

MICHIGAN FARM NEWS

MICHIGAN'S ONLY STATEWIDE FARM NEWSPAPER

MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU



MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU

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Michigan spring planting well underway



This Isabella County farmer – and many other farmers across the state – got a jump on getting their corn in to put the state's corn crop at over one-third planted. Michigan farmers hope to have the majority of Michigan's estimated 2.6-million-acre corn crop in by now with soybeans soon to follow.

Basic Formula Price options narrowed down to four

On the heels of another drop in the Basic Formula Price (BFP) for April milk of \$1.05, which brought the price to \$11.44 (see Market Outlook, page 6) the USDA's BFP committee submitted four alternatives for further discussion to base the price of all the country's milk. The options include two multiple-component pricing plans, a product price formula and a competitive pay price. The committee based its consideration of possible options on written public comments, input provided during a public BFP forum held in Madison, Wis.; a survey of transaction prices for manufactured dairy products; analysis by a group of university researchers; and extensive study and analysis by the BFP Committee. The BFP Committee evaluated options against the criteria of stability, predictability, simplicity, uniformity, transparency, sound economics and reduced regulation. The four options, in detail, are:

Option 1

A four-class, multiple-component pricing plan to compute prices for nonfat solids and butterfat used in butter and powder (Class IV) and a second multiple-component pricing plan to compute prices for protein, butterfat and lactose used to make cheese (Class III). Class I and II prices could be set independent of the manufacturing prices, or computed by addition of differentials to a weighted moving average of the manufacturing prices or to the higher of the Class III or Class IV prices.

Option 2

A three-class, multiple-component pricing plan. This option is based on a modification of the "Benchmark Component Pricing" plan, developed by the University Study Committee, which computes a protein price from a cheese price, a butterfat price from a butter price, and an other solids price from a powder price. The Benchmark Component Price is then calculated by multiplying each of the component prices by a standard factor representing the share of each component in a hundredweight of milk. This option has only one manufacturing class consisting of butter, powder and cheese.

Option 3

A butter/powder-cheese formula to compute a BFP that would function as the minimum price for manufacturing milk used in all three products. It would be the Class III price in a three-class market and possibly the price mover for Class I and Class II. The formula uses seasonal product yields and a California cost-based make allowance, and the contribution of each manufactured product is weighted by its U.S. production.

Continued on page 8

Governor's road funding proposal: A right direction for Michigan's roads

At a May 8 press conference, Gov. John Engler unveiled his transportation reform package called "Build Michigan II" which would reform the way roads and bridges are funded and calls for a four-cent gas tax increase.

"We're extremely pleased the governor has indicated his willingness to go to the taxpayers, the drivers, the users of the roads, and ask for their support to rebuild our infrastructure," said Jack Laurie, president of Michigan Farm Bureau, the state's largest farm organization. "It is a movement in the right direction to rebuild Michigan."

Calling the \$570 million package very positive news, Laurie said the organization was generally pleased with the "Build Michigan II" package, which includes several systemic reform measures, a proposal to increase Michigan's share of federal highway funds, and a 4-cent-per-gallon gas tax increase. Michigan Farm Bureau policy supports a gas tax increase up to 7 cents.

"We're still looking closely at the proposed distribution system to see if it satisfies the needs of agriculture, because our concerns are, and continue to be: What does this do for rural Michigan? Will it address the problems that we have of moving agriculture production from the farm to the consumer and bringing inputs back out to the farm?" Laurie asked.

According to Michigan Farm Bureau Associate Legislative Counsel Tim Goodrich, the package is relying on \$200 million in additional federal highway funds; a 4-cent increase in the gas tax, which would bring an additional \$200 million and increas-

es in registration fees for trucks. The plan also includes tort reform and internal reforms within the transportation department regarding insurance on construction projects.

According to Goodrich, "It would be naive at this point to think the governor's proposal is going to be the final proposal. But, like the property tax issue, until the governor got serious about that issue, there wasn't any real reform. And that's what this issue has needed; it needed the governor to come forward and step up to the plate and say that he's willing to go on record for some type of a gas tax increase."

Goodrich said although the 4-cent increase will mean motorists who drive 12,000 to 15,000 miles annually will spend, on average, \$22 to \$30 per year, the net impact is a positive one. "Estimates show right now that motorists are averaging about \$100 in repair costs due to the conditions of the roads," Goodrich explained. "So while motorists will see a slight increase at the gas pump, they should see a decrease at the repair shop."

Proposed Road Funding Sources (in millions)	
Increased Federal Highway Funding	\$200
4-Cent Gas Tax Increase	\$200
Ending the Diesel Discount	\$28
Increasing Commercial Truck Registration	\$38
Creating an Overweight Truck Fee	\$6
Ending the Spillage Allowance	\$15
General Fund Contribution	\$43
Insurance Reform Measures	\$40
TOTAL	\$570

COVER STORY

Planting progress report released

As of the first week of May, Michigan producers jumped ahead of the five-year planting average for corn in the state, with virtually all sugar beets in the ground, as well.

According to USDA's crop planting weekly progress report for May 5, Michigan was about one-third complete in terms of corn planting, up from virtually nothing in a matter of seven days.

"I think we are at least that far along," notes MFB Field Crops Department Manager Bob Boehm. "Last week that had us at 0 percent planted and we had a lot of corn in the ground, so I think that Michigan is off to a good start this spring. Corn planting is wrapping up in a lot of areas. People are moving on to soybeans. Some areas of the state where there are heavier soils, in the central area, the ground is a little wetter and corn planting has been held up a little bit, but there is still 25 to 30 percent completed."

If all continues to go well this spring, Michigan farmers will plant 2.6 million acres of corn, down 50,000 acres from last year, according to the Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service. However, 50,000 additional acres of soybeans will go in the ground this year in the state, totaling 1.7 million acres. Nationwide, corn planting intentions are projected to reach the highest level since 1985 at 81.4 million acres and soybeans will follow corn's lead with the largest acreage intended to plant since 1980 of 68.8 million acres, up 7 percent from last year alone.

"I don't know if we have any number on acreage of wheat that was ripped up to go to soybeans," Boehm adds. "We have a 56 percent good to excellent rating for wheat, down from 71 percent a week ago."

This year's sugar beet acres will equal 170,000 acres across the state now that planting is complete, up from 153,000 acres last year. ■

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News in Brief

Young People's Citizenship Seminar deadline approaching

Michigan Farm Bureau will once again be holding the annual Young People's Citizenship Seminar (YPCS) June 16-20 at Calvin College in Grand Rapids. More than 250 high school sophomores and juniors will be invited to take part in the week-long political education program.

According to YPCS program manager Tom Nugent, the 35-year-old program has helped educate thousands of Michigan high school students about the U.S. political process by providing practical hands-on experience and top-notch speakers.

"A favorite aspect of the seminar is that participants actually go through the election process, by campaigning and voting in primaries and general elections for offices and ballot proposals," Nugent explained. "Students also have the chance to interact with political leaders and hear real-life stories of people from all over the country. They'll also interact with their peers

from throughout Michigan. This is an excellent opportunity for a young person to learn about the complex process of government."

Speakers for this year's event include Dr. Robert Rowland, past president of American Citizenship Center at Oklahoma Christian University, on "The Moral Foundation of Freedom;" Dr. Frank Frick, Albion College, on "South Africa's First Elections;" Erna Blitzer, Holocaust survivor; Maxine Hankins-Cain, Lansing Public Schools, on the "The Secret Ingredient;" and a player from the Detroit Lions.

High school sophomores and juniors are encouraged to attend YPCS. To get an application, contact your county Farm Bureau office prior to the May 23 reservation deadline. County Farm Bureau scholarships are also available to cover the \$170 registration fee. For more information, contact your local county Farm Bureau, or Tom Nugent at 800-292-2680, extension 6585. ■

MCA/MSU Bull Test Sale provides Michigan producers with quality bulls

The Michigan Cattlemen's Association (MCA)/MSU Bull Test concluded on March 22, 1997 with the annual Bull Test Sale. More than 350 individuals turned out to this year's sale at the Michigan Livestock Exchange in St. Louis where 36 bulls were sold to 30 different buyers, all from the state of Michigan.

The high indexing bull was a Simmental bull consigned by Jones' Simmentals of Clare and bought by Kevin Page of Lyons for \$1,200. The sale grossed \$50,350 with an average of \$1,399, a \$23 improvement from last year's average. The high selling bull was an Angus bull consigned by Michigan State University

and purchased by MLE Beef Improvement Programs of East Lansing for \$2,650.

The Test Station for this event has been Stoneman Farms in Breckenridge since the beginning of the program in 1988. Bulls were delivered to Stonemans in mid-October and the official test began in the beginning of November. All bulls were weighed on days 28, 56, and 84 of the test to determine average daily gain (ADG) and weight per day of age (WDA). These numbers were then compiled to form the index, which determined the bulls that would sell and the order in which those bulls would sell. ■

ORGANIZATIONAL BRIEFS

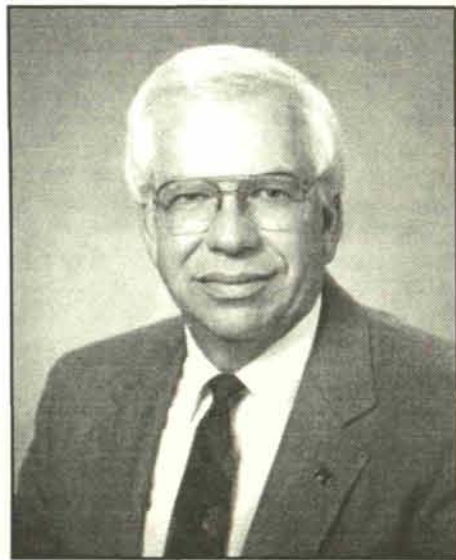
Michigan Farm Bureau administrator announces retirement

After more than 40 years of service, Charles Burkett, administrative director for the state's largest farm organization, has announced his plans to retire effective Sept. 30. His career with the Michigan Farm Bureau began in 1957 and was uninterrupted with the exception of a tour of duty with the U.S. military.

Burkett joined Farm Bureau Services as a management trainee in June of 1957 following his graduation from Western Michigan University with a bachelor of science degree in agribusiness. He served numerous roles within the organization, including nine years as a regional representative before being promoted to division director of the organization's field operations division in 1969. He was then promoted to the MFB administrative director position in 1987.

"We should all share in the pride of Chuck's accomplishment of being a part of the Farm Bureau family for more than 40 years," said Michigan Farm Bureau President Jack Laurie. "His service is an exception, not only in our organization, but in all other organizations as well. Chuck has agreed to continue serving Michigan Farm Bureau and its members as our representative on the Michigan Blue Cross Blue Shield board of directors following his retirement."

Burkett was recently elected by the Blue Cross Blue Shield board of directors to serve as its chairman. He is the first person from outside of southeast Michigan to serve as chairman since separate Blue Cross and Blue Shield organizations consolidated in 1975. Burkett was first appointed to the Blues' board in 1988, as a representative for large-



sized groups. He has served as vice chair of the board's audit committee as well as vice chair of the Blue Care Network (HMO) Management Company, and chair of the Blues' delegation on a joint committee on hospital reimbursement.

"Charles Burkett brings to the chairman's position a wealth of knowledge about the health care system and the challenges it faces," said Richard E. Whitmer, Blues president and chief executive officer. "Over the years he has focused on numerous ways to contain health care costs while maintaining high-quality services. He has worked productively with all segments of the health care community represented on the board of directors." ■

Counting Michigan's tart cherries

Tart cherry trees will be blooming soon, and the Federal/State Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service will conduct its annual Tart Cherry Objective Yield Survey. This survey is unique to Michigan, which historically produces about 75 percent of the United States' tart cherries. Last year's total for the state was 195 million pounds, a 37 percent decrease from the previous year. The national total was 270.3 million pounds, 32 percent below 1995. During the last five years Michigan's production has averaged 246 million pounds, 90 percent of which is utilized.

What will be the tart cherry production for 1997? Tart cherry growers, cherry processors, and others will have this question answered, when the 1997 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) releases its forecast. USDA has tentatively set June 26 as

the release date for the official 1997 tart cherry crop estimate.

The Tart Cherry Objective Yield Survey is conducted to increase the forecast's accuracy. Groundwork for this year's survey began in late April. Interviewers started the process by contacting and briefly interviewing about 260 of the state's tart cherry producers. With the grower's permission, two trees are randomly chosen from each of 280 selected samples and two limbs per tree are then randomly selected for further study.

In mid-June, interviewers will return to the orchards to count and weigh the cherries on the previously selected tree limbs. The average yield per tree, along with the number of bearing tart cherry trees in Michigan, is used as an indication to forecast the 1997 tart cherry crop. ■

MDA director appoints director of ag policy

Dale A. Sherwin of Lansing has been appointed director of agriculture policy by Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) Director Dan Wyant.

"Dale has vast experience in the agriculture and legislative arenas, at the local, state and federal levels," Wyant said. "I expect him to focus on some of the most important emerging issues in agriculture today. We're looking forward to having him as a member of our MDA executive team."

