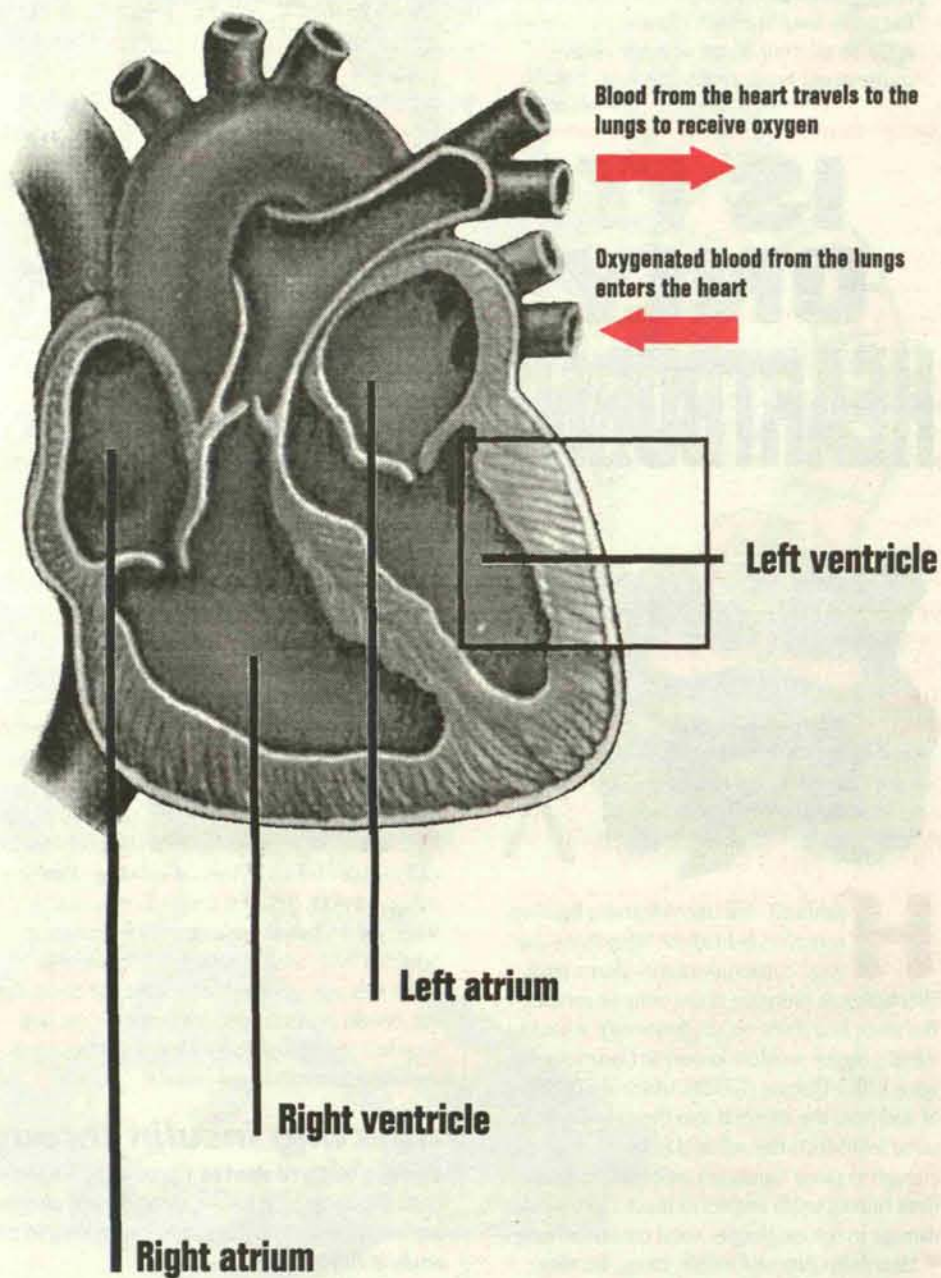
In one study of 160 patients presented at the cardiology meeting, researchers from 12 US medical centers compared treatment with the laser to treatment with traditional medications for angina. All of the patients had previously undergone angioplasty or bypass. After six months, 71 percent of those who underwent TMR saw improvement in their angina, compared with none of the patients on medication.

For now, no one knows exactly why TMR works, and it is still considered investigational by the Food and Drug Administration. But when more hospitals begin buying the lasers, which are anticipated to receive FDA approval later this year, this procedure is sure to gain wider attention.

### The physician's perspective

Currently, the treatment options available to people suffering from angina include medication, angioplasty, and bypass surgery. While medication primarily works by reducing the heart's need for oxygen, angioplasty and bypass surgery create new pathways for blood to be delivered to the heart by going through or around the clogged coronary arteries.

Unfortunately, none of these treatments is



In transmyocardial revascularization (TMR), a computer-controlled laser drills tiny channels through the wall of the left ventricle while the chamber is filled with oxygen-rich blood. In theory, this allows blood to flow through the channels to the oxygen-starved tissue, relieving angina. The openings on the heart's surface scar over quickly, but it's not yet known how long the channels stay open.

perfect. People who undergo angioplasty frequently need repeat procedures to keep blood vessels open. Bypass surgery is limited by its greater risk of complications, longer recovery period and higher cost. In addition, some people have other health problems that make them poor candidates for bypass. Physicians usually recommend that patients start with medication, and then move on to angioplasty or surgery if symptoms persist.

The different tactic offered by transmyocardial laser revascularization might sound like an ideal alternative for improving blood flow to the heart, based on research results to date. But many cardiologists are wary because the mechanism by which it works is not at all clear.

Animal studies and some human studies now show that most of the laser-drilled channels in the heart muscle wall actually close soon after surgery. So how does the procedure help blood to move from inside the ventricle to the heart muscle? One possible explanation is that the short-lived flow of blood through the channels, or perhaps the laser energy itself, may stimulate the growth of tiny new blood vessels, capable of carrying oxygen-rich blood to the deficient areas of the heart. In fact, several recent studies have demonstrated that blood flow to the heart does improve after TMR, despite closure of the laser-induced channels.

As shown by this latest study, TMR does seem to relieve angina better than medication.

And some research suggests that TMR may be most useful as an adjunct to traditional bypass surgery, particularly in areas of the heart where the arteries are too small for the surgeon to sew in a bypass graft.

Cardiologists have several concerns about the widespread use of TMR, however. Some of the short-term benefits seen so far may be due to a placebo effect rather than the laser channels themselves. That is, people may feel better simply because they have had some sort of treatment, regardless of whether it actually works. In addition, no studies have followed patients for more than one year after surgery, so no one knows how long the angina relief may last. And unlike bypass surgery, which has been carefully studied in thousands of patients over decades, the effect of this technique on life expectancy is unknown. Lastly, lasers are sexy, and many hospitals are taking advantage of this to market themselves aggressively to their communities.

What should you do if you continue to suffer from angina despite treatment with medication? First, consult your doctor about your suitability for angioplasty or bypass surgery. If you are not a good candidate for these proven therapies, or your angina persists despite treatment, TMR may be an option. For now, the procedure is available only through clinical trials at FDA-approved sites. And you should keep in mind that TMR is experimental and that the long-term benefits are still unknown. ■

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# Using wheat to enhance Michigan crop rotations

A great deal of research both in controlled trials and farmers' fields has shown the many advantages of wheat in maintaining optimum yields when used in field crop rotations, especially following soybeans and before corn. If good farmers use suitable hybrids, good fertility and other cultural practices, nothing else will increase corn yields as much as wheat in the rotation. Just rotting corn with wheat can increase corn yields by at least 10 percent. When wheat is followed by a cover crop, increased yields in Michigan have never been less than 15 percent, and usually average 17-18 percent.

This increase in corn yields occurs as low as the 100-bushel level and as high as 180-190 bushel per acre. The reasons for such yield increases aren't yet entirely clear. However, one reason is that wheat is usually preceded by soybeans, which have a major effect by contributing carryover nitrogen for at least one year. This usually increases yields by about 10 percent. The impact during the second year is somewhat less. So the total impact of wheat is due not only to the effect of wheat alone, but also the effect of the soybean crop that preceded it. There are added benefits from wheat beyond that due to the nitrogen it receives.

## Breaking the interrupted yield decline

Recently, an article was published in the *Agronomy Journal*, which cited the "interrupted yield decline" of monocultures of both grasses and legumes. Other scientific literature shows that both soybeans and wheat can break this cycle of yield decline associated with monocultures. On the positive side, the yield enhancement, at least on sandier soils, appears to last only one year. But can such yield enhancements last up to two years? Based on evidence to date, the answer is not clear because the basis for the yield response isn't completely understood.