Sherwin most recently served as a member of the House Republican Programs and Research Staff, focusing on all issues related to agriculture, forestry

and transportation. He has also worked as a legislative aide to Sen. Nick Smith; Republican staff director for the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture; and Deputy Assistant Secretary, International Affairs and Commodity Programs, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In addition, Sherwin worked in the Foreign Agricultural Service, as a lobbyist and trade specialist for the American Farm Bureau Federation, legislative counsel and field representative for the Michigan Farm Bureau, and as a farmer in Davison.

He earned a bachelor's degree in animal science from Michigan State University. ■

Taiwan outbreak bad news for U.S. corn exports

The recent outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Taiwanese hog herds will mean the nation will import about 500,000 tons less corn this year, according to a report released by the Agriculture Department.

"The discovery of foot and mouth disease on some Taiwanese hog farms has significantly impacted feed imports, specifically from the United States, as Taiwan is one of the top three markets for U.S. corn," USDA said in its monthly world grain report. ■

'Watchdog' group criticizes estate tax reform

Saying Republican proposals to reform the federal estate tax would cost the government \$12 billion each year and let only the most wealthy Americans off the tax hook, a budget watchdog group called the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities called estate taxes an important progressive tax.

The group said in reality the estate tax affects "an extremely small portion of all estates" and does not adversely affect family-run farms and small businesses. Without the estate tax, a report released by the group said, millions of dollars in tax revenues

would escape government collection because the assets are held to the time of death, thus avoiding capital gains taxes. The group said "fewer than 2 percent of all deaths result in estate tax liability" and that farms account for "less than 0.5 percent of all assets included in taxable estates."

"If estate taxes are reduced in large-scale ways that extend beyond providing targeted relief to small family-owned businesses and farms, that would provide a windfall to the wealthiest taxpayers in the country," the report said.

AFBF supports repeal of federal estate taxes. ■

U.S. considering lifting Argentine beef ban

The United States is considering lifting the 67-year-old ban on imports of beef from Argentina. The U.S. import ban has been in place since the 1930s following an outbreak of foot and mouth disease, a livestock sickness the country has been certified free of for the last three years.

According to the report, Paul Drazek, the Agricul-

ture Department's top trade official, said imports of as much as 20,000 tons could be allowed into the United States in the next few months. Drazek said the level would have "little impact" on the U.S. beef industry.

Talks between Argentine and U.S. negotiators are taking place at high levels and include representatives from the White House. ■

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Capitol Corner

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NATIONAL

Estate tax reform

The Family Business Protection Act of 1997, H.R. 1299, has been introduced to reform the federal estate tax. The major provisions include the following:

- Changes the unified credit to an exemption, which has the effect of reducing the estate tax rate on estates between \$1 million and \$4 million.
- Increases the estate tax exemption from the current \$600,000 to \$800,000 in 1998 and to \$1 million in 2002.
- Allows an additional \$1.5 million exemption for family business assets provided the family continues to operate the business. One-half of the family business assets over \$1.5 million would be excluded from the estate tax. The \$1.5 million would be indexed for inflation.

- Indexes for inflation the \$750,000 limit on the amount the property value can be reduced to reflect its actual use under the Section 2032A special use provisions.
- Excludes land subject to a qualified conservation easement from the estate tax.

Reform of the federal estate tax is a priority issue for Michigan Farm Bureau. The current \$600,000 exemption has been significantly reduced by inflation over the 16 years since it was last updated in 1981.

MFB position: Farm Bureau supports H.R. 1299.

Action requested: Please contact your U.S. representative and ask him/her to cosponsor H.R. 1299.
MFB contact: Al Almy, ext. 2040. ■

NATIONAL

Fire blight research funding

Fire blight is a bacterial disease of apples that is causing severe production problems in Michigan, New York and other states. The bacterium destroys the tree tissue that it infects. Often it seriously reduces fruit yields by infecting the apple blossoms and killing branches. Once a tree is infected, the bacterium spreads through the tree infecting the roots and killing it outright.

A method of controlling fire blight involves the use of the antibiotic Streptomycin, which is sprayed on the tree. However, new strains of the bacterium that are resistant to Streptomycin have appeared leaving no effective method of control.

Last year Michigan Farm Bureau and the Michigan Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Association worked to have Congress appropriate \$325,000 to begin a five-year research program to develop solutions to fire blight. The appropriation is divided between the Michigan State University Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station, which are working cooperatively on the research.

The fire blight research is aimed at the following:

- Developing methods to identify fire blight quickly and accurately determine when the bacterium is present on apple blossoms. Early detection will limit the number of Streptomycin applications and delay the development of Streptomycin resistance.
- Developing methods to delay or prevent fire blight bacterium developing resistance to antibiotics.
- Developing fire blight-resistant apple varieties and rootstocks.
- Developing techniques for the use of growth regulators to reduce the vegetative growth of apple trees in June and July, which should discourage fire blight infection of new growth shoots.

Efforts are now underway to obtain \$375,000 from Congress to fund the second year of the fire blight research project. Meetings have been held with Michigan Congressmen who represent districts where apples are grown or who serve on the House Appropriations Committee. At this time the outlook for funding to continue the research looks favorable, but anything can happen.

MFB contact: Al Almy, ext. 2040. ■

NATIONAL

Self-employment tax on farmers

It is common for farmers in a partnership to individually own some of the assets used in the partnership business and to rent individually owned assets to the partnership.

Prior to 1995, rental income between individuals and partnerships was not subject to self-employment tax. Based on a late-1995 tax court case, the IRS adopted rules making rent from land used in farming subject to the 15.3 percent self-employment tax if the owner materially participates in the management of the operation. Material participation means the owner is involved on a regular, continuous and substantial basis. The IRS looks at the arrangements between individuals and their partnerships to determine material participation.

H.R. 1261 has been introduced by Congressman Jim Nussle (R-Iowa) and David Minge (D-Minn.) to clarify that lease agreements are the only type of agreements that can be used to show material participation and trigger liability for the self-employment tax. An identical bill, S. 529, has been introduced in the Senate by Sens. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) and Rod Grams (R-Minn.).

H.R. 1261 is pending in the House Ways and Means Committee. S. 529 is pending in the Senate Finance Committee.

MFB position: Farm Bureau supports H.R. 1261 and S. 529.

MFB contact: Al Almy, ext. 2040. ■

STATE

Primary seat belt bill

H.B. 4280 was introduced Feb. 11, 1997 by Rep. Fitzgerald (R-Grand Ledge) and has been on the House calendar since April 17, pending a second reading. When the bill is on the House floor it can be taken up at any time.

This bill removes the following sentence: "Enforcement of this section by state or local law enforcement agencies shall be accomplished only as a secondary action when a driver of a motor vehicle has been detained for a suspected violation of another section of this act," from the Michigan Vehicle Code. When the seat belt law was passed in Michigan, the Legislature added the above language, which was needed to secure enough votes for passage. Farm Bureau has no position on the issue of mandatory seat belt use. Farm Bureau does, however, have many general policy statements encouraging members to use safe practices in home and work.

Many of Farm Bureau's policies concerning law enforcement encourage members to support law enforcement efforts in controlling crime. At the same time, Farm Bureau has opposed further expansion of police powers. In the 1997 Policy Book, two policies (Law Enforcement #93 and Narcotics and Harmful Drugs #96) state that: "We support

effective use of current police powers. In order to preserve individual rights we oppose further expansion of police powers." One of the four specific police powers that should not be expanded is allowing police officers to stop vehicles in which persons are suspected of not wearing a seat belt. The other three police powers that should not be expanded beyond what is currently allowed are: no knock, the exclusionary clause and sobriety check lanes.

On April 28, a unanimous U.S. Supreme Court ruled on one of our four issues. Wisconsin police had petitioned the high court to grant expanded police powers to be able to break into a home without knocking and identifying themselves as police officers. The court refused to create a blanket exception to current law in conducting unreasonable searches. The police community in Michigan is asking the Legislature to grant them more powers. It is not a safety issue, it is a law enforcement issue. The primary seat belt bill (H.B. 4280) would expand police powers by allowing police to stop vehicles under the suspicion of a violation.

MFB position: Farm Bureau opposes HB-4280.
MFB contact: Howard Kelly, ext. 2044. ■

STATE

Amendments to change milk labeling

H.B. 4568, H.B. 4569, H.B. 4570, H.B. 4571 and H.B. 4572 are sponsored by Rep. Ilona Varga (D-Detroit). These amend sections of law dealing with grading milk and the manufactured milk and milk products. The bills would permit a person to label milk or milk products produced by a cow that was not treated with rBST (recombinant bovine somatotropin).

The package of bills was referred to the Committee on Regulatory Reform. The committee had hearings on April 24 and May 1 and referred the bills to a special work group, which will consist of House members to be announced at a later date.

BST (bovine somatotropin) is a naturally occurring protein that stimulates milk production in cattle. rBST is a manufactured product adminis-

tered to dairy cows to increase lactation.

The sponsor's intent is to provide labeling of milk so consumers have more information and can select the milk of their choice. The committee understands there is no difference in the two products. However, they still want to provide the labeling information.

Currently, the Department of Agriculture permits labeling if the label follows the federal guidelines with specific language indicating that there is no difference in the milk, whether or not the cow is treated with rBST.

MFB position: Farm Bureau does not support H.B. 4568, H.B. 4569, H.B. 4570, H.B. 4571 and H.B. 4572.

MFB contact: Ron Nelson, ext. 2043. ■

STATE

Pipeline crews on private land

S.B. 262, sponsored by Sen. Joel Gougeon (R-Bay City), Sen. George McManus (R- Traverse City), Sen. Walter North (R-St. Ignace) and Sen. Mat Dunaskiss (R-Lake Orion), amends P.A. 16 of 1929, which regulates the transportation and sale of crude oil and petroleum through pipelines, to establish certain requirements for persons constructing a crude oil or petroleum pipeline or facility.

The bill requires that a person who conducted survey work for a proposed crude oil or petroleum pipeline would have to notify all affected property owners, in writing, before a survey crew entered the owners' property. It also requires that any offer to a landowner for an easement for the purpose of locating, constructing, maintaining, operating and transporting crude oil or petroleum pipelines on agricultural property in Michigan would have to include all of the following information:

- The anticipated physical impact of pipeline construction on the landowner's property.
- Written assurance that any agricultural drainage tile that was damaged or removed during the construction or repair of a pipeline would be repaired or replaced to preconstruction working conditions. ("Drainage tile" would include any surface or subsurface system by which the movement of water was redirected.)
- Written assurance that topsoil that was disturbed due to construction or repair of a pipeline was properly separated and replaced. ("Topsoil"

would mean surface soil that was presumed to be fertile as distinguished from subsoil.)

- The method by which property will be appraised.
- For property used to produce crops prior to construction of a pipeline, an estimate of the value of the loss of the productivity based on historic yield of the site before pipeline construction. The agricultural property owner would have to provide historic crop yield values upon request.
- Payment would be made for all damages incurred after construction of the pipeline due to the pipeline owner's or operator's entry upon the property to exercise easement rights, except that the owner or operator would be allowed to maintain a clear right-of-way without further compensation being due to the landowner.
- That the landowner had rights under the Uniform Condemnation Procedures Act. A copy of that act would have to be provided to the landowner.
- A pipeline company would have to make a good-faith effort to minimize the physical impact and economic damage that resulted from the construction and repair of a pipeline.

S.B. 262 has passed the Senate Economic Development, International Trade and Regulatory Affairs Committee and is pending on the Senate Floor.

MFB position: MFB supports S.B. 262.
MFB contact: Scott Everett, ext. 2046. ■

STATE

Governmental Immunity Act

S.B. 306, sponsored by Sen. Leon Stille (R-Spring Lake), amends the Governmental Immunity Act to limit a governmental agency's liability to \$500,000 or less for all bodily injuries or damage to the individual's property arising from a governmental agency's failure to maintain and repair a highway. Any individual not carrying no-fault insurance would not be allowed to collect non-economic damages. Under this proposal, a governmental agency's negligence would be limited to a highway, road or street, which must be kept in reasonable repair and safe for vehicular travel. A governmental agency is the state, a political subdivision, a city, village, county or township.

In addition, an individual who was more than 50 percent at fault and was under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance would not be able to sue for pain and suffering.

This bill was part of Gov. Engler's State of the State proposal on transportation reform. If passed by the Legislature, it could save the state between \$8 and \$12 million per year.

S.B. 306 passed the Senate on a straight party line vote. All republicans voted "Yes," and all democrats voted "No."

MFB position: MFB supports S.B. 306.
MFB contact: Tim Goodrich, ext. 2048. ■

STATE

Federal gas tax diversion

In 1993, the federal government increased the gas tax 4.3 cents per gallon. The revenue from this increase has been earmarked for federal deficit reduction rather than dedicating the increased revenue for roads. In 1995 alone, motorists in Michigan sent over \$331 million to Washington to be used solely for deficit reduction. The federal gas tax is currently 18.3 cents per gallon, but only 14 cents goes into the federal Highway Trust Fund.

State Rep. Terry London (R-Marysville) has introduced House Concurrent Resolution (H.C.R.) 14, which memorializes the U.S. Congress to "...return to the states the revenue collected under the gasoline tax increase of 1993." In effect, this resolution requests Congress to eliminate the diversion of gas tax revenue to deficit reduction, and use the money for road funding and maintenance. H.C.R. 14 has passed the State House of Representatives.