## Nutrient replenishment or nutrient availability

Some agronomists have expressed this response in terms of nutrient replenishment, implying that the wheat is contributing something back to the soil. However, it more likely involves the mobilization of nutrients in the soil following wheat. Thus, part of yield increase may be due to the release of nutrients, which become available to the next crop. Thus, part of the value of wheat is in the improvement of corn yield over soybeans alone. A wealth of scientific evidence shows that corn following wheat gives a 6-11 percent increase, whereas corn following soybeans and wheat gives 10 percent increase at the lower end and up to 18 percent at the higher end.

## Passive soil management

Wheat in the rotation provides a type of "passive soil management" over a seven-month period of root deterioration in the winter following wheat harvest. This provides an excellent supply of soil residue that protects the soil from being "beat on."

## Increased soil quality

Some of the improvement appears to be due to the increased soil quality that comes from the duration of rooting, though there is not enough data to prove it. However, the physical and nutritional soil quality really does govern the yield potential for corn. At least two or three factors help with soil quality. First, the presence of wheat prevents the soil from being "beat to death" during the year. Although this is a complex picture, some aspects are obvious. Production of wheat following soybeans or dry beans requires minimal tillage. The fields seldom need plowing; thus minimal tillage is necessary, allowing a quick turn-around time before planting wheat in the fall. Once wheat has been planted, minimal subsequent field operations are needed. The sod is usually dry at harvest.



Winter is ordinarily the time when the greatest destruction to soil quality occurs, primarily because of poor soil cover during seven months or more. Soil coming out of soybeans and left fallow for seven months of cold wet winter weather risks significant potential destruction. Although some negative deterioration occurs, with reasonable fall growth, wheat provides both excellent physical cover and actively growing roots, which provide a good habitat for soil flora and fauna. These active roots are present continuously from field establishment until the following July when they senesce. Thus, the roots growing in the soil provides "active soil management" which helps improve the soil quality. Thus wheat roots and its residue survive. Even more residue can accumulate if a cover is either frost seeded or seeded after the wheat until the next spring when corn is planted. This provides a total of 22 with active rooting in the soil.

## Opportunity for cover crops

Wheat production also gives the biggest "window of opportunity" for cover cropping. This allows another species, typically another cool-season crop such as clover in the rotation. Although red clover is one of the best ones, a range of options could be used. This window occurs from the end of July until the next spring during which a cover crop can be grown. Corn and soybeans alone do not provide enough time to get a cover crop in.

Wheat in the rotation provides a window for a cover crop, allowing corn yields to be maximized by a complete rotation of soybeans, wheat, cover crop, and corn. This rotation almost always results in an 18 percent increase in corn yield over continuous corn. In addition it provides at least 40-60 lb./acre nitrogen credit to the following corn crop and reduces the need for nitrogen application by this amount depending on the kind of clover used. The reduced corn expenses (for fertilizer) offset the cost of clover seeding. Increased corn yield is a bonus. However, the greatest long-term beneficiary is the improvement in soil quality, which produces higher long-term yields.

## Preventing groundwater contamination

Few other crops are as effective as wheat in keeping nitrogen out of the groundwater. More nitrogen is lost into the groundwater from field crops on sandy soils over the winter (from October to April) than during any other time. An average of 25, 30, or 40 lbs. per acre of nitrogen is lost from fallow compared with 30 to 50 lbs. per acre from soybeans. Soybeans do not take up as much nitrogen, so some loss occurs from the residue, which

begins to break down in the fall. Only about 15 lb. per acre is lost in the fall from wheat. However, from April, May, June, and July, wheat takes up both nitrogen and the water, allowing very little to be lost. About 30 to 50 lbs. per acre is lost from corn-soybeans during the winter, then about 15-20 lb. during the growing season, giving a total loss of 70 lb. per acre per year into the groundwater. By adding up the total loss or by actual lysimeter measurements, an average annual loss of 25 to 30 lb./acre occurs from the corn-soybean-wheat rotation, half of that from corn-soybean rotations.

Of the two benefits, preserving the groundwater is probably more important than the savings in nitrogen. Reducing the loss of 30-35 lb. per acre of nitrogen is worth \$5 to \$7 on the basis of savings of 20¢/lb. But the effect of the nitrates saved from loss into the groundwater is more valuable. Nitrates are building up in Michigan groundwater. About 15 percent of the rural Michigan wells are above the 10 ppm level, which is World Health Organization's recommended upper limit. Eventually, the problem with groundwater contamination has to be addressed.

## Nitrogen pulsing

Wheat is very effective in holding nitrogen loss down during the winter. Afterwards it pulls nitrate levels down and holds nitrogen in the wheat stubble. This is often referred to as "pulsing" when the available nitrogen is pulled down to levels, which permits very little loss. Then the soil, conditioned by the wheat roots and the clover which follows, gives a "pulsing" of the nitrogen into the corn crop. The system is suppressed, then pulsed, then suppressed again with available soluble nitrogen. This is an effective and sophisticated system, which directly benefits the following corn crop. However, the same could be true for other crops such as potatoes or sugarbeets.

## Favorable habitat for insect predators

Another benefit from wheat is that it provides a green crop in the field during the winter and early spring. If all other cropland is in summer crops (corn, soybeans or sugarbeets), little land in the winter will be suitable for predator habitat. Fields, which are green and lush during the summer, become brown or bare during the fall and winter. But wheat provides a green oasis during the winter, and especially during the early spring. This provides excellent habitat for the buildup of predators; especially ladybird beetles that thrive in wheat which may be the only green plants growing on the landscape when there isn't alfalfa acreage nearby. Be-

cause of the early buildup of leafhoppers, aphids, or other insects, ladybird beetles build up in the wheat because of the suitable habitat it provides. They are then available to move into corn, soybeans and other summer crops to control emerging pest populations.

## Buffer strips/physical barriers to pollutants and erosion

Wheat also serves as a buffer and a physical barrier against problems with chemical pollutants, particularly in the late spring. That is the period of greatest danger from herbicide contamination in streams and rivers. This is the time of greatest herbicide use and, with heavy spring rains, a time of herbicide spiking of streams and runoff water. Wheat in the landscape is especially valuable in preventing contamination of lakes and streams from sloping land or from municipal watershed areas and provides an excellent buffer against contamination. It is almost impossible for water to run across wheat, which acts as a "sponge" for potential contaminants. Thus, it provides a very effective physical barrier.

Eventually, the guidelines for sustainability in agriculture will require the containment of production inputs on farms within soil boundaries and in the upper layers of the soil. Wheat is an ideal crop to achieve this because it protects from such losses during the most vulnerable periods.

Wheat also provides a green buffer strip that protects soil from wind erosion during the winter. Some farmers routinely plow ahead of crops such as sugarbeets. That is when wheat buffer strips become especially valuable, whereas, on land without wheat, brown snow banks appear during the winter. The erosion control is not just for the land wheat is occupying, but the surrounding land around as well.

## Breakup of weed cycles

Wheat also helps break up the weed cycle. A corn-soybean rotation ultimately results in significant weed pressure from summer type annual weeds. Very little weed pressure occurs following summer crops during wheat production; thus, wheat helps break the cycle of warm-season crops with a cool-season crop.

## Protection against insects

About a third of all corn-on corn must be sprayed with an insecticide for control of corn rootworm. Wheat prevents this need by breaking up and lengthening the rotation for rootworm.

## Wheat as a conditioner crop

Wheat and soybeans act as conditioner crops for the soil and for the recipient crops that follow (e.g., sugarbeets, vegetable crops). Thus, a rotation with wheat and a cover crop can help to maximize the value of a subsequent high value crop.

## Reduced traffic

Finally wheat does an excellent job of reducing the traffic on the field which further helps prevent soil compaction. Consequently, less horsepower is expended in the entire rotation.

## Spreading out the workload

Wheat also spreads out the workload and the use of equipment in the rotation, plus providing a cash crop that can be sold early during the year.

## Summary

With all these benefits that have been discussed, no more than about one-third of Michigan crop rotations include wheat. Wheat is not being utilized to its greatest advantage in Michigan. While it is important to try to achieve high yields, wheat can be used as a tool in the rotation to keep inputs contained. Thus, wheat is one of the tools we have for both high productivity and maintaining the environment. All of these benefits provide ample reason why wheat is such an important crop to Michigan's agriculture. ■

# Thumb Oilseed Producer's Cooperative moving forward

At their September 9 meeting, the Thumb Oilseed Producer's Cooperative (TOPC) start-up Board voted to move forward with a project to establish an 800,000-bushel soybean extrusion plant to produce oil and meal in Michigan's Thumb area. The TOPC board has looked over the feasibility study prepared by Konnex Consulting, Ossining, NY, and has met with Konrad Biedermann personally to review details. After careful consideration, the TOPC Board decided to proceed. In the next few months, a detailed business plan will be developed with several scenarios based on volume of soybean meal sold and soy oil sales.