MFB position: MFB supports H.C.R. 14.
MFB contact: Tim Goodrich, ext. 2048. ■

STATE

Revise explosives crime penalties

This bill was introduced on Feb. 11, 1997 by Rep. Mark Schauer (D-Battle Creek) and was referred to the House Committee on Judiciary.

The bill deals with explosives and bombs. Sending or placing explosives (or things made to look like explosives) with the intention of hurting or scaring someone, or making or having explosives with the intent to use them unlawfully, is a crime. The bill increases the maximum imprisonment from the current two- to five-year felonies to 10 years. The bill also would re-write much of the current act's now-outdated language. The sponsor invited

Farm Bureau to address how this would affect farmers using such items as ammonium nitrate. Language such as "intent to use unlawfully" will be considered and may protect farmers when using explosive materials in a lawful manner.

Rep. Prusi (D-Ishpeming) has introduced H.B. 4218, which also increases penalties as does Sen. Byrum's (D-Lansing) bill, S.B. 97.

MFB position: Farm Bureau has no policy directly addressing H.B. 4289.
MFB contact: Howard Kelly, ext. 2044. ■

Farmers, rescue personnel attend safety seminar



Rescue personnel prepare for an extraction demonstration as part of the seminar.

Program focused on life-saving skills by Kara Endsley

Ogemaw County Farm Bureau teamed up with the local Emergency Medical Service and the sheriff's department in an effort to educate rescue personnel and farmers about agricultural accidents.

More than 150 people attended the April 19 Agricultural Accident Rescue Seminar at the Ogemaw County Fairgrounds. The day familiarized rescue personnel with farm equipment, pinpointed machinery danger zones and addressed agricultural chemical safety issues.

Birger Anderson and Donald Gailey, Mason, instructors for the Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council, led the rescue seminar.

The program was coordinated by Roberta Beck, a registered nurse and farmer in Ogemaw County; Greg Clark, Ogemaw County emergency management coordinator; Rob Lacey, Ogemaw County emergency medical service director; and Peggy Miller, Ogemaw County Farm Bureau Promotion and Education Committee chairperson.

"It created an awareness of what needs to be done, focusing on pursuing rescue techniques more diligently," Beck said. "It pulled community organizations — the police, fire departments and emergency service — together."

Group organizers hope to continue the program next year, possibly focusing on farm safety for children. ■

Farm Bureau establishes relief fund for Red River flood

The American Farm Bureau Federation recently established a relief fund to aid rural victims of the Red River flood in North Dakota and Minnesota. According to AFBF President Dean Kleckner, the fund will be used to provide relief in farming and rural areas affected by the devastating flood.

"There are heavy property losses along the flooded Red River in Minnesota and North Dakota," Kleckner said. "While most of the news concentrates on destruction in Grand Forks, tragic losses in more rural, agricultural areas of the two affected states have touched thousands of lives and livelihoods."

Tax-deductible donations to the fund are being coordinated by the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture (AFBFA). Flood relief donations may be sent to: AFBFA Disaster Relief Fund, 225 Touhy Ave., Park Ridge, IL 60068.

"Americans, especially those in rural areas, always come together in critical times of need," Kleckner said. "Now is one of those times. Many farmers and ranchers are hurting and will be for a long time due to this flood's lingering effects."

"Even though the flood waters may be subsiding in that area and the media spotlight has

shifted away from that area," states MFB President Jack Laurie, "the devastating effects of the flood on Red River Valley agriculture will last well into this summer. This fund will be there for fellow farmers in need for the long haul and hopefully get them back farming as soon as possible."

"Cash donations are the quickest way to get necessities in the hands of those who need them. We are sure that farmers from the affected areas would appreciate any assistance that is offered," Kleckner states.

Funds will be distributed by charitable organizations, including churches, in the affected states. Donors may earmark their contributions for the general fund, which will be divided according to need between the two states, or directly to either of the states.

Due to this year's harsh blizzards, a relief fund has also been established for disaster victims in South Dakota. Michigan Farm Bureau members wishing to contribute to this fund may send donations to: South Dakota Livestock Foundation, c/o South Dakota Department of Agriculture, 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501-3182. ■

NIOSH launches national research program to protect children on farms from injury, death

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched on April 21 a national research program designed to protect children on farms from illness, injury and death.

Under the program, NIOSH will conduct and support research to identify factors that put children at serious risk of injury on the farm, and to develop better information nationally about the prevalence and circumstances of such injuries. The program also will foster new approaches for raising the awareness about safety risks for children on farms and providing information to help farm families, communities and organizations safeguard young people.

"This national program recognizes that farmers and their children embody a unique tradition of hard work, responsibility and love for the land," said Donna E. Shalala, Secretary of Health and Human Services. "This is a heritage that we want to nurture while assuring safety and health for a new generation of farmers."

Details of the program were announced by NIOSH at a town meeting today in Marshfield, Wis. Speakers included Rep. David Obey (D-Wis.) and NIOSH Director Linda Rosenstock, M.D., M.P.H. This program builds on previous NIOSH research and on recommendations in a national action plan for child agriculture safety and health released last year by a broad-based coalition of farmers, agricultural groups, safety and health professionals and government officials.

"This initiative places NIOSH at the forefront of determining the factors that contribute to prevent-

able illnesses, injuries and deaths among children in farm families, the children of migrant and seasonal workers, and children visiting farms," Rosenstock said. "When we know more about these factors, we can help parents and employers determine which tasks and activities are appropriate for children of different ages."

Studies estimate that about 100 people under 20 years of age are killed on farms each year and more than 100,000 injured in agriculture-related activities. Agents associated with these deaths and injuries include tractors and other farm machinery, livestock, building structures and falls.

The NIOSH initiative is funded at \$5 million. Most of the funding will be awarded by NIOSH in competitive grants for research by outside institutions. Also through competitive grant funding, NIOSH plans to establish a national center to facilitate activities toward childhood agriculture injury prevention. The remainder of the funding will support internal NIOSH research. NIOSH published a request for applications for competitive research grants on March 10, 1997, and expects to issue another request for applications to establish a national center.

Further information on NIOSH's initiative on safety for children on farms and its other activities in agricultural safety and health is available by calling toll-free 1-800-35-NIOSH (1-800-356-4674) and on the NIOSH home page on the World Wide Web, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html>. ■

Capitol Corner

Continued from page 3

STATE

Snowmobile ID numbers

H.B. 4522 was introduced March 19 by Rep. Bobier (R-Hesperia) and was referred to the House Committee on Conservation, Environment and Recreation.

The bill provides that snowmobiles having been issued a certificate of registration, shall paint on or attach to each side, the registration number on the belly pan immediately in front of the footwell in the following manner:

- Number must consist of block-style characters of not less than three inches in height, reading from left to right.

- Numbers shall contrast so as to be distinctly visible and legible.
- Under no circumstance should other numbers be attached or otherwise displayed on any part of the snowmobile.
- The current registration decal shall always be affixed to the right of the registration number.

Farm Bureau Policy #93: We recommend the reinstatement of required snowmobile and personal watercraft ID numbers for identification purposes.

MFB position: MFB supports H.B. 4522.
MFB contact: Howard Kelly, ext. 2044. ■

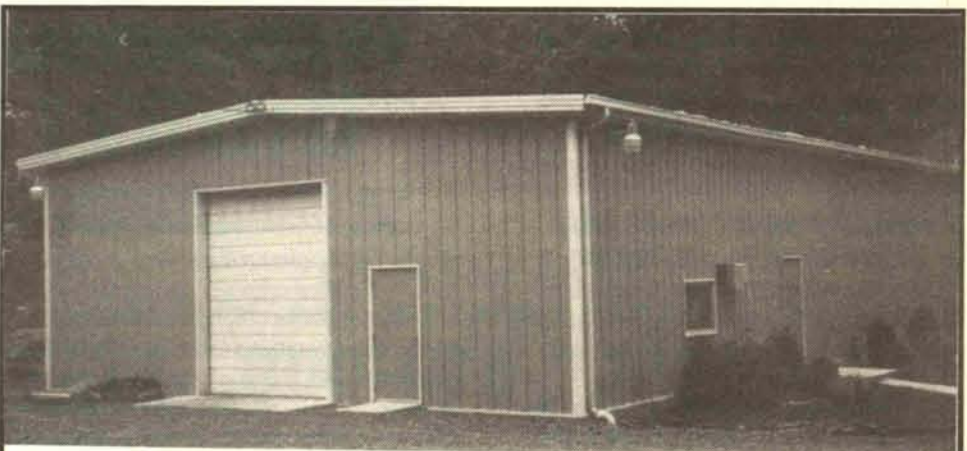
STATE

Senate and House resolutions on deer damage

S.R. 45, sponsored by Sen. Joanne Emmons (R-Big Rapids), and H.R. 35, sponsored by Rep. Larry DeVuyst (R-Ithaca), encourage the Department of Natural Resources and the Natural Resources Com-

mission to increase efforts to reduce agricultural, forestry and automobile damage caused by deer.

MFB position: MFB supports both resolutions.
MFB contact: Scott Everett, ext. 2046. ■



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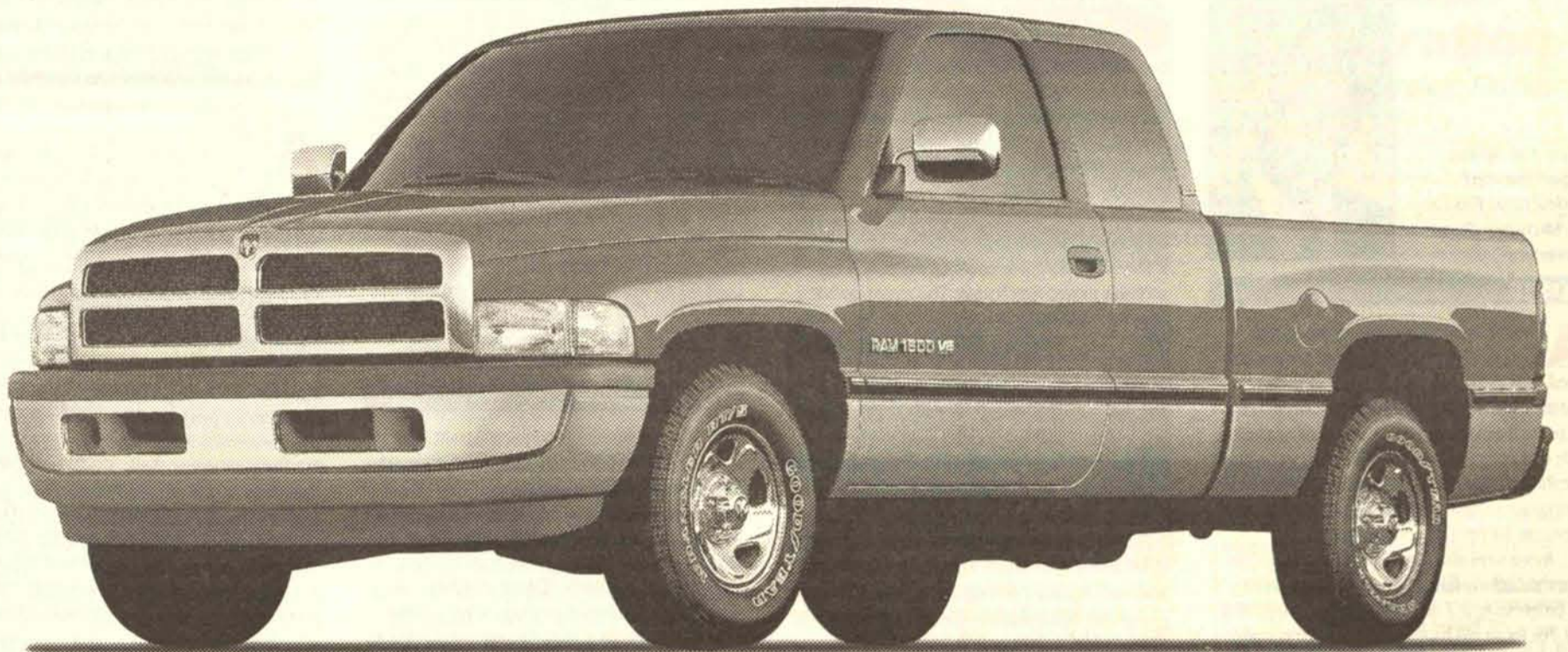
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Market Outlook

by Dr. Jim Hilker,
Department of
Agricultural Econom-
ics, Michigan State
University



CORN

As you all know, the month of May is high-intensity time for corn farmers. It's not only critical with respect to getting the corn in the ground, but it is also an important month to keep an eye on the markets. Pricing decisions need to be made and executed in a timely manner, at the same time the corn has to go in the ground. That's why it is important to have a pricing plan in place that will be executed if prices hit certain levels.

As we went into May, old and new crop corn prices had fallen off from recent highs as planting was progressing at a decent rate and use appeared firm. For those still hanging on to old crop, make sure you understand the downside risks. We have good prices now and plenty of old crop to get through until harvest. Playing with 10 to 15 percent of your crop is one thing; risking more than that is another. If July futures prices break back over \$3.10, it is probably time to quit playing with old crop and put all your attention on new crop.