The TOPC Board will also be looking at

how capital costs might be reduced while maintaining quality end products. The site selection committee will begin to draw up a bid sheet in which communities can respond. Among the items to be considered are electrical supply, roads, minimum acreage, site development costs, taxes and markets.

Over the next few months, three other committees will be meeting to address concerns in the finance, building and equipment, and crop procurement areas.

Jim LeCureux, Extension agricultural agent and TOPC start-up manager stated that, "The TOPC board has chosen to go with the extrusion/expelling process, which relies on heat and

pressure to extract the oil from the raw soybean. Due to this "natural" process, opportunities in processing organic soybeans, producing a natural cooking oil and a high energy soybean meal exist."

The soybean meal is desirable for dairy cattle as it has a higher by-pass protein than traditional 48% meal and contains some energy. A feeding trial is underway with a large lot of hogs to provide local data on the use of the extruded/expelled meal in hog production.

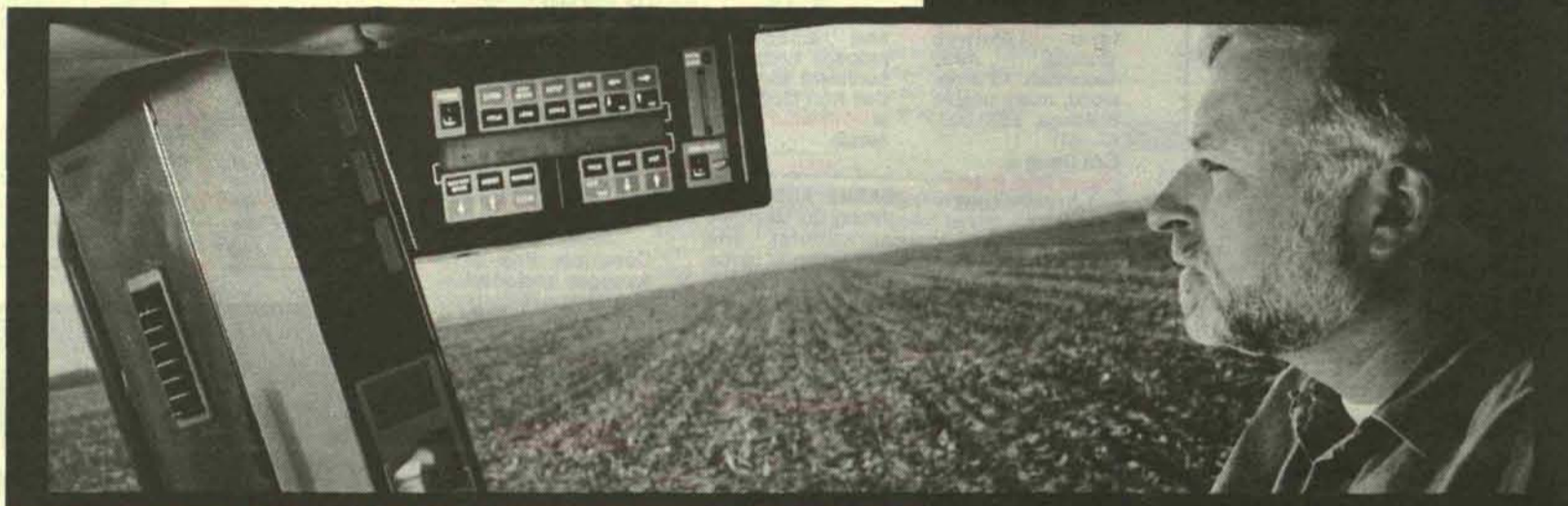
It is the goal of the TOPC board to also develop end markets for the oil. Crop oil, cutting oil, food grade oils, industrial solvents and

other uses are being explored, and the TOPC Board hopes to have markets identified in the near future.

The TOPC board plans to develop an added-value cooperative that allows the farmer stockholders to produce, process and market their soybeans as meal and oil products. The goal is to take it all the way through the process, thereby adding value to farmers' basic commodity.

For more information, contact Jim LeCureux, Extension agricultural agent and start-up manager for the TOPC Project, at the MSU Extension-Project Office in Bad Axe at (517)269-6099. ■

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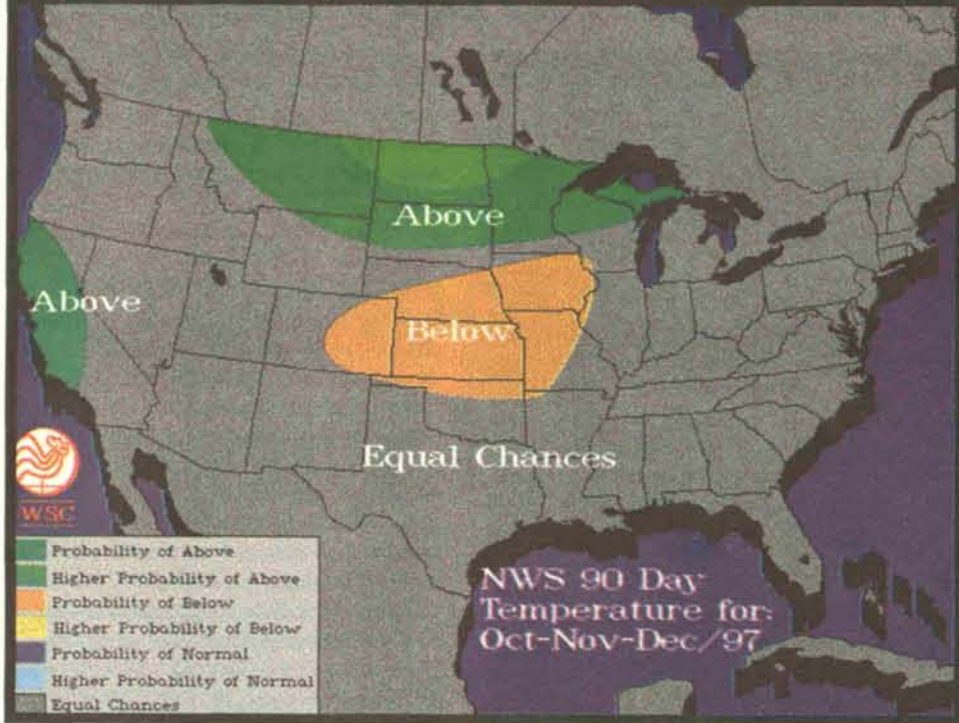
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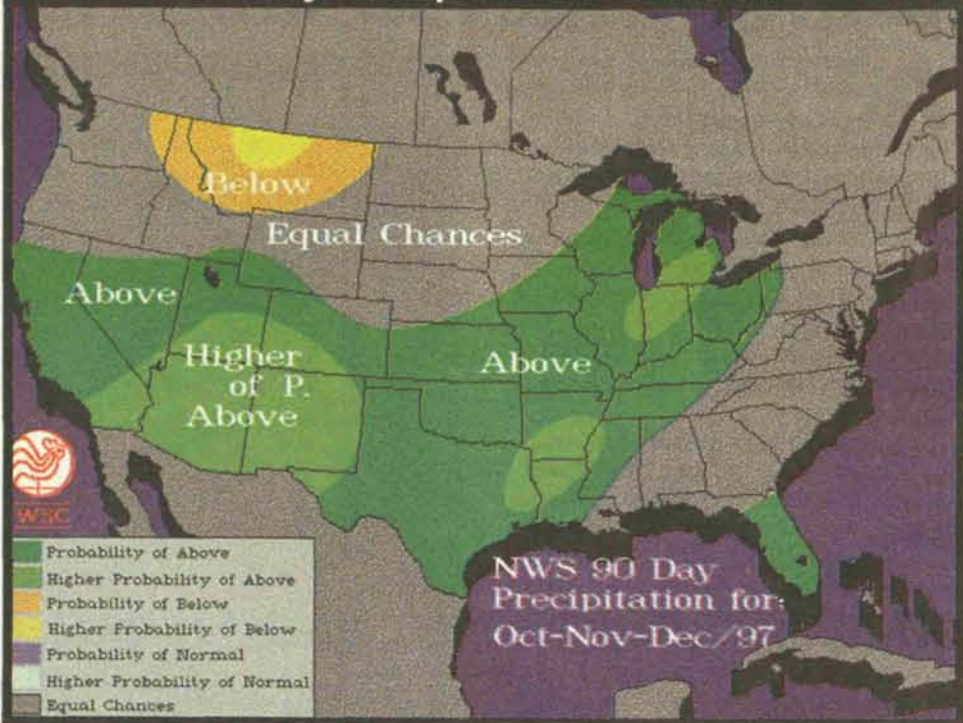
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90-day Temperature Outlook



90-day Precipitation Outlook



# Weather Outlook



by Dr. Jeff Andresen, Agricultural Meteorologist, Dept. of Geography, Michigan State University

During late September, jet stream steering currents in the upper atmosphere shifted to a more zonal west-to-east configuration. This resulted in some late-summer like warmth and much-needed growing degree day accumulations in many areas of the state. While killing freeze conditions ended the growing season for much of the Upper and interior northern Lower Peninsulas, crops continued to develop in central and southern sections of the state and greatly benefited from the recent warm temperatures.

For September, mean temperatures ranged from 1-3°F above normal in the Upper Peninsula to 1-3°F below normal in central and southern lower Michigan. For some southern sections of the state, it was the sixth consecutive month of below normal temperatures (since April). Base 50°F growing degree day seasonal accumulations at the end of the month generally ranged from 10 to as much as 20 percent below normal, with largest departures from normal occurring in central and southern sections of the state. Precipitation for the month was variable, but generally ranged from below normal in northern areas of the state to above normal in the south.

With a strong El Nino event in full swing across the equatorial Pacific Ocean, NOAA/Climate Prediction Center outlooks are calling for near equal probabilities of below-, near-, and above-normal temperatures forecast for the month of October and for the 90-day October-December period. Warmer-than-normal temperatures are favored for western and central sections of the Upper Peninsula for the 90-day period. The outlook calls for increased odds of above-normal precipitation in the October-December period, with near equal probabilities of all three scenarios indicated for the month of October.

## Democrats still viewed as the "green party"

A recent survey of registered voters revealed that 51 percent of Americans believe the Democratic party would do a better job of protecting the environment than would the Republicans. Only 12 percent viewed the Republican party as guardians of the environment. Nineteen percent said both parties would perform about the same. Another 11 percent selected neither party.

The 39-point margin is wider than the 28-point advantage Democrats enjoyed in May 1996. With the economy in apparently good health, environmental issues could take center stage in next year's off-year election, according to experts.

"Environmental groups ... are telling politicians, that with economic issues off the table, such causes as clean air, water and ozone protection gain prominence," according to the *Wall Street Journal*.



### Michigan Weather Summary

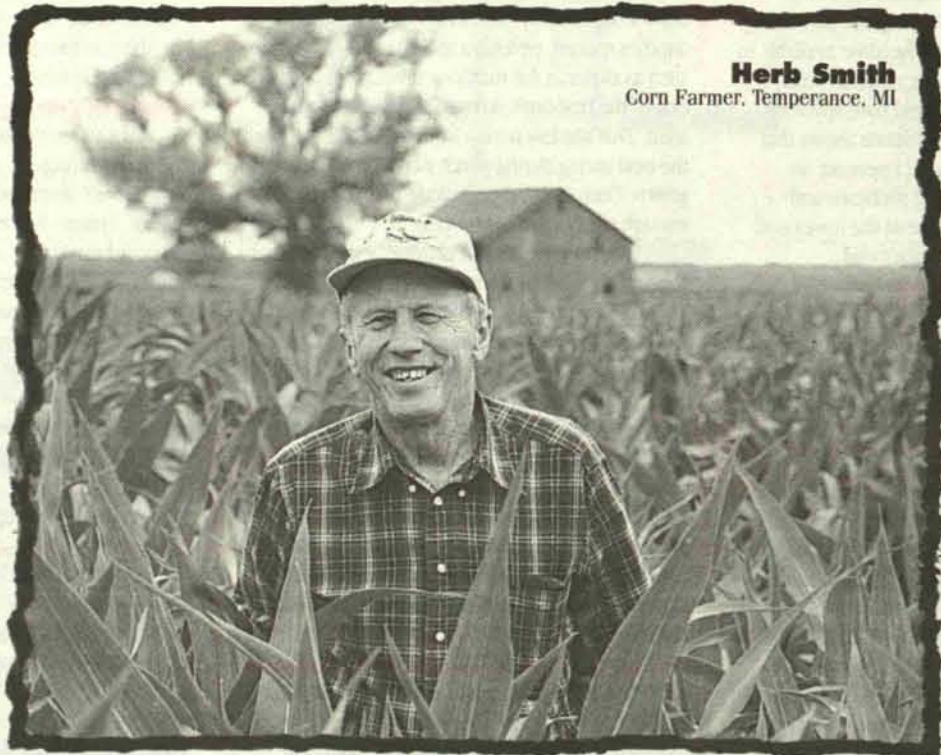
9/1/97-9/30/97	Temperature		Growing Degree Days <sup>(*)</sup>		Precipitation	
	Obs. mean	Dev. from normal	Actual Acc.	Normal Acc.	Actual (inch)	Normal (inch)
Houghton	57.7	2.2	1683	1845	4.40	3.58
Marquette	56.9	3.1	1593	1845	1.25	3.58

Sault Ste. Marie	57.7	2.6	1592	1616	2.92	3.55	Grand Rapids	61.8	-0.1	2322	2723	4.24	3.26
Lake City	56.1	-2.0	1715	2109	2.69	3.66	South Bend	63.2	-0.5	2557	2723	2.84	3.26
Pellston	58.1	2.2	1773	2109	2.01	3.66	Coldwater	60.9	-3.0	2312	2653	3.68	2.79
Alpena	58.6	1.0	1815	2035	2.87	3.47	Lansing	60.7	-1.0	2160	2653	2.93	2.79
Houghton Lake	58.0	-0.3	1822	2035	3.46	3.47	Detroit	63.3	-0.4	2517	2673	3.42	2.43
Muskegon	61.5	-0.1	2144	2338	3.09	3.19	Flint	60.7	-0.6	2190	2673	4.32	2.48
Vestaburg	58.1	-3.8	1999	2414	2.54	3.09	Toledo	62.9	-1.1	2493	2673	3.10	2.43
Bad Axe	60.2	-1.6	1964	2454	4.43	2.70							
Saginaw	61.4	-0.8	2335	2454	5.80	2.70							

\* Growing degree day accumulations are calculated with the 86/50 "corn" method and are summed beginning April 1, 1997.

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For more information, contact the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan: Call 888-323-6601, fax 517-323-6601 or write to: 6206 W. Saginaw Highway, Lansing, MI 48917-2467

# Precision Agriculture

by Neil R. Miller

Is high-tech agriculture destroying our environment? In recent months I've heard several people refer to a tension between the environmental activists and those promoting GPS and other cutting-edge technologies.

At a fundamental level, environmental stewardship and site-specific management have much in common. I recently prepared variable rate fertilizer prescriptions for a wheat grower whose soil phosphorus levels varied from 16 to 218 lbs/acre. Using a variable rate spreader with GPS, the low-testing areas of his fields will receive over 450 lbs. of pre-plant fertilizer, while

## Site-specific agriculture: environmental friend or foe?

his high phosphorus soils will receive none. This strategy is far more environmentally friendly than applying a uniform 250 lbs. on all his ground. But at the same time, he informs me that where he has used variable-rate fertilizer applications his crops are much more uniform. More often than not, site-specific crop management also serves our environmental interests.

So why the talk of a conflict? I am convinced that the sociological implications of high-tech agriculture cause more controversy than its environmental impacts. Technologies such as yield monitoring are clearly more suited to larger farming operations. As they enable these producers to farm more efficiently they

will undoubtedly compete more effectively with smaller scale operations.

However, in a global grain market, the small farmer's competition comes as much from Argentina or Australia as it does from the 2,000-acre producer down the road. Unless our political environment swings back toward protectionist trade policies (not likely!) small farmers will best survive by producing specialty crops and seeking niche markets.

If one accepts the premise that grain farming will remain the realm of larger, more efficient producers, the environmental implications of site-specific management take on added importance. A small-scale producer may be able to change fertilizer blends or rates for each 10-15 acre field. In larger operations, with larger

field sizes, GPS technology may ultimately be the only realistic way to manage environmentally sensitive areas in a responsible manner. ■



If you have any topic suggestions for the Precision Agriculture column, please write to Michigan Farm News, PO Box 30960, Lansing, MI 48909, or e-mail us at: mfbinfo@aol.com!