New crop prices took a bigger hit than old crop as the market is now looking at a trend to better-than-trend yield. If you have not priced any new crop, think hard about pricing some at today's prices. If you have already priced 10 to 15 percent, consider pricing some more if December corn futures bounce back over \$2.85. And, if you have already priced 20 to 30 percent of your crop, think about pricing some more if new crop futures push

Seasonal Commodity Price Trends

Corn	↑
Soybeans (explosive)	↓
Wheat	↑
Hogs	↑
Cattle	↑

Index: → = stable prices; ↑ = higher prices; ↓ = lower prices; TP = topping; BT = bottoming; ? = unsure

back into the \$3 area. Remember, you have several tools to price and can use more than one of them. Consider such things as the basis; how much downside risk you can, or want, to handle; and the cost to keeping some upside potential.

The USDA released their first estimate of the supply/demand estimates for the 1997-98 crop year on May 12. Compare them to mine in Table 1 below. If they are greatly different, then the market has probably moved significantly. This means updating your pricing plan.

WHEAT

Wheat seems to be on somewhat of an uptrend. This would be expected with the late freeze in the Plains and Southwest, and the questionable planting progress in the spring wheat areas. However, as with all agricultural commodities, that can quickly change. Again, compare my 1997-98 wheat supply-demand estimates with the recently released USDA estimate; it will give you a better idea of their analysis of the freeze damage.

If you have not priced any 1997 wheat, consider doing so if July Chicago wheat futures are above \$4.30. If you have already priced 20 to 30 percent, consider waiting until futures hit the \$4.45-4.55 area to price more. I'm giving you these pricing points and amounts to give you a general idea for the average producer — of which none exists. You need to then individualize these for your operation. Just don't make the mistake of always setting your pricing points a lot higher and your amounts a lot lower.

SOYBEANS

As of the first of May, old crop soybean prices were great. When July soybean prices are trading over \$8.70, things are good. It's hard to give advice, such as hold for more. However, old crop soybean prices remain in an explosive position, up or down. Use just keeps rolling along as corn use did last year until prices exploded.

The question is, how high do soybean prices have to go to call it an explosion? In the not-too-distant past, today's prices would have fit that definition. As with corn, if you want to play with the last 10 to 15 percent of your old crop, go ahead. Just do it with a basis contract or call versus paying any storage.

Don't let the huge spread between old and new crop soybean futures fool you into thinking that new crop prices are not good. November soybean futures over \$6.50 are good prices, and at the beginning of May, we were near \$7. Again, we are in an explosive situation, but the downside risk gives you a price level much lower than the downside price risk of old crop soybeans. There is about a 10 percent chance prices could fall to or below \$5.50.

If you have not priced any new crop, consider pricing at least 15 percent soon. If you have already priced about that much, consider watching for November futures in the \$7.10 to 7.15 area, and then move to 20 to 30 percent priced. If prices jump to the \$7.25 level, consider having a plan in place to price more into the uptrend.

HOGS

March weekly slaughter being down 1.5 percent was near expectations, but April weekly slaughter being down 4.8 percent was below what the March report indicated would be the case. And it does not appear to be a case of hogs being backed up and not being current. Prices have responded accordingly. Hog futures have been in an uptrend and they are at profitable levels out through at least February 1998. There are several ways we can use this information in developing a pricing plan. Keep pricing cash hogs into the uptrend and in the short-run probably not have to worry about prices falling to unprofitable levels. Or we could say these prices are good and lock in prices on a percent of our production over the next year. Another way would be to price production into the uptrend at regular intervals and put some stops under the uptrend if the market trend changes.

CATTLE

Keep current, but make sure you take the cattle capable of grading choice at a reasonable cost to choice. A lot of cattle on feed will be coming to market over the next few months. Out months cattle futures have jumped around a lot as the market tries to anticipate what will be coming to the market and the demand.

Consider doing some forward pricing if offered when the futures are near the top of these fairly wide trading ranges. To give you some idea of where these are if you don't have charts available, for June and August this would be near \$66 per cwt., for October \$69-70, and for December around \$71. Forward pricing is harder with cattle than other commodities, the basis is less predictable and forward contracts harder to find. However, check out your options.

DAIRY

Larry G. Hamm

April brought price disaster to the dairy product markets. As a result, near-term farm level milk prices will be going down. Dairy market fundamentals, however, still seem to indicate that 1997 will be relatively good milk price year.

During April trading on the National Cheese Exchange (NCE), the average wholesale price for 40-pound cheddar blocks dropped 13.5 cents. In trading on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME), Grade AA butter dropped 24 cents per pound. The Basic Formula Price (BFP) for April is adjusted by the change in the product values for cheese, butter and powder between March wholesale price levels and April wholesale price levels. The dramatic drops experienced on the dairy product market exchanges guarantee that the BFP will fall when announced May 5.

The current BFP continues to be dominated by the cheese price. The April BFP dropped \$1.05 to \$11.44. The March BFP was \$12.49 per cwt. (3.5 percent test). The May BFP will likely drop to around \$11.30 per cwt. The last time the BFP was in this price range was in the spring of 1995. Farm level price declines for April milk will be tempered by the lag effect of Federal Order pricing. However, if the dairy product markets do not recover in May, farm level prices in Michigan for May and June production will be significantly lower than last year.

There is industry speculation as to what the underlying causes are for the weaker dairy product markets. Cheese prices may have weakened due to higher cheese inventories in processor warehouses. Also, a softer demand could account for lower prices. Inventories held by processors are up from a year-ago level. Also, there appears to be a slowing in the growth of demand for cheese. Milk production nationally has been basically flat. When these three factors are combined, most market analysts would anticipate that the dairy product markets would be steady to slightly lower. What then might explain the dramatic drop in dairy products, especially cheese, prices?

There has been a rapid increase in milk production in western and southwestern dairy states. California and, to a lesser extent, Idaho, Washington and New Mexico, have shaken off the impacts of last year's feed price increases and are increasing milk production significantly. Simultaneously, there has been a proliferation and expansion of western U.S. cheese plants. This process has been on-going, but appears to have reached the levels where the production of cheese from California, Idaho and Washington are now over-riding the benchmark cheese price from the upper Midwest. Several years ago, California surpassed Wisconsin as America's leading dairy state. The dairy markets are now in adjustment as new cheese processing capacity is coming on-line to deal with the significant milk increases in the western U.S.

The supply and demand situation in the U.S. dairy industry continues to be positive. The production and consumption of milk appear to be in line and a mid-summer/fall rally in milk prices is still anticipated. Unfortunately, the rally later this year will be starting from a lower base than analysts had anticipated.

EGGS AND BROILERS

Henry Larzelere

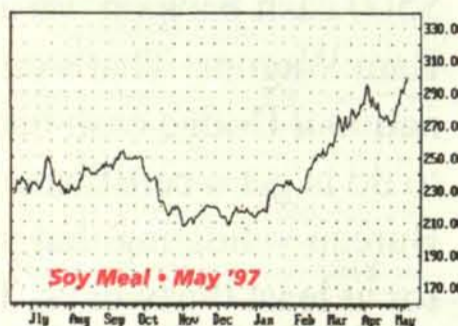
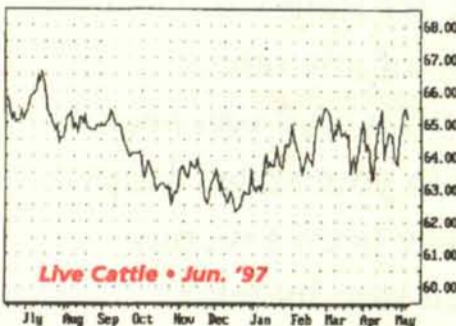
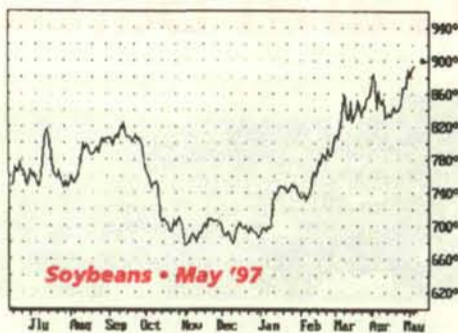
Egg prices in April averaged about nine cents a dozen below April 1996. At the end of the month, prices dropped to nearly 25 cents a dozen below last year. Feed ingredient costs had dropped about seven cents a dozen eggs below April 1996.

Wholesale prices in New York for Grade A large white eggs in cartons are likely to average in the high 60s to low 70s during May and June. The number of hens and pullets on farms on April 1 was 2 percent above last year. Egg production in March was about 2 percent above last year. Table egg production was up 1 percent.

The egg-type chick hatch in March was about the same as March of 1996. The number of layer-type eggs in incubators on April 1 was up 4 percent from last year. During April the slaughter of spent hens has increased considerably over a year ago.

Continued on page 7

COMMODITY PRICE TRENDS



Source: Knight Ridder Financial

COMMODITY SUPPLY/DEMAND BALANCE SHEETS

Table 1 — Corn

(Million acres)	Estimated 1995-1996	Projected 1996-1997	Hilker 1997-1998
Acres set-aside/diverted	6.2	0.0	0.0
Acres planted	71.2	79.5	81.4
Acres harvested	65.0	73.1	74.9
Bu./harvested acre	113.5	127.1	129.0
Stocks (million bushels)			
Beginning stocks	1,558	426	909
Production	7,374	9,293	9,662
Imports	16	10	9
Total supply	8,948	9,729	10,580
Use:			
Feed and residual	4,696	5,325	5,525
Food/seed & Ind. uses	1,598	1,670	1,750
Total domestic	6,294	6,995	7,275
Exports	2,228	1,825	2,100
Total use	8,522	8,820	9,375
Ending stocks	426	909	1,205
Ending stocks, % of use	5.0	10.3	12.9
Regular loan rate	\$1.89	\$1.89	\$1.89
U.S. season average			
Farm price, \$/bu.	\$3.24	\$2.80	\$2.55

Table 2 — Wheat

(Million acres)	Estimated 1995-1996	Projected 1996-1997	Hilker 1997-1998
Acres set-aside & diverted	5.2	0.0	0.0
Acres planted	69.2	75.6	69.2
Acres harvested	61.0	62.9	59.7
Bu./harvested acre	35.8	36.3	37.5
Stocks (million bushels)			
Beginning stocks	507	376	460
Production	2,182	2,282	2,239
Imports	68	90	81
Total supply	2,757	2,748	2,780
Use:			
Food	884	900	910
Seed	104	103	105
Feed	152	300	200
Total domestic	1,140	1,303	1,215
Exports	1,241	985	1,100
Total use	2,381	2,288	2,315
Ending stocks	376	460	465
Ending stocks, % of use	15.8	20.1	20.1
Regular loan rate	\$2.58	\$2.58	\$2.58
U.S. season average			
Farm price, \$/bu.	\$4.55	\$4.35	\$4.20

Table 3 — Soybeans

(Million acres)	Estimated 1995-1996	Projected 1996-1997	Hilker 1997-1998
Acres planted	62.6	64.3	68.8
Acres harvested	61.6	63.4	67.8
Bu./harvested acre	35.3	37.6	38.0
Stocks (million bushels)			
Beginning stocks	335	183	125
Production	2,177	2,383	2,576
Imports	4	5	4
Total supply	2,516	2,571	2,705
Use:			
Crushings	1,370	1,420	1,430
Exports	851	895	900
Seed, feed & residuals	112	131	120
Total use	2,333	2,445	2,445
Ending stocks	183	125	250
Ending stocks, % of use	7.8	5.1	10.2
Regular loan rate	\$4.92	\$4.97	\$4.97
U.S. season average			
Farm price, \$/bu.	\$6.77	\$7.25	\$6.50

Source: USDA and Jim Hilker

Market outlook

Continued from page 6

BROILERS

Broiler prices averaged nearly 4 cents a pound (Midwest, U.S. Grade A, 2-3 pounds fresh, ready-to-cook, in ice) above 1995 even though the number of chicks placed was almost 8 percent up from the previous year. Broiler prices in the first 3 months of 1997 averaged about 3 cents a pound above the same months in 1996, while the number of chicks placed was up 2 percent from a year ago.

It should be recalled that the number of chicks placed will increase during the summer months with prices increasing several cents a pound from the same months in 1996. ■

Potato growers seek feeders for oversupply

The largest potato crop on record will mean a significant tonnage of potatoes be directed toward livestock feed in order to clean up the bins.

Potato growers from Maine to Washington are facing a serious disposal problem. Michigan growers will still dump approximately 130,000 cwt. with a farm gate value over \$500,000.

Livestock feeders or potato growers are urged to contact the Commission office for information.

Ben Kudwa, Executive Director of the Michigan Potato Industry Commission indicated "that cleaning up the 1996 Michigan potato crop, no matter how painful, must be done in a prudent manner to avoid disease contamination of the 1997 crop with 1996 crop potatoes being discarded. Feeding potatoes to livestock is an excellent way of avoiding the spread of blight and disposing of unmarketable potatoes," he said. ■

Agriculture's Summer Celebration set for June 24 at Michigan State University

Event to focus on state's livestock industry revitalization efforts

Several Michigan agricultural organizations will join forces Tuesday, June 24, to host Agriculture's Summer Celebration on the campus of Michigan State University. Farmers are invited to help celebrate the completion of the Animal Industry Initiative, a \$70 million effort to revitalize the state's livestock industry.

Participants may take guided bus tours of new MSU livestock facilities from 2 to 5 p.m. Stops will include the dairy and swine facilities and the new Pavilion for Livestock and Agriculture Education. A special commemoration of the livestock initiative will take place at 4 p.m. and dinner will be served from 4 to 7 p.m.

The event coincides with the opening day of Ag Expo, the annual agriculture trade show held at MSU. A free shuttle will transport visitors between Ag Expo and the celebration. Look for the tent near the corner of Shaw and Farm Lane in East Lansing, behind the Farrall Agricultural Engineering building.

To order tickets (available in advance only), send \$5 each payable to Michigan Farm Bureau to: Agriculture's Summer Celebration, P.O. Box 30960, Lansing, MI 48909. For more information, call (800) 292-2680, ext. 3204. Deadline for ticket orders is June 12.

Agriculture's Summer Celebration is sponsored by Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan State University, Michigan Milk Producers Association and Michigan Livestock Exchange. ■



Held in conjunction with Ag Expo, Agriculture's Summer Celebration will bring Michigan agriculture organizations together for an afternoon of fun and food. Look for the big white tent behind the agriculture engineering building at MSU June 24.

Tickets just \$5
available in advance only

Agriculture's Summer Celebration

Ticket Order Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, Zip: _____

County: _____

Dinner Choice(s): _____

of Beef _____

of Pork _____

Number of Tickets at \$5 Each: _____

Deadline for ticket orders — June 12

Mail check, payable to
MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU to:
Agriculture's Summer Celebration
PO Box 30960
Lansing MI 48909

FFA breaks ground in northwest Indianapolis

The National FFA Organization held a groundbreaking ceremony Monday, April 21 for its new National FFA Center in Indianapolis. The organization announced that it purchased a five-acre plot of land near 86th Street and Interstate 465 at a reduced price from The Dow Chemical Company, Midland, Mich. Construction of the building is expected to be completed by spring 1998.

More than 75 FFA members from Indiana and state officers from Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky and Illinois joined the six national FFA officers and local dignitaries to turn the first ceremonial shovel of soil at the new site. Speakers included Joseph Kernan, Indiana lieutenant governor and commissioner of agriculture; Stephen Goldsmith, Indianapolis mayor; Wayne Beck, vice president, supply management, Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc., and chair of the National FFA Foundation Sponsors' Board; Corey Rosenbusch, national FFA president; and Larry D. Case, chief executive officer and national advisor of the national FFA Organization.

"The business FFA is involved in, preparing young people to be leaders is the most important business," Kernan said. "These young people will be in charge and will bring their skills to the table for the next generation. They will make things happen."

Goldsmith said that the city worked to attract FFA partly because of the economic impact, but more importantly because of the civic impact. "FFA members have leadership skills, the right values, all the things that will make our country great in the future," he said.

Rosenbusch, speaking on behalf of the more than 452,000 FFA members nationwide, acknowledged the significance of the day. "It's true that from this ground a new building will rise to house the National FFA Organization," he said. "But beyond the building, this day signifies a reaffirmation of FFA's commitment to changing the lives of young people. When we build young people we build families and communities. And when we build communities we build a nation."

Later in the day, Indianapolis welcomed FFA to the city with a reception at the State House.

The FFA, a national organization for high school students preparing for careers in the business, science and technology of agriculture, announced last September that it would move its 80-employee business and foundation operations to Indianapolis from Alexandria, Va., and Madison, Wis. The FFA headquarters will remain a part of the U.S. Department of Education in the Washington, D.C. area.

"Moving our business operations to Indianapolis better positions the FFA and agricultural education for the future," Case said. "Indianapolis provides a better quality of life for our staff, puts us closer to the majority of our members and helps reduce operating costs. The supportive local agribusiness community and youth-focused state philosophy also will help us achieve our mission of making a positive difference in the lives of students through agricultural education."

The National FFA Foundation, Inc., has initiated a national capital campaign, themed "I Believe in the Future," to help finance the land and building. FFA has received local leadership gifts totaling \$1.5 million from The Lilly Endowment, DowElanco and The Lilly Fund on behalf of Elanco Animal Health.

The Dow Chemical Company is one of the parent companies of DowElanco, both long-time supporters of FFA that sponsor several education and leadership programs. The land sale, partly made possible by a gift from DowElanco and Dow Chemical, is an extension of that support. "The most important investment we can make is in the future of our young people and the future of the agricultural industry," said

John Hagaman, president and chief executive officer of DowElanco. "We have long believe that supporting FFA is the best way to make that investment. The return is evident in our own employees, many of whom are former FFA members, and in the young students we meet through involvement in FFA. These students will become the industry's next leaders, and they are well-prepared."

The 40,000 square-foot Frank Lloyd Wright prairie-style building design reflects the strong history and bright future of FFA, with a solid, stone foundation rising to a more modern, glass atrium. A highlight of the building is the Hall of Achievement, set in a rotunda just inside the main entrance. This display of FFA history, mission and future goals is expected to be a popular site for FFA members visiting from across the country. The surrounding area will include a pond and natural area created through an FFA student landscape design competition.

FFA is a national organization of 452,885 members preparing for leadership and careers in the science, business and technology of agriculture. The organization has 7,263 local chapters located throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands. ■



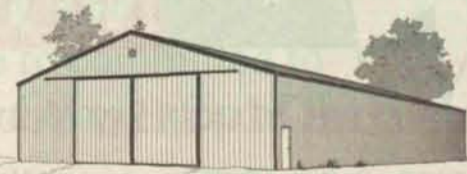
Members of the Michigan Association of FFA state officer team assisted with the groundbreaking ceremony for the new National FFA Center in Indianapolis on April 21, 1997. From left to right: Charlie Jones, national FFA southern region vice president; Kevin Nugent, Michigan FFA president; Holly Bentley, national FFA secretary; Kyle Fiebig, Michigan FFA Region III state vice president; Ray Starling, national FFA eastern region vice president; Kristin Prelesnik, Michigan FFA secretary; Teresa Swamba, Michigan FFA president; Corey Rosenbusch, national FFA president; Kerry Ackerman, Michigan FFA reporter; Rachel Fehringer, national FFA western region vice president; Charles Arensmeier, Michigan FFA advisor; Melanie Endres, Michigan FFA Region V state vice president; and Brad Montgomery, national FFA central region vice president.

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Precision Agriculture

by Neil R. Miller

Modern planter equipment now allows producers to vary seeding rates continuously as they move across a field. Several of my clients have been using Rawson hydraulic drives on their corn planters for years. Many new planters now come with factory-installed variable rate drives, and in 1998 John Deere and possibly Case IH will tie their controllers to GPS so that populations can be varied according to a pre-programmed computer generated map. (Rawson has had this capability for several years.)

What benefits can producers expect to reap from this new technology? As with other aspects of site-specific management, our agronomic knowledge lags somewhat behind our engineering capabilities. We simply do not know the optimum seeding rates for the myriad of soil types, varieties, management systems and weather conditions we may encounter. Consequently, it is difficult to estimate what the benefits of this technology will be in the future. Nevertheless, the following generalizations appear to hold true:

For many producers, optimizing corn populations will involve an across-the-board increase. Recommended corn populations in Michigan have increased steadily over the past

Variable-rate seeding technology

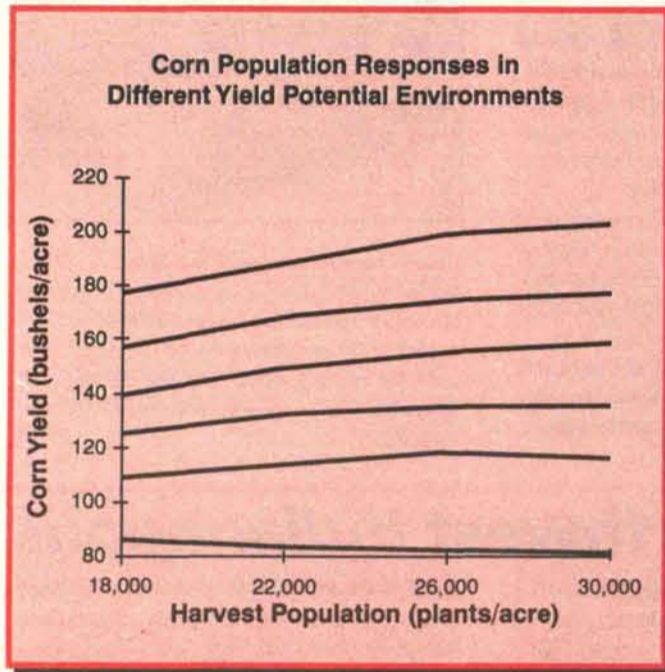
decade. Modern hybrids, especially those in the shorter maturity range, show continuing response seeding rates beyond 30,000 seeds/acre. Thus, even before they use variable rate technology to optimize populations on a site-specific basis, many producers will benefit by simply increasing their overall seeding rates.

Soil characteristics, especially water-holding capacity, will be the dominant factor determining site-specific corn populations. Fields with higher moisture-holding capacity, and higher yield potential, will often continue to respond as seeding rates increase above 30,000 seeds/acre. In contrast, yields on sandier, relatively low-potential soils tend to peak at seeding rates of 26-29,000, and decline above this, especially in dry years. The accompanying figure illustrates the relationship between productivity

of a given environment and optimum corn populations. Note that these are final populations, and seeding rates would likely be 10 percent higher.

The most common way to document varied yield potential within fields is to map its various soil types. If you plan to use NRCS soil survey maps to do this, be sure to verify their accuracy ahead of time. Many counties in Michigan now have digitized, geo-referenced versions of these maps that can be easily imported into site-specific farming software. However, the NRCS has not carried out field validation of these maps, and my experience suggests that their accuracy varies widely. Before they can be used for prescription writing, they should be taken to the field and edited using GPS data logging equipment. Contact me if you are interested in details on how this can be done.

Variable rate seeding of soybeans will likely produce fewer benefits. Most soybean varieties exhibit a remarkable ability to adjust their growth habits to various environmental conditions. Thus, even when seeded at a uniform rate, plants will produce more branch stems and produce or abort pods as needed to take advantage of differing conditions within a field. I have talked with some producers who are interested in holding back populations on their most productive ground in order to decrease lodging and white mold potential. However, I have not seen research to document whether or not this would be beneficial. ■



Optimum corn populations tend to be highest in high-productivity environments (source: Pioneer Hi-Bred, 1978-93)

Basic Formula Price

Continued from page 1

Option 4

A combination of a competitive pay price series and a product price formula. The competitive pay price would be the national weighted average price paid for Grade A milk used to produce manufactured dairy products for the preceding month, less performance premiums, plus hauling subsidies. A product price formula would be used to update the competitive pay price information to the current month. The competitive pay price would be collected by the National Agricultural Statistics Service for a representative sample of states that account for the majority of Grade A milk used to produce manufactured products. The price series does not currently exist and would have to be developed.

Included in the university study of pricing alternatives was Michigan State University Agricultural Economics Department Chair Larry Hamm. According to him, "When you strip all of the details apart, you fundamentally have to have a price that reflects what consumers are willing to pay for manufactured products that are made from milk."

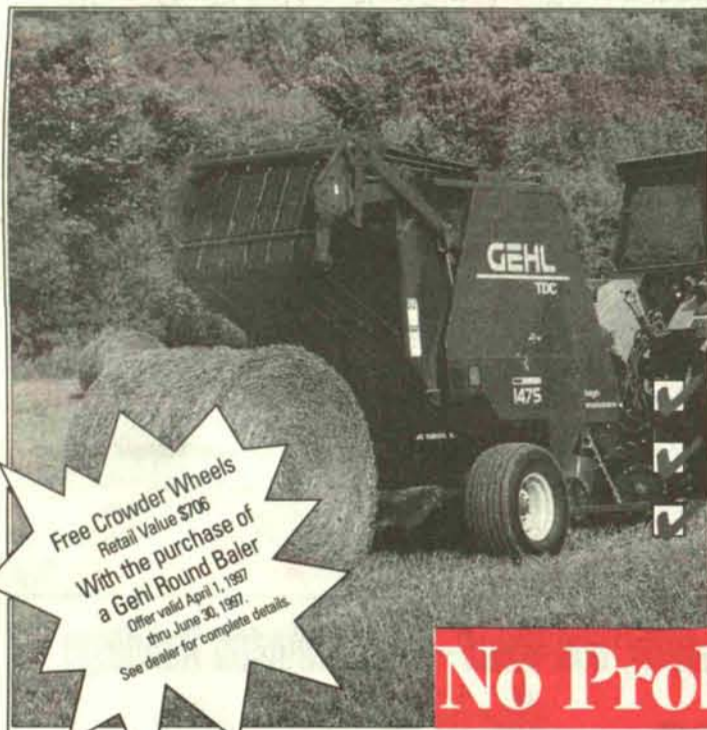
"As a group we looked at 32 to 34 different options," adds Hamm, "but one of those is valuing milk on the value of the products that are made — using a product price formula that basically weighs the amount of milk that goes into butter, powder and cheese, and then adjusting that value by how much it costs to manufacture products."