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## Member of the Year award presented at round-up

The Michigan Cattlemen's Association (MCA) bestowed its 1997 Member of the Year honor to Bill and Linda Hinga, of Climax, in June at the Association's Summer Round-Up in Columbus, Ohio. This award, which is typically given to one outstanding MCA member each year, was presented to both Bill and Linda because of the time and dedication the couple devotes to the MCA every year.

MCA President Gary Voogt, who presented the award, described the two as unsung heroes. "This award is symbolic this year because it is not only for the Hingas, but for all the MCA members who work hard for the Association and do not always get the recognition that they deserve."

The Hingas have put in a lot of hours helping the association. Bill is a past member of the Board of Directors and both he and Linda are present at nearly every MCA event, doing whatever needs to be done. "You can depend on them even for less desirable tasks. They are the kind of members you want as good friends," said Quentin Harwood,

MCA immediate past president.

"We are proud members of the MCA. This organization and any like it is what every cattleman in Michigan needs to be involved in." Linda Hinga explained about their involvement

with the MCA.

For more information on the MCA's member awards or any MCA program, please contact the MCA office at (517) 336-6780 or write P.O. Box 24041, Lansing, MI 48909. ■



Michigan Cattlemen's Association President Gary Voogt presents the 1997 Member of the Year award to Bill and Linda Hinga. The Hingas farm near Climax.

## Are irradiation labels alarming consumers?

Irradiation labels are placed on items to assure consumers that the products are safe. The food industry, however, fears the prominent labels may be scaring people from buying certain products. The industry is seeking legislation requesting to limit the size of the disclosure labels to help ease fears among consumers.

"We believe you can inform consumers, but we don't believe it should be a warning label that people should be concerned about what they are eating," said John Cady of the National Food Processors Association.

Irradiation is used to kill microorganisms in food such as salmonella and E. coli. It also destroys fungus, mold and parasites. The Food and Drug Administration requires processors to prominently and conspicuously display a label on packages of irradiated products.

Michael Colby of the Food and Water, Inc. group, vows to fight the food industry's attempt at changing the labels. "This is very deceitful because for the last 12 years, irradiated food labeling had to be prominently displayed and the public avoided it," said Colby. ■



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# Weed Strategies

## Winter weed control meetings

by Dr. Jim Kells and Karen Renner, Department of Crop and Soil Science, Michigan State University



that will be held in January and February 1998. The meetings will be located throughout southern and central Michigan and will be publicized across a multi-county area. The major weed control topics that we plan to present are:

- Predicting yield losses from weeds
- Managing weeds with herbicide resistant crops
- Herbicide recommendations update.

The following table lists the meeting dates, locations, and speakers at each meeting. Detailed agendas will be developed by the hosting County Extension offices later this fall. For more information on the meetings, please contact the Michigan State University Extension office in the county hosting the meeting. ■

The tentative schedule for the Michigan State University winter weed control meetings has been set. We are planning a total of 14 meetings

Weed Control Meeting Schedule		
Meeting Date	County(ies)	Speaker
January 22	Saginaw, Shiawassee*	Jim Kells
January 23	Sanilac	Jim Kells
February 3	Tuscola	Karen Renner
February 6	Ionia*, Eaton, Barry	Karen Renner
February 17	Bay, Arenac*	Jim Kells
February 17	Berrien*, Cass, VanBuren	Karen Renner
February 18	Lenawee*, Monroe	Jim Kells
February 18	Ingham	Karen Renner
February 19	Huron	Karen Renner
February 20	Gratiot, Clinton*	Jim Kells
February 20	Calhoun*, Branch, Hillsdale, Jackson	Karen Renner
February 24	Kalamazoo, St. Joseph*	Jim Kells
February 25	Lapeer*, Oakland, Genesee, St. Clair	Karen Renner
February 27	Midland, Clare, Isabella*, Gladwin	Jim Kells

\*Hosting county

## New voluntary wildlife habitat plan announced by USDA

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman recently announced a new program that will help farmers and other landowners protect critically important wildlife habitat. USDA's Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a land management — rather than a land retirement — program.

WHIP provides both technical assistance and cost-share payments to landowners to help establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat. In addition, if the landowner agrees, cooperating state wildlife agencies and nonprofit or private organizations may provide expertise or additional funding to help landowners complete a project.

"WHIP will help the nation's landowners voluntarily develop habitat for wildlife on private lands that comprise over 70 percent of the land in this country," Glickman said. "WHIP also offers farmers and ranchers an opportunity to meet their production needs in ways that are compatible with providing fish and wildlife habitat." Under the 1996 farm bill, WHIP provides cost-share assistance up to 75 percent of the cost of installing wildlife habitat practices. Cost-share payments may be used to establish new practices or replace practices that fail for reasons beyond the landowner's control. The total cost-share amount cannot exceed \$10,000 per agreement. ■

## Science fair project illustrates public hysteria

Nathan Zohner may only be a high school freshman, but he's already found out firsthand how easily people's opinions are swayed by alarmists spreading fear of everything in our environment.

Zohner, a student at Eagle Rock Junior High in Idaho, won first prize at the Greater Idaho Falls Science fair this spring. For his project, he asked 50 fellow freshmen to sign a petition demanding strict control or total elimination of the chemical "dihydrogen monoxide." He circulated a factual flyer that outlined why the chemical should be banned.

There were plenty of good reasons:

- It can cause excessive sweating and vomiting.
- It is a major component in acid rain.
- It can cause severe burns in its gaseous state.
- Accidental inhalation can kill you.
- It has been found in tumors of cancer patients.

Of the 50 respondents, 43 said dihydrogen monoxide should be banned, six were undecided and only one knew that the chemical is more commonly called "water." The title of Zohner's prize-winning project was "How Gullible Are We?" The conclusion is obvious. ■

## Grower Service makes Farm TEC a reality

by Tonia Koppelaar

In August, over 500 Saginaw area growers participated in Grower Service Corporation's Farm TEC (Technology Education Center). Farmers were able to see technology in action, as researchers and specialists walked them through the 32-acre plot located in Birch Run, Mich. In eight stops, farmers saw variable rate and infrared technology, seed technologies, herbicide trials, fertility comparisons and application, effects of soil compaction and narrow row research.

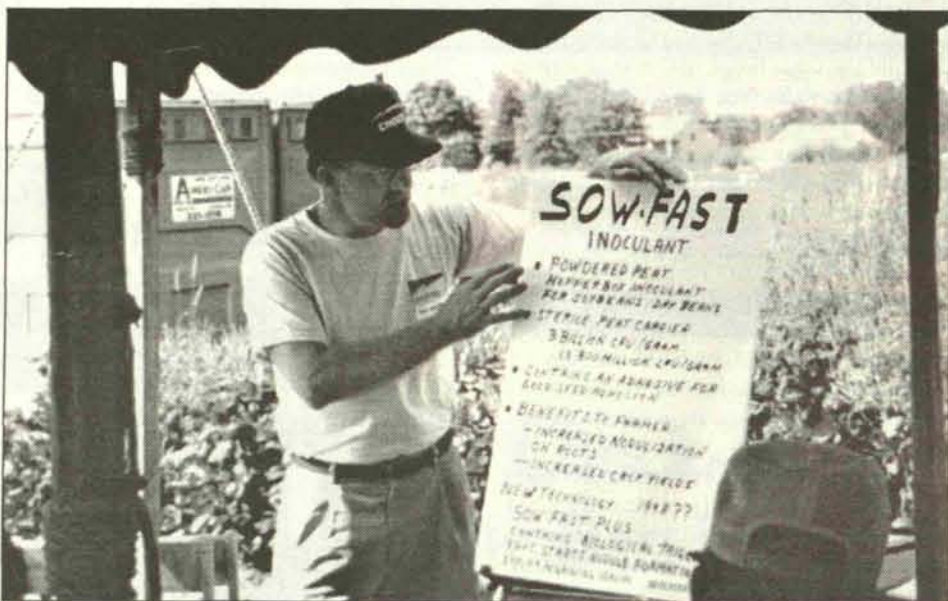
Last July, Ed Benkert and Jim Borowski, of Grower Service — Birch Run, decided there was an absence of hands-on research available to farmers in Michigan. The purpose for having Farm TEC was to "provide examples of pesticides and seed technologies to the farmer on their own soil in their own environment," said Benkert. "There is a ton of infor-

mation and research on applied technology in the Corn Belt states," he continued.