According to MFB Livestock Specialist Kevin Kirk, option four — the product price formula — carries the most merit of the four alternatives. "I think that is the most fair way to do it," he adds. "When you look at the things that they were talking about in the criteria — stability, simplicity, uniformity, sound economics, reduced regulation, predictability, and a recognizable replacement for the basic formula price — that's what we need to do is it has to be something that the industry can recognize and understand. It has to be broad across the entire United States — we can't take one designated area, because as things change, production changes, we have to take that into consideration." ■

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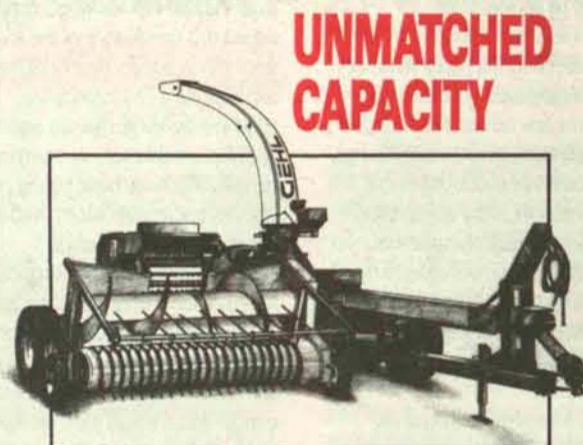
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Michigan's first shrimp operation opens

First business registered under new law

Michigan's first shrimp production facility is also the first business registered under a new state law that will help expand the aquaculture industry in Michigan, according to Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) Director Dan Wyant.

Wyant's remarks came during a reception at the facility, Seafood Systems, Inc. of Okemos. Wyant was joined by legislators, agriculture industry leaders and Seafood Systems President Russ Allen.

"Michigan agriculture entrepreneurs, like Russ Allen, are venturing into businesses unheard of in Michigan just a few years ago," said Wyant. "MDA is working in partnership with the industry and academia to create a climate that encourages such agricultural entrepreneurship and growth."

According to Wyant, it was a partnership that helped create the "Michigan Aquaculture Development Act," providing the basis for development of the aquaculture industry in the state, and designat-

ing the Michigan Department of Agriculture as its regulator.

Aquaculture is expected to be a major new agricultural growth industry in the 21st century as the demand for fish increases. The United States has a major opportunity to develop an internationally competitive aquaculture industry to serve national needs and the global marketplace.

Michigan already has 51 commercial trout operations, which sold over 723,000 pounds of fish in 1995. Production value was nearly \$2 million, ranking Michigan 10th in the nation for the value of trout sold.

The goal of Seafood Systems, Inc. is to produce 50 million pounds of shrimp annually through the completion of four project phases using state-of-the-art construction techniques for thermal efficiencies. The company is currently a pioneer in the development of production systems for indoor, closed-cycle rearing of marine shrimp. ■



Russ Allen (left), Seafood Systems, Inc. of Okemos, accepts his license from MDA Director Dan Wyant.

Farm Bureau opposing truck weight legislation

Legislators in Lansing are making another run at reducing legal maximum truck weights. Rep. Burton Leland (D-Detroit) has introduced House Bill 4613 to reduce legal truck weights from 164,000 pounds gross vehicle weight down to just 80,000 pounds. While it may prove politically popular, Michigan Farm Bureau Associate Legislative Counsel Tim Goodrich warns the legislation would actually increase truck traffic, worsen road wear, and ultimately prove costly for truckers and consumers.

"The key issue here is that the gross vehicle weight is not as important as the per-axle weight," Goodrich cautioned. "Research has shown that the trucks running over 80,000 pounds have a lower axle weight than the trucks running at 80,000 pounds. Even though they're heavier trucks, their poundage is spread out over more axles. And they're doing less damage

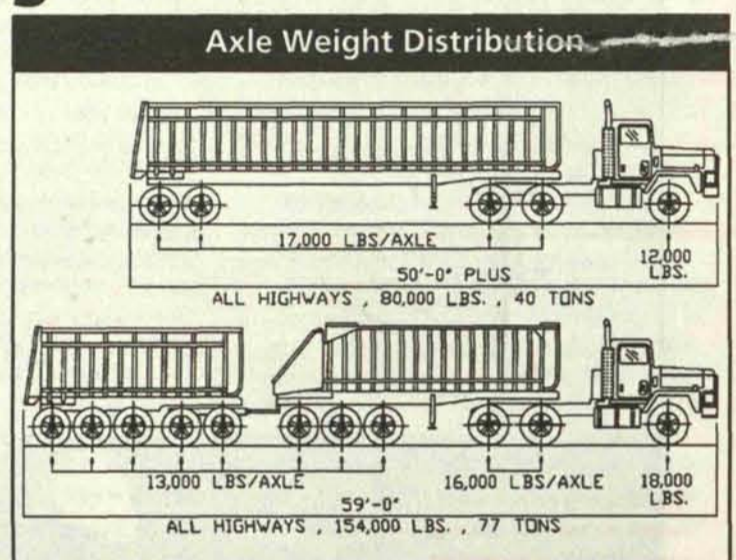
to the roads than the trucks at 80,000 pounds." Michigan law allows the operation of commercial vehicles with gross weights over 80,000 pounds if the weight is distributed over 11 or more axles, compared to just five axles on 80,000-pound trucks.

According to Goodrich, Michigan Farm Bureau is working with a coalition of interested parties, including the Michigan Milk Producers Association and the Michigan Manufacturers Association, to make sure the bill never passes the House.

"All of these industries are hauling or are recipients of materials that are hauled," Goodrich explained, "and they'd see their business costs increase. The Michigan Milk Producers Association, for example, has estimated that just to eliminate the old trucks and put in new trucks would cost them about \$7.2 million. And their operating costs would increase about \$6.2 million due to smaller loads and

increased trucking costs."

Goodrich says that an additional 16,000 trucks would be needed to haul the equivalent payload of multi-axle trucks. "This would add considerably to road congestion and the probability of truck-related accidents," he said. "The higher energy and environmental costs in the form of increased fuel consumption and exhaust emissions shouldn't be overlooked either." ■



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HEALTH HARVEST

Insight on eyesight: Seven vision myths



Blind spots about vision can cause needless worry, wasted effort and unnecessary treatment

Throw away your glasses!" urged the ads for laser eye surgery. For millions of nearsighted Americans, that prospect seemed like a dream come true. But last year, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Federal Trade Commission sent a letter warning physicians that unqualified promises for such an outcome are "misleading and deceptive."

The notion that you'll never wear glasses again after laser surgery is just one of many myths about eyesight that can lead people to waste time, effort and money — and sometimes even expose them to needless danger.

Myth: You'll never need glasses again if you undergo surgery to correct nearsightedness.

Truth: Surgery can reduce or eliminate nearsightedness, by flattening the cornea. But there's no guarantee that surgery will eliminate the need for glasses.

In the traditional operation, called radial keratotomy, the surgeon makes several pie-shaped incisions in the cornea. Ten years after surgery in the largest study so far, 30 percent of patients were still wearing corrective lenses for distance vision at least sometimes — while driving, for example. Even if the operation works perfectly, a number of patients will eventually need reading glasses, because the lens of the eye stiffens with age.

In addition, surgery can result in problems with glare that may persist for months, sometimes even longer, and visual acuity may fluctuate for years. More important, 3 percent of patients could not see as clearly with glasses as they could before the operation. More serious complications, such as infection or rupture of the cornea, are rare, but potentially blinding. And the surgery weakens the cornea, so a subsequent blow to the eye theoretically could have devastating results.

A newer method, called photorefractive keratectomy, uses a laser beam to shave an automatically preset sliver off the surface of the cornea. The laser reduces the chance of overcorrecting or undercorrecting, fluctuating vision and excessive glare. And it doesn't weaken the cornea.

But some 20 percent of laser patients still need glasses for distance vision at least occasionally — and again, a number of patients will eventually need reading glasses. Vision is sometimes hazy for months or longer after the procedure. And there's still a remote (1 to 2 percent) chance that vision with glasses will be worse than before.

Myth: Once you develop a cataract, it must be removed.

Truth: Most cataracts (clouding of the lens of the eye) are so minor that they cause little loss of vision, and many of them never will. Even when objective tests show a substantial drop in visual acuity, surgery may not be required. That's because subjective factors matter more: If the loss of acuity does not significantly affect your everyday activities, you don't need surgery, regardless of what any test shows.

Myth: Straining your eyes — for example, by working in dim or glaring light, reading fine print, wearing glasses with the wrong prescription or staring at a computer screen — can damage your eyesight.

Truth: Prolonged use of the eyes under those conditions can all cause eye strain, since it makes the eye muscles struggle to maintain a clear or unwavering focus. In addition, prolonged staring can dry the front of the eye somewhat since it reduces blinking, which helps lubricate the cornea. But fatigue and minor dryness, no matter how uncomfortable, cannot permanently harm your vision.

Of course, it still makes sense to minimize the discomfort. Here's how:

- **Brighten up.** Age tends to cloud the lens of the eye and shrink the pupil, sharply increasing the need for light. So if reading strains your eyes, consider installing brighter lights, or at least moving the reading lamp closer to the page.

- **Cut glare.** Position the reading lamp so light comes from over your shoulder, and keep background lights on when you use the lamp. If you read by the light of a single fluorescent bulb, which may flicker, consider switching to multiple fluorescent bulbs or to incandescent illumination. Don't read or do computer work near an unshaded window. And wear sunglasses if you're reading outside.

- **Stop and blink.** When you're working at the computer or reading, pause frequently — say, every 15 minutes or so — to close your eyes, or gaze away from the screen or page and blink repeatedly. Every hour or so, get up and take a longer break.

The following steps apply only to computer use:

- **Get the distance right.** Keep your eyes at the same distance from the screen as you would from a book. If that's uncomfortable, buy a pair of glasses with a prescription designed just for computer work, or use "progressive-addition" bifocals, which have gradually changing power from the top to the bottom of the lens.

- **Position the screen.** Keep the top of the screen at or slightly below eye level. (Gazing upward can strain muscles in the eye and forehead.)

- **Take a stand.** Put a stand for reading matter next to the screen, at the same distance from your eyes.

- **Keep your screen and glasses clean.** Dust and grime can blur the images.

If those steps don't reduce the strain from either reading or computer work, have an optometrist or ophthalmologist check whether you need to start wearing glasses or have your prescription changed.

Myth: The more you rely on your glasses, the faster your eyesight deteriorates.

Truth: That notion is based on the misconception that glasses do the work of the eyes, which then supposedly grow lazy and weak. But glasses merely compensate for a structural defect — an improperly shaped eyeball or excessively stiff lens — that prevents proper focusing despite the best efforts of the lens muscles. When you wear glasses, the muscles no longer need to be tense or relaxed (depending on whether you're farsighted or nearsighted) more often than usual. Instead, they simply work as hard as the muscles in a normal eye.

Myth: Eye exercises can help many people see better and perform better.

Truth: Eye exercises help some children whose eyes have major "binocularity" problems, such as significant crossing, misalignment or inability to converge. But claims that the exercises can help many children read better are unsubstantiated. Only a small number of children have clearly abnormal binocularity — and most of those children have no trouble reading. In fact, only one carefully controlled study in the past two decades has suggested that eye exercises might improve reading — and the apparent improvement was not statistically significant.

Some optometrists and "holistic" practitioners claim that eye exercises can not only help children read better, but also sharpen visual acuity, boost athletic performance and help correct numerous problems in both children and adults. Those additional claims are unsupported and implausible.

Myth: The more carrots you eat, the better your eyesight.

Truth: Carrots are rich in beta carotene, an orange pigment used by the body to manufacture vitamin A, which is essential for night vision. But a reasonably well-balanced diet supplies enough beta carotene for the eyes. Extra doses of that nutrient — or of vitamin A itself — do not improve vision.

However, beta carotene and other carotenoid nutrients in fruits and vegetables do fight oxidation, chemical changes that can damage cells in the body. One large observational study from researchers at Harvard Medical School found that women whose diet supplied the most antioxidant nutrients, particularly beta carotene, were 39 percent less likely to have cataracts than those who consumed the least. Further, a multi-center observational study found that people with the highest dietary intake of carotenoids, particularly from dark-green leafy vegetables, had 43 percent less risk of macular degeneration, a potentially blinding breakdown of the retina, than those with the lowest intake. Other research suggests that antioxidant supplements may reduce the risk of cataracts and slow the progression of macular degeneration.

Myth: The darker the sunglasses, the better the protection against harmful ultraviolet light.

Truth: Prolonged exposure to the ultraviolet rays in sunlight increases the risk of cataracts and possibly macular degeneration, in theory because the UV rays oxidize tissues in the eye. But the darkness or tint of the sunglasses has no effect on how much UV light they absorb. So you need to check the label — or, if possible, have the eyeglass shop test the lenses — to ensure they provide adequate protection.

At the very least, look for sunglasses labeled "Meets ANSI Z80.3 General Purpose UV Requirements." They block at least 95 percent of the high-energy UVB rays and 60 percent of the lower-energy UVA rays. If you spend lots of time in the sun, particularly if you have light-colored eyes, seek stronger protection. That's indicated by the label "Special Purpose UV Requirements," which means the glasses block at least 99 percent of the UVB rays.

Certain medications may make the eyes more susceptible to damage from light, including psoralens (for psoriasis), allopurinol (Zyloprim), phenothiazine compounds (Compazine, Thorazine), tretinoin (Retin-A) and the antibiotics doxycycline and tetracycline. If you take any of those drugs, choose sunglasses that either indicate 100 percent UV blockage or say "blocks UV up to 400 nm." The glasses should also wrap around or have side shields.