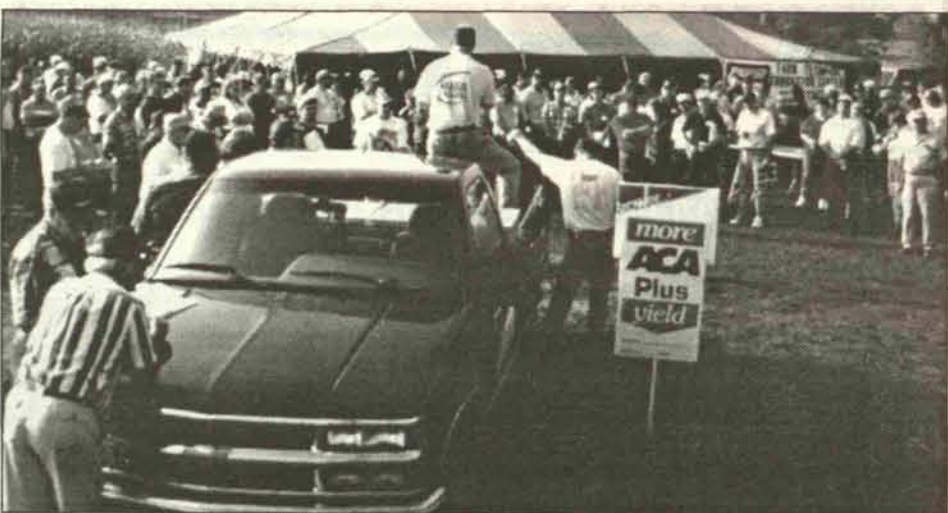
A lot of work went into making Farm TEC, but the combination of efforts is really what made the event a success. Under the direction of Benkert and Borowski, over 22 different companies were involved in the labor and organization of the plot. Farmers made note of the joint efforts too. One farmer commented that "it was great to see the chemical companies and researchers working side-by-side. I was amazed to see how well they worked together."

**Plans are already moving toward a Farm TEC 1998**

To wrap up this year's plot, yield data will be collected and compiled on all applicable trials. Any farmer who attended the event can receive this end-of-season summary. Others who would like test plot information and yield data should contact Benkert or Borowski at (517) 624-9321. ■



Dan Murphy of Loveland Industries outlined the benefits of using inoculants on soybeans at Grower Service's Farm TEC on Aug. 27.



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# Farm Finance

A few years ago, when a farmer made the decision to acquire a bigger tractor or piece of machinery, in addition to the price tag, there were only two main questions to consider, "What brand? and New or used?" With the dawn of the new millennium almost upon them, most farmers are now adding at least one more consideration to the mix, "Buy or lease?"

Recently, leasing has become an attractive option offered to farmers by both equipment dealers and ag lenders. Farmers are deciding to lease equipment for several reasons, Tom Smith, Farm Credit Services' leasing specialist explained. One reason leasing is an attractive option is the up front cost. "The first lease payment is almost always less than the standard 25 percent down payment required when a farmer purchases equipment," Smith said.

Mark Gettel of Gettel and Company, a four-store John Deere dealership serving the northern Saginaw Bay area, agrees with Smith. "As farmers strive to grow their operation in size and profit," Gettel explained, "They need more capital sooner than what their profits normally can provide. Farmers need the efficiency provided by the quality and capacity of the latest technology. The challenge is in determining how much capital should be spent on an appreciable asset such as land and how much capital should be spent on more efficient, productive equipment, which is a depreciable asset."

"Many farmers lease equipment with the plan to purchase the item at the end of the lease," explained Jason Koehler, another FCS leasing specialist. "In a lot of cases, the farmer's total out of pocket cost is within a few dollars of the cost for conventional financing over the same time period as the lease. Leasing is no longer high cost financing," said Koehler.

# Equipment leasing offers advantages

While the first lease payment is usually due at closing, the same as a down payment would be, Farm Credit Services has developed several payment plans for farmers. For example, the Harvest Lease Plan allows a grower to lease a combine in September, and not make the first lease payment until December after a partial payment of 10 percent of the asset cost, Smith said. Many times, leases are also available on used equipment, making them an even lower cost option.

Leasing can also afford farmers several tax advantages over traditional purchases, said Kelly Tobin, director, Financial Management Services for Farm Credit Services. Payments on true operating leases are totally tax deductible expenses, Tobin said. The tax deductibility of lease payments is not affected by the time of year the contract was entered in to. However, purchases made in October through December, and in certain instances only one-eighth of a year's depreciation can be taken on an item purchased in the last quarter of the year.

Equipment leases should be used only as a tool for tax management, not for tax avoidance, Tobin and Smith agreed. They both said that farmers should always consult their tax specialist so they can have all the facts before deciding to lease or purchase.

Farmers need to be especially careful that a lease meets the requirements of a true operating lease before they use the lease payment(s) as an expense deduction on their taxes. True operating leases have a purchase option at the end of the contract, which should be exactly that, an option. True operating leases also don't spell out an interest rate in the contract, and they shouldn't have a really low cost purchase option. One test to determine if the lease is a true operating lease is if the residual value or purchase option price is the same as the equipment's true market value, Tobin said. Residual values on leased farm equipment

also vary depending on what equipment was leased. For example, tillage equipment is likely to have a lower residual value than a tractor.

Another reason both Gettel and Smith gave for increased leasing is the desire of farmers to keep up with new technology. It is more inexpensive and easier to keep up with new technology when a lease only lasts three to five years. When a lease comes to an end, the farmer doesn't have to purchase the equipment, instead he is free to go on to lease a brand new piece of equipment built with the latest technology.

"With a lease, the farmer only pays for the use of the equipment," Smith added. "The cost of the lease can be easily broken down into a per-hour or per-acre cost for the farmer," Gettel said, "allowing the farmer to assign a fixed amount to the equipment costs."

"Leases can also be used as an estate planning tool," Smith explained. A farmer nearing re-

tirement, but with plans to pass the farm on to the next generation, can lease a piece of equipment. At the end of the lease, whoever is taking over the farm can exercise the purchase option on the equipment with the lessee's approval. In this scenario, the equipment can be passed on to the next generation, but at a low cost that doesn't have any implications to the retiring farmer's estate.

These men admit that leasing isn't for everyone. But they emphasize it is a management option that should be considered by all farmers before they decide to acquire any more new or used equipment. ■

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## Hunter, landowner cooperation and coordination crucial components for successful whitetail hunt

If sportsmen and farmers hope to maximize the potential of several new deer herd management strategies approved by the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) this past summer, they need to start talking with one another now." That was the advice offered by Michigan Farm Bureau President Jack Laurie during a joint news conference in late September with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) and the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA).

Laurie commended the NRC and the MDNR for the creation of a special antlerless season, Dec. 20 through Jan. 4, and the stand-alone antlerless permits, which he says should help alleviate excessive crop damage in years to come.

"The ball is now in the court of the landowners and the sportsmen," Laurie said. "These management strategies give us new tools to help reduce the deer herd. The crucial link rests between farmers providing access if and when possible, and sportsmen taking the initiative to seek access now, not the day before the start of these new seasons. Hunters also need



Agriculture and natural resources leaders answered questions at a recent news conference. Pictured are Rick Jameson, MUCC; Dan Wyant, MDA; K.L. Cook, DNR; and Jack Laurie, MFB.

to be willing to take antlerless deer."

Rick Jameson, executive director of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, agreed, adding that hunters need to be aware of and respect trespass and poaching laws as well as honor specific landowner requests. He predicts that more than

750,000 firearm deer hunters will take to the woods and fields this fall during the firearm deer season. "How hunters pursue their sport is more important than how many deer they bag," Jameson said. "We should all practice and demand zero tolerance on poaching and trespassing."

According to K.L. Cool, director of MDNR, the new management strategies are the result of growing public concern, as evidenced by increased discussions about car-deer accidents, winter-starvation when deer populations exceed carrying capacity of local areas, and agricultural crop damage.

"By working together, we believe we have developed a strategy to address each of these critical areas in the upcoming season," Cool said.

"Department of Natural Resources' wildlife biologists have identified the Deer Management Units where white-tailed populations are above specific population objectives and have determined how many antlerless deer need to be removed," Cool explained.

In addition to helping reduce crop damage and the number of car-deer accidents, Dan Wyant, director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture expects the anticipated reduction in the deer population to improve overall deer herd quality and health.

"I'm very pleased with the special hunting opportunities and innovative deer management tools that were passed by the NRC," Wyant said. "This effort will maximize the antlerless deer harvest this season, which is crucial to reducing our state's deer herd."