Dark sunglasses do have one potential advantage over paler pairs: They block more visible light, which creates glare and may possibly contribute to macular degeneration. However, nearly all sunglasses block enough visible light for safety and comfort under ordinary conditions. Only people exposed to brilliant sunlight — on ski slopes or tropical beaches, for example — may need extra-dark, wraparound glasses. ■

Source: Consumer Reports on Health, April 1997

Do you give your teeth the royal treatment?



Of course we're supposed to brush every day. But how many of us know why? Take this test to find out if you're truly treating your teeth well.

1. You can catch gum disease from

- a Kissing
- b Sharing a toothbrush
- c Both
- d Neither

2. Toothbrushing prevents

- a Detached gums
- b Root decay
- c Stained decay
- d None of the above

3. You're least likely to get cavities from eating

- a Raisins
- b Pure sugar
- c An English muffin

4. Who's especially susceptible to getting gum disease?

- a Pregnant women
- b Menopausal women
- c Teetotalers

5. If you can't brush your teeth after a meal, what's the best thing to do?

- a Eat a banana
- b Chew gum
- c Use a toothpick

6. The minimum time for a thorough toothbrushing is

- a One minute
- b Three minutes
- c Four minutes

7. Which will relieve toothache pain fastest?

- a Aspirin
- b Clove oil
- c Salt water

Answers

1. c By age 35, three in four Americans have at least the beginnings of gum disease, an irritation and infection below the gum line caused by certain bacteria in dental plaque. But occasionally bacteria transmitted via the saliva of someone with gum disease can bring on gum disease in someone who doesn't even have plaque. So if your partner isn't taking care of his or her teeth, take the problem seriously. Your own gums may be at risk.

2. d Toothbrushing removes plaque and prevents cavities on the gum line, but not below. When plaque isn't cleaned out, the gums fall away, allowing germs to get at your roots and even at the bone anchoring the teeth. Gum disease is the nation's leading cause of tooth loss. To prevent it, you have to floss regularly.

3. b Sugary foods, including candy and chocolate, are cleared from the mouth more quickly than starchy foods. Raisins are a special case because they stick between teeth so tenaciously.

4. a Nearly all pregnant women get some signs of gum disease because hormones associated with pregnancy increase swelling, bleeding and tiny infections in the gums. There's an old saying: Lose a tooth for every child. To keep it from coming true, brush after every meal, floss daily and see a dentist at the beginning of your pregnancy.

5. b Chewing gum stimulates copious secretions of saliva, and saliva's chemicals neutralize tooth-decaying acids. Pop in a piece when you finish a meal. Sugarless gum works much better than regular, and gum containing xylitol works best of all, reducing tooth decay by as much as 85 percent. (The sweetener keeps bacteria from mass-producing.) The gum is sold mostly in health food stores.

6. b To make this task seem less daunting, try dividing your mouth into ten sections. (Include a section each for the roof of your mouth, your tongue, and the inside of your right and left cheeks, all places where bacteria congregate.) Then count to 20 alligators as you brush each section. The average American spends about 30 seconds brushing.

7. b If your dentist can't see you right away for a painful cavity or infection, saturate a cotton ball in oil of clove (sold at many pharmacies) and put it on the aching tooth. The anesthetic oil should ease the pain in a couple of seconds.

Source: HEALTH magazine

Human ailment wrongly called "mad cow" disease

With increasing frequency, we're seeing inaccurate news reports of people who have died of "mad cow" disease or the disease linked to it, Creutzfeldt-Jakob. Here are some commonly asked questions and answers on this issue.

What is CJD?

Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) is a rare degenerative brain disease found in humans. It occurs at a rate of approximately one in a million worldwide. It is one of a number of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) that infect humans and animals. CJD typically occurs in individuals older than 60. It progresses relatively rapidly and is always fatal.

What is BSE?

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) is a TSE that has been found in cattle. It was first identified in Great Britain, but a limited number of cases have been found in other countries, as well. It has never been found in the United States. More than 168,000 cases have been reported in British cattle since it was first identified in 1986. Animals with the disease are not "mad," but do suffer from a degenerative brain disease. They become nervous, lose body weight, lose control of their legs and die. Like CJD, it is always fatal. It appears that the disease was spread by feeding rendered animal protein to cattle. One difficulty with identifying BSE, and any other TSEs, is that there is no live animal test for it. In order to confirm the presence of the disease, brain tissue needs to be examined.

Is there a link?

Concerns were raised when the United Kingdom's Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee indicated that BSE might account for 10 cases of a variant form of CJD that had been found in the country. Since that time an additional six cases have been confirmed. The new variant CJD (nv-CJD) is different from the conventional form in that it affected younger people (average age less than 30), takes longer to progress and shows somewhat different damage to the brain tissue when autopsies are conducted. The possible link between nv-CJD and BSE caused beef sales to plummet in Great Britain and in Europe.

Do we have CJD or BSE in the United States?

We do have the conventional form of CJD in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta indicates that we have had from 0.8 to 1.1 cases per million people per year from 1979 to the present. This would mean that approximately 200 deaths per year would be attributed to CJD. There is no indication that any of the deaths have been nv-CJD or that there is any link to any other TSE-related disease.

The Agriculture Department has in place an active surveillance program for BSE in the United States. Since 1990 it has examined approximately 2,800 animal brains that were likely BSE suspects. None have been found positive for BSE. Together with the industry, USDA has initiated programs to prevent the introduction of the disease to the U.S. cattle herd.

CJD is often associated with BSE. While any case of CJD is unfortunate, the urge to tie it to BSE can lead to sensational headlines and raise undue concerns. There is no evidence that BSE has occurred in the United States or that any case of nv-CJD, the disease of concern in Great Britain, has occurred here. The cattle industry, in cooperation with the Food and Drug Administration and USDA, is working to assure consumers that the U.S. food supply is safe and they have no reason for concern. ■

Author Ken Olson is animal health policy specialist for the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Healthy Bites

Heart-smart pork



Long touted as "the other white meat," lean cuts of pork are just now proving to be as healthful as poultry in countering cholesterol, say researchers at Duke University Medical Center in

Durham, NC. Over a

28-day period, 51 men and women with elevated cholesterol levels consumed two large servings of either skinless chicken breast or lean pork each day. Both meats helped to lower cholesterol levels by 7 or 8 percent.

We're almost there

Polio is targeted for global eradication by the year 2000. There are now 145 countries that are free of the disease.

Hand-to-hand combat – against germs



Children who wash their hands four or more times during the school day get sick less than other kids, according to a recent study right here in Michigan.

The hand-washers had 24 percent fewer sick days due to colds and flu, and 50 percent fewer days lost because of stomach illness. Numerous studies, in children and adults, have shown that hand-washing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of colds and other infectious diseases.

Five a day for better health, Michigan

Only about 22 percent of Americans eat the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day. States with the most five-a-dayers (at least 30 percent): Connecticut, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan and New Jersey. States with the fewest (less than 19 percent): Alaska, Delaware, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, North Dakota and Utah. On an upbeat note, the proportion of high school students who ate at least five servings a day doubled between 1993 and 1995, from 14 to 28 percent.

I have hypoglycemia and crave sweets, but my doctor told me to stay away from refined sugars.

A There are many things to do to improve your eating habits when you have hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) besides avoiding refined sweets. The dietary goal for people with hypoglycemia is to keep blood sugar relatively even throughout the day.

For most people, that means eating a meal or snack about every three hours. If you wait longer than that for food, you may start to feel the symptoms of low blood sugar (shakiness, sweatiness, confusion, irritability, headache).

It is helpful to include both a carbohydrate food and a protein-containing food at every meal and snack. This could be snacks such as peanut butter on crackers, half of a cheese sandwich or a bowl of cereal. If someone needs to limit fat because of a cholesterol or weight problem, then we'd suggest something like

Reach out and hit someone



In 1995 almost 10 million people acquired car phones in the United States – more new phones than newborn babies. In a new study, epidemiologists at the University of Toronto examined a total of 26,798 calls and learned that phoning from the car quadruples the risk of a crash. Ironically, there's one offsetting factor: you can call for help on the car phone after the crash. (The crashes under study did not involve physical injury to the driver or passengers, but only material damage.) Oddly, a hands-free phone offers no advantages. It's the distraction that causes the crash, not one-handed driving. Some countries (such as Brazil and Israel) have made it illegal to talk on a phone while driving. If you have a car phone, keep your calls short. Hang up if you're in a tight spot. When making a long or potentially upsetting call, pull over.

No more finger pricking?

In the future, implanted glucose monitors might spare some people with severe diabetes the pain and inconvenience of pricking their fingers up to a dozen times daily to measure their blood sugar levels. Implanted Biosystems, Inc., of Yellow Springs, Ohio, is developing one such monitor, which the company plans to test in humans within the next two years. The monitor, about the size of a pocket watch, will be implanted under the skin in the abdomen to detect blood sugar (glucose) levels and send signals to an external receiver that resembles a pager. That device will display or record the person's blood glucose levels on demand or according to a preprogrammed schedule – and sound a warning if blood sugar levels reach dangerously high or low levels. Potential downsides include the minor surgery to install the device and the cost, which will likely be in the \$3,000 range. According to the company, the monitors may be particularly valuable for people who have difficulty controlling their diabetes and find the multiple finger sticks especially troublesome.



Pregnant? Get your calcium

A serious pregnancy complication, preeclampsia (once known as toxemia), which is characterized by high blood pressure, kidney malfunction and swelling, could be prevented more than 60 percent of the time if pregnant women would simply get enough calcium. Study findings show pregnant women

who took 1,500 mg to 2,000 mg of calcium supplements a day were 70 percent less likely to develop high blood pressure and 62 percent less likely to develop preeclampsia. Preeclampsia and other blood pressure problems affect 15 percent of pregnancies.

Adults: Avoid the itchy, scratchy chickenpox

If you managed to avoid the chickenpox when you were a kid, you may want to get the new



varicella (chickenpox) vaccine now – especially if you live or work with children. Adult cases of chickenpox can be severe and lead to serious complications. Adults need two doses of the

vaccine, four to eight weeks apart. Women who did not have the disease as kids should get vaccinated at least three months before they become pregnant; pregnant women should get their shots after they deliver.

Office Calls

half of a lean meat sandwich or low-fat bean dip with baked corn chips. A piece of fruit plus an ounce of low-fat mozzarella cheese would work, as well.

In years past, the dietary recommendations for hypoglycemia were different; protein foods were heavily emphasized and carbohydrates were discouraged. At that time, people were told to eat lots of cheese or a spoon of peanut butter or a handful of nuts for a between-meal snack. You may hear this type of suggestion from someone now, but it is not the most current advice.

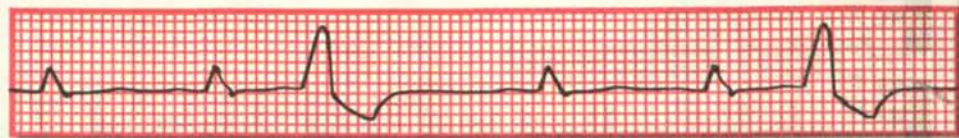
Another helpful hint for those suffering with hypoglycemia is to avoid alcohol; alcohol tends to keep blood sugar low, triggering a headache or sleepiness. You'll also want to limit caffeine, because when the effect of the caffeine wears off, you'll feel like your blood sugar is dropping, even if it isn't.

If you still don't feel well after trying some of these ideas, you may want to meet with a registered

dietitian individually for a meal plan. He or she would look at your calorie needs, activity level and current eating habits to help you fine tune your eating plan and feel better. ■



Medical Focus



Surgery for skin cancer achieves high cure rate

Mohs micrographic surgery is a highly specialized method for treating the two most common types of skin cancer — basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma. It is particularly effective for skin cancers on the face because it precisely locates the extension of a cancerous tumor on the face and spares as much healthy skin tissue as possible. Mohs surgery has also been shown to have a higher cure rate than any other treatment for recurrent skin cancers.

"The most important objective of Mohs surgery is to make sure you get the tumor out with as much accuracy as is available today in medicine," says Bruce Nelson, M.D., associate professor of dermatology at The University of Texas-Houston Medical School. "The second objective is to conserve tissue in areas where you don't have a lot to spare, such as eyelids."

The Mohs technique is more time-consuming and expensive than other forms of skin cancer treatment, so it is critical for a patient and physician to understand when it should be used. Mohs surgery is generally not used to treat malignant melanoma, the most deadly form of skin cancer, because the cancerous tissue that is removed must be frozen, and freezing makes melanoma tumors more difficult to interpret under the microscope. However, some Mohs surgeons are strong proponents of Mohs for the treatment of melanoma. Dr. Nelson uses the technique primarily for non-melanoma cancer such as basal cell and squamous cell carcinoma and for some other rare forms of skin cancer.

How the surgery is performed

Mohs micrographic surgery is named after Frederic E. Mohs, M.D., professor of surgery at the University of Wisconsin who pioneered the procedure in the 1930s. It differs from other forms of skin cancer treatment in that the surgeon is also the pathologist. Instead of sending a skin tissue sample off to a laboratory and waiting for results several days later, the surgeon examines the tissue under a microscope, typically 10 to 15 minutes after it has been removed, frozen and processed on slides. The patient's wound is kept open until the surgeon is satisfied that all the cancer has been removed. Then, the patient can be sutured or have reconstructive surgery to repair the wound.