## Hunter access — tips to ensure success this season

It's fall in Michigan and soon more than 750,000 bright orange-clad hunters will dot tree lines throughout the state in their quest to bring home one of Michigan's nearly two million white-tailed deer.

However, improper planning and/or poor communication between property owners and hunters often results in hunters bagging more frustration than wild game, according to Michigan Farm Bureau Associate Legislative Counsel Scott Everett. He says planning early, and lining up the places they want to hunt well ahead of opening day, is key to avoiding problems.

### Tips for making it a successful hunt

#### For the Landowner

- Make sure you know who you grant permission to. Get the name and address of everyone who has permission to hunt your property.
- Explain in detail which fields can and, more importantly,

which fields cannot be hunted. No one wants a newly seeded wheat field to be trampled by a group of hunters working their way to their blinds.

- Note which gates are used for access to the permitted hunting areas.
- Explain which species can be harvested during the appropriate hunting seasons. Do you only want antlerless deer taken from your fields? Can geese only be hunted in areas outside of land adjacent to the farm? This is your opportunity to set the parameters for use of your farmland during the hunting season.
- Decide if you want them to stop by the farm after they hunt to let you know they are gone.
- Decide where you want permitted hunters to park. Be sure to request license plate numbers of those vehicles to ensure only permitted hunters park there.
- If there is not enough room for granting hunter access during the regular archery and firearm seasons, invite

hunters back for the special antlerless season Dec. 20 through Jan. 4, 1998.

#### For the hunter

- Ask for permission well in advance of the hunting season. Plan your visit to the farm right after lunch or early in the evening when the farmer most likely is less busy.
- Offer to take antlerless deer only, and offer to hunt the special antlerless-only seasons.
- Ask for permission even if the land isn't posted against hunting or trespassing.
- When asking for permission, be polite and don't be offended if a farmer does not grant permission to hunt on his property. Remember, he or she may already have others who have asked to hunt there. Get their opinion on other farmers or landowners to request access.
- When asking permission, ask for yourself or with one other person. Don't take a large group up to the door and do not take your gun with you when asking.

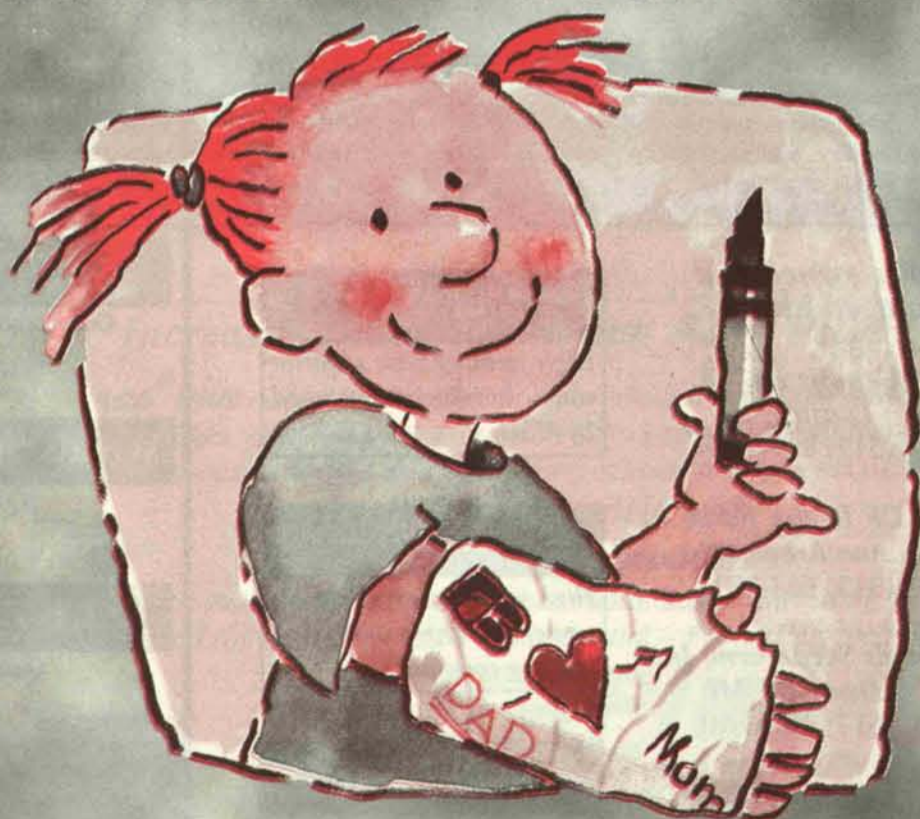
- If permission is only for you to hunt, don't show up with additional friends or relatives looking to hunt.
- Ask for specific directions to fields available to be hunted. Be sure to find out if there are any crop fields that should not be hunted.
- Be sure to leave gates the way you found them. If the gate is open, it is open for a reason, either for livestock or machinery access.
- Maintain a minimum distance of 450 feet from buildings.
- Be sure to obtain written permission from the landowner.
- Do not set up hunting stands or bait on the landowner's property without specifically getting permission for it.
- Leave the area you hunt as you left it — that means picking up any litter, especially spent shells, from the property.
- After the hunt, be sure to thank the landowner for the use of their property. Offer the farmer a portion of the game you harvested on his property — that opens doors for next year's hunt.

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Where Belonging Makes a Difference. MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU

# Discussion Topic

**November 1997**  
A monthly resource for the Community Action Groups of Michigan Farm Bureau



Three years ago, MSU Extension staff members took a look at what Michigan citizens needed from the organization and decided to make an important change. The change came in the form of Area of Expertise (AoE) teams.



Carrie Andrich, Huron County Extension agriculture agent, addresses a group during a plot tour.

## Extension Area of Expertise teams designed to reach out to farmers with specialized knowledge

In agriculture, the teams are made up of Extension specialists, agents, researchers and stakeholders centered around a particular commodity. AoE teams help farmers with more specialized expertise in specific fields, such as dairy, field crops or swine.

Paul Wylie, Allegan County Extension agriculture agent, devotes about 50 percent of his time to Area of Expertise responsibilities. He is the field crops AoE agent in Allegan, Ottawa and Barry counties. He spends the other half of his time serving as a general ag agent in Allegan County.

"The Area of Expertise teams evolved from field staffs — county agents. They saw changes in the needs of farmers," Wylie said. "They wanted to talk to someone on a local basis that had a higher level of expertise. The farmers that are left tend to be pretty sophisticated and, in many cases, knew more about what they were doing than the county ag agents did."

Thus the Area of Expertise idea was born. Beginning in the summer of 1994, agents were allowed to choose their areas of expertise.

Some agents, who were used to covering general agriculture in just one county, were asked to cover a specific commodity in a few counties. Some Extension agents have no AoE responsibilities at all. Dairy agents, on the other hand, are required to spend all their time covering dairy, often over more than one county. The Animal Industry Initiative added another kind of agent — district livestock agents.

"Most county ag agents had developed an area of expertise — something they were proficient in and could speak authoritatively on," Wylie said. "Extension just wanted to

formalize it."

According to Wylie, having AoE teams can better serve the needs of farmers.

"There's a need for some specialization — to be on the cutting edge of a certain field," Wylie said. "There's also a need to have some general knowledge so farmers and agribusiness people can call with almost any kind of question."

"There's at least somebody in each county that has an agricultural assignment," Wylie said. And for assistance with specific areas, farmers can find resources without looking all the way toward the Michigan State University campus. "There's somebody within a county or two away that has cutting-edge knowledge," he continued.

Carrie Andrich, Huron County Extension agriculture agent, said having an area to focus on helps her provide better service to farmers. "I think it allows the person in the position to be more effective in their job," she said.

Andrich began her Extension career in

1995 and was hired in as a field crops Area of Expertise agent.

"It's still hard to know everything about field crops because Michigan is so diverse," Andrich said. "Up here, we cover six or seven crops, so it's not necessarily about knowing all the answers, but finding the resources farmers need." ■

### Discussion Questions

1. How is your county's agricultural Extension office organized? Do you have a general ag agent? Does a district livestock agent or an AoE agent in a specific commodity cover your area?
2. Has anyone in your group had contact with an Area of Expertise team member? Did that person provide you with the specialized service you needed?
3. Is this a step in the right direction for Extension? Why or why not? How might your county's agriculture industry be better served by Extension?

## New waste management video available: Farm Waste Management Makes \$ense

A nine-minute video, *Farm Waste Management Makes \$ense*, provides an overview of serious economic questions surrounding agricultural waste disposal and offers suggestions for effective waste management.

Farmers have traditionally disposed of farm and household waste by maintaining small dumps and by burning combustible materials on-site. Waste oil, pesticides, used batteries, and other potential contaminants, as well as containers, plastics, and cast-off equipment have been disposed of in these ways. Under the pressures of greater numbers of nonfarm neighbors, wider use of plastics that add to the problem of agricultural wastes, and stricter environmental regulation, continued on-site burning and dumping may jeopardize the viability of some farms. In addition, farm lenders are concerned about the impact of environmental degradation on

long-term collateral value.

Seeing deeper awareness of waste management issues as a key to the financial success of farms in New York and across the country, the Cornell Waste Management Institute produced *Farm Waste Management Makes \$ense* for agricultural audiences in a variety of settings.

*Farm Waste Management Makes \$ense*, NRAES-111, is available for \$20 per copy (plus shipping and handling) from NRAES, Cooperative Extension, 152 Riley-Robb Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853-5701. The shipping and handling charge is \$3.50 for a single copy within the continental United States. Major credit cards are accepted, and checks should be made payable to NRAES. For additional information, or for a free publications catalog, contact NRAES by phone at (607) 255-7654, by fax at (607) 254-8770, or by e-mail at [nraes@cornell.edu](mailto:nraes@cornell.edu). ■

## Report shows wetlands decline slowing

A report by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (USFWS) shows the rate of declining wetlands has slowed. The report said between 1985 and 1995, the net loss of wetlands averaged 117,000 acres per year, which is down from the previous decade's average of 290,000 acres lost per year. The numbers look even more dramatic when compared to the decade of 1965 to 1975 when wetlands disap-

peared at a rate of 485,000 acres per year.

"The good news is that wetland loss is significantly lower than what we lost in the past," said Jamie Clark, USFWS director. Clark also said "we believe we are very much on the road," toward reaching a "no-net-loss" goal for U.S. wetlands.

The report said there are 100.9 million acres of wetlands in the contiguous 48 states. ■

## Americans' concerns about food safety growing

According to a survey conducted by the CMF&Z public relations firm in Des Moines, Iowa, food safety concerns are increasing. Recent food safety scares are cited for the growing concern.

About 67 percent of editors who cover food issues and 52 percent of consumers believe food safety is a more important consumer issue than it was a year ago. While 32 percent of consumers say they believe less than half of the news reports concerning food safety issues, more than 75 percent surveyed said they would take action in response to a negative story concerning safe drinking water, bacteria in food and food preparation.

Caution should be exercised in analyzing the consumer portion of the survey since the sample size was only 150 individuals.

"The survey confirmed some things we had suspected based on comparing our results from previous years," said Carol Bodensteiner of CMF&Z. "The public is generally more aware of food safety issues and more concerned about a broad range of food safety topics than the media perceives."

Members of the media said in the survey that fat content was among the most important food safety issues. Among the public response, fat content ranked seventh on a list of food safety concerns.

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# White and red wheat in Michigan

**T**raditionally, the Michigan wheat acreage has been about 70-75 percent soft white vs. 25-30 percent soft red. Michigan's reputation as a soft white wheat state and a strong wheat breeding program at MSU, plus the vigorous and dynamic Michigan Millers Association, have combined to keep white wheat production strong and healthy. Thus, Michigan, along with the Pacific Northwest and the Canadian province of Ontario, has supplied most of the soft white wheat in North America, with smaller amounts grown in New York and Pennsylvania.

Out of 10 varieties developed and released from MSU since 1968, seven have been soft white varieties and three soft red varieties. The MSU breeding program has received major support from the Michigan Millers Association, which depends largely on soft white varieties to keep their market base for supplying flour for cakes, cookies and pastries, and bran used in the breakfast food industry. A smaller market exists for thickening agents and other special uses.

The strong support of the milling industry, along with strong support from the certified seed industry for MSU wheat breeding has enabled the development of a string of successful varieties bred especially for Michigan's climatological and soil environment. The pinnacle of breeding success occurred in 1980 with the release of Augusta and Frankenmuth varieties, which for the next 10 years dominated the wheat picture in Michigan and most of Ontario in both acreage and productivity.

The traditional transition area between red wheat varieties in the South and white varieties in the Central, Thumb, and Northern areas has been somewhere near an east-west line between Grand Rapids and Lansing, however, pockets of each type have always existed on either side of this line.

Until the 1980s, red wheat varieties available in Michigan were primarily developed by public experiment stations in Indiana, Ohio and Illinois. Although these included excellent vari-

eties, they were not bred specifically for Michigan conditions and were relatively few in number compared to the number of varieties available today.

The past 20 years have seen a revolution in the development of wheat varieties, most of which have been developed by the private seed industry. Because of the large acreage of soft red wheat throughout the entire Eastern United States and the potential for seed sales, almost all private varieties have been soft red. Thus, the total number of red varieties currently available to Michigan wheat producers outnumbers that for white varieties substantially. This preponderance in red wheat varieties has resulted in increased availability and visibility of soft red wheat. This, along with the excellent performance of available varieties, has enabled the emergence of soft red wheat in Michigan, including areas historically dominated by white wheat.

In the past, most elevators in the traditionally white or red wheat areas have been unwilling to receive both classes of wheat. However, with recent changes, most elevators today accept both classes in most areas, especially the larger ones with good handling facilities. The relative price of the two classes has traditionally fluctuated. In years when the price favors red wheat, enterprising growers, even in Central and Northern Michigan, typically transport their wheat to Southern Michigan or Toledo markets to take advantage of better prices.

Most Michigan wheat producers are familiar with the historical factors cited above, although they may sometimes be confused by the array of factors that influence their variety of class choices. It is clear that the traditional balance between white and red wheat in Michigan is changing because of choices that individual growers are making. It is also clear that Michigan wheat producers increasingly feel that production of red varieties is to their advantage. The purpose of the following discussion is to help clarify some of the factors involved con-

cerning white and red wheats, and in grower choices about which variety and class to produce.

## Advantages of red varieties

1. Greater number of varieties. One factor already noted is the greater number of soft red varieties available compared to that for soft white varieties. The reason for this is clear. Probably as many as 10 different public institutions throughout the Eastern United States have wheat breeding programs and all but two (Michigan and New York) concentrate on red wheat varieties.
2. Greater sprout tolerance. Though both soft red and soft white types will sprout under prolonged wet weather, red varieties are substantially more resistant to sprouting. Thus, they tolerate more successive days of wet weather before sprouting occurs. Consequently, sprouting is only infrequently a significant problem. However, red wheats are not resistant to sprouting and will eventually be affected.

## Advantages of white varieties in Michigan

1. Uniqueness to Michigan. This must be considered as an advantage, first to the milling industry, and then to growers as well. Though Michigan is not the only white wheat area, it does have a well-earned reputation for producing a unique product that fills an important niche, especially in providing white bran for the breakfast food industry. Early Michigan millers had the vision and market wisdom to understand that they could not compete with larger wheat areas throughout the Eastern United States by being "also rans" in the marketplace. They had the vision to develop their future on uniqueness and in filling a niche market by which they could sustain their industry, and with it, profitability to Michigan wheat producers. The success of the Michigan white wheat milling industry has energized and undergirded the entire Michigan wheat industry by

maintaining profitability for the entire wheat industry and to a large extent, Michigan agriculture. It has enabled the milling industry to average near \$100 million per year in farm gate receipts and an added value of \$1.5 billion, in large part because of soft white wheat.

2. Varieties bred and developed for Michigan conditions. This has been part of the strength of Michigan white wheat varieties. They were largely developed at Michigan State University for Michigan conditions. This has been considered to be an advantage over soft red varieties, which were largely developed for other areas. In the past, it has been thought that white wheat varieties were more winterhardy because of this reason.

## Shared attributes and yield potential

White and red wheat share much more in common than the small differences that exist between them. Except for the unique features of the bran for cereals and breakfast foods, the value of both classes is similar. The flour of both is of equal use for cake, cookie and pastry flour. The management of both types is essentially the same in terms of planting, fertilization, performance and yield potential. During the record year for Michigan wheat yields in 1995, 10 white wheat varieties entered in the MSU state performance trials yielded 70.68, compared to 71.2 for all varieties of white and red.

## Production choices — market choices

Both white and red wheat varieties are well adapted to Michigan and both have a place in the total wheat picture. Regardless of the class produced, growers should choose the best varieties of each on the basis of statewide performance and market potential in their area. In the end, most growers will probably be influenced by relative price and profitability in their immediate area. However, it is very important to the total wheat industry that Michigan stay competitive in wheat and understand that the key to competitiveness includes the continued production of white wheat. ■

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