Mohs surgery employs a unique method of cutting a tumor from the skin. The surgeon injects a local anesthetic around the skin cancer and cuts a disk-shaped section of skin around the tumor, beveling the edges of the disk at a 45-degree angle so that when the skin specimen is removed, the edges of it can be curved up and brought into the same plane as the inner section of the specimen. This allows horizontal slices of the specimen to contain both outer and inner layers of skin so that the surgeon can see the direction in which the tumor is growing. The disk of skin taken from the patient is then nicked with a scalpel and color-coded so that it can be oriented (or "mapped") to the patient's face; if after looking at a slice of skin under the microscope, the surgeon sees the cancer tumor extend-

ing outside the margin of the specimen, he or she knows exactly where to go back on the patient's face to take another specimen. In most cases, Dr. Nelson says, taking one skin section from the patient is adequate, although a surgeon may have to take a second or third specimen (or more) if the tumor is particularly deep or aggressive.

The key difference between Mohs surgery and other methods of removing skin lesions is that the skin layers are cut horizontally rather than vertically. The standard vertical cutting of specimens in a "breadleaf" fashion examines approximately 0.1 percent of the true surgical margin, according to Dr. Nelson. In other words, horizontal slices of the specimen offer a more effective way to see whether all the tumor is being removed.

The procedure, which is performed in an outpatient setting, typically takes about three to four hours. It is more time-consuming than other forms of skin-cancer surgery. It is more expensive than curettage and electrodesiccation (scraping off the tumor and burning the remaining skin surrounding it with an electric current) and less expensive than plastic surgery in which the cost of the operating room alone may be \$1,000 to \$1,400.

With Mohs surgery, removal of the first skin section layer from the face can cost about \$700; removal of a second layer (if needed) costs about \$350, and there's an additional charge if reconstructive surgery is needed. By contrast, a typical cost for scraping and burning that same lesion may cost \$200 to \$300. Mohs surgery can be considered cost effective, however, because it is effective in preventing recurrent tumors, says Dr. Nelson.

"Mohs surgery is one method whereby we try to get all the tumor out the first time on the first visit," he says, "so that we don't have to deal with tumors that have been treated and keep coming back over and over again. Even with our procedure, we have a recurrence rate of 2 to 5 percent, and this is the best procedure known."

Cure rates

There have been no standardized and randomized clinical trials comparing Mohs micrographic surgery vs. non-Mohs treatment such as scraping and burning of the lesion. However, in 1989 a retrospective review of all studies involving Mohs surgery since 1950 showed some remarkable statistics. The five-year cure rate for primary (first-time) basal cell carcinomas treated with Mohs micrographic surgery was 99 percent. This was based on 7,670 tumors. This compared to a 90 to 93 percent five-year cure rate obtained by standard treatments. However, with recurrent basal cell carcinomas (skin cancers that have returned after treatment), the Mohs technique showed a 94 percent cure rate compared to a cure rate of only 60 to 84 percent for the other standard treatments.

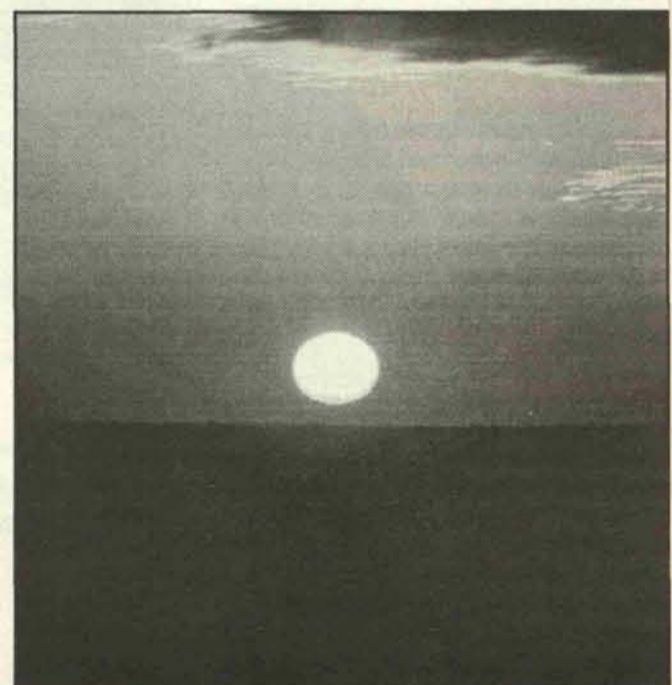
An additional review published in 1992 compared cure rates for squamous cell carcinomas treated by Mohs surgery vs. cure rates by standard treatments (see chart). With low-risk basal cell carcinomas and squamous cell carcinomas it appears there is very little difference between cure rates for Mohs and non-Mohs treatment. Therefore, Mohs is not indicated for all non-melanoma skin cancers. "There are a lot of tumors that are amenable to scraping and burning," says Dr. Nelson. "It depends on the patient and the type of tumor."

However, for high-risk tumors, Mohs micrographic surgery is a superior method of treatment. High-risk tumors may include:

- Tumors located on the head and neck
- "Large" tumors, greater than 2 cm
- Aggressive tumors such as morpheiform basal cell carcinoma with scar-like features
- Recurrent tumors that return after any treatment
- Tumors arising in areas of previous radiation
- Incompletely excised (cut out) tumors
- Tumors with clinically ill-defined borders
- Tumors with perineural (nerve) invasion
- Tumors that occur in patients who have had organ transplants.

Low-risk tumors such as shallow basal cell carcinomas can be removed by your primary care physician or dermatologist. For information on where to find a surgeon who performs Mohs micrographic surgery in your area, contact your primary care physician or the American College of Mohs Micrographic Surgery and Cutaneous Oncology at (847) 330-9830. ■

Source: *Lifetime Health Letter*, The University of Texas



Skin cancer, often caused by exposure to the sun, has reached almost epidemic proportions and it's the most common form of cancer in the United States with about one million new cases diagnosed each year. But a new medical procedure may help treat the two most common types of skin cancer.

Skin cancer prevention

It's always better to prevent skin cancer than to treat it. When going out into the sun, always wear a wide-brimmed hat and a sun screen with an SPF of at least 15.

Skin cancer has reached almost epidemic proportions. It is the most common form of cancer in the United States with about one million new cases diagnosed each year. Fortunately, most skin cancers can be cured if detected early.

May is Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month. Some 3,000 volunteer dermatologists are offering free screenings for early skin cancers, many at local hospitals. To find a free screening near you, check your local hospital or dermatological society.



Working outdoors in the full sun calls for added sun protection.

Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) recurrence rates Mohs vs. non-Mohs surgery

High-risk lesions	Mohs	Non-Mohs
Primary SCC of the skin and lip	3.1%	10.9%
Primary SCC of the ear	5.3%	18.7%
Locally recurrent SCC of the skin (not site-specific)	10%	23.3%
SCC with perineural (nerve) involvement	0%	47%
SCCs greater than 2 cm in size	25.2%	41.7%
Poorly differentiated SCC	32.6%	53.6%

Source: Rowe DE, Carroll RJ, Day CL. Prognostic factors for local recurrence, metastasis and survival rates in squamous cell carcinoma of the skin, ear and lip. *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* 26:976, 1992.



Farm Finance

It is common knowledge that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Any business person would agree, applying that axiom to his bottom line and pointing out that flattening the peaks and valleys provides a much shorter route to profitability. Those whose business is particularly seasonal may attest to the fact that the inevitable peaks and valleys can make for a wild ride.

Some of those business owners, though, have learned how to break the seasonal bronco through the use of operating loans. Businesses as wide-ranging as greenhouse manufacturers, equipment dealers, seed companies and agricultural producers frequently rely on the stability an operating loan can provide.

Typically, financial institutions — as well as some suppliers — offer two types of loans for operating purposes: the budget note and the revolving line of credit, according to Rodger Ellis, account executive for Farm Credit Services of East Central Michigan in Lapeer. A budget note — the kind of operating loan most commonly offered by some suppliers — allows growers to borrow a specific amount of money, which is to be repaid in full on a certain date, with interest. If the grower repays any amount of money before that date, it cannot be withdrawn again for harvest or other costs. Once paid, in other words, the money cannot be retrieved.

Another type of operating loan — one that has evolved with customers' needs — said Ellis, is the revolving line of credit. It is a more "friendly" loan for borrowers and gives them more control over their cash flow by setting a certain credit limit and allowing them to pay against their debt as they are able. The most significant difference between the budget note and the revolving line lies in the fact that borrowers are able to withdraw money repeatedly, up to their limit, as they repay against the revolving line of credit. This flexibility takes advantage of the "peaks and valleys effect" and decreases the amount of interest that must be paid on the loan. These features make it a valuable management tool for growers — one that lets them control their operation's cash flow and financial position.

Both the budget note and the revolving line of credit are typically written for a term of 12 months or the selling cycle of the product for which the loan is initially written. However, some revolving lines can be written for a term of up to three years, which is convenient for borrowers, Duane Hoxie, senior loan officer in Farm Credit's Schoolcraft office, added, because all that usually is required from them every year, during the term of the loan, is updated financial information.

"The revolving line of credit," said Hoxie, "is perfect for cash grain operators who plant their crops

Operating loans help farmers make it through the peaks and valleys

in the spring and don't see dime one until fall. This gives them some cash flow during the growing season with which to pay for short-term expenses." Hoxie defined short-term expenses as things such as feed, seed, fertilizer, repairs and other living expenses that have a useful life of less than one year. Tom Judd, branch manager at Farm Credit's Hemlock branch, has this rule of thumb: An operating loan can be used to pay for anything that can readily be listed as an expense on a farmer's Schedule F tax form (itemized income and expenses).

Hoxie added that livestock farmers also are excellent candidates for the revolving line of credit, although they typically use the line on a more frequent basis as they buy and sell their livestock.

"Virtually anyone who plants crops for feed or sale can benefit by taking out an operating loan," said Ellis. He urges his customers to secure their operating loans as early as December in order to take advantage of the discounts — typically ranging from 5 percent to as much as 12 percent — available early in the year from seed, feed, fertilizer and other suppliers. Ellis explained that farmers usually can offset their operating loan interest payments significantly through these early discounts.

The ability to take early advantage of discounts is only one of the advantages of securing a revolving line of credit for operating, according to Judd. Tractors break down, fences need mending, children represent all types of unexpected expenses. An operating loan gives farmers the safety net they need to deal with the unexpected.

For more long-term or larger expenses, Hoxie explained that a capital line of credit may be more useful than a typical operating loan. These types of loans usually are written for terms of up to five years and may be used for longer-term equipment purchases. Hoxie mentioned that capital lines can be used by farmers who make equipment purchases at auctions. The borrower normally is billed for 20 percent of the outstanding balance of the loan every year, plus interest, until it is paid in full.

If a straight line is the shortest route between two points, drawing that line yourself may be the most satisfying way to get to your destination. For this reason, some financial institutions have instituted draft plans to be used in tandem with their revolving credit lines.

Using a draft plan, a borrower can write checks — issued by his lender — against his revolving or budget line of credit. In effect, the draft plan is a pre-approved line of credit the borrower can access anytime, anywhere. It allows the borrower to pay for his purchases immediately and saves him the time he would have spent having his lending institution issue the check to the recipient. The amount of the loan is pre-determined and the borrower has control from that point on.

"About 85 to 90 percent of our revolving line customers take advantage of our draft plan," said Hoxie. "These checks are as good as cash and are the most convenient way for farmers to take control of where their money is spent."

Ellis added that the most significant advantage of this direct draft draw plan is the way it allows borrowers to save their money. "Because a borrower withdraws only the amount needed for a specific purchase at a specific time," Ellis said, "interest accrues only on the funds spent ... not on the unused portion of the credit line." Keeping track of the funds spent is usually very easy, since many institutions that offer this service include carbon draft copies and issue monthly account updates for customers.

Although the convenience and utility of operating loans is obvious, Judd uses this analogy to explain how growers should ideally use them: "If you're going on vacation and you know you won't have enough cash, you'd be sure to bring credit cards with you for emergencies. When you're talking about operating loans, it works this way: If you're not sure you're not going to have enough cash to carry you through the year, you'll want to take out an operating loan for emergencies." Judd added that he frequently suggests to customers

who repeatedly use operating loans that they should try to build up their cash reserves as they make use of the loans.

"I believe operating loans are of the biggest use to young farmers and to farmers who are undertaking large expansion projects," said Judd. He encourages potential borrowers — no matter what type of loan they're applying for — to put together a business plan, complete with projections before applying. ("I tell them to assume average weather when they make their projections," he mentioned.) He then inspects those plans and looks at the grower's history, a balance sheet, financial statement, three years of tax returns and his ability to repay before a loan is written.

Hoxie added that some lenders now offer quick financing options, such as Farm Credit's "On the Spot" financing. An "On the Spot" loan requires answers to only about a dozen questions from applicants, which include limited financial and earnings information. The responses to these requests for quick financing are known within minutes. If a lender offers this type of "quick-step" financing, it is typically offered on loans under a certain dollar amount; \$50,000 to \$100,000 is common.

The bottom line to the operating loan question, then, is a straight one: it smoothes the transition from season to season and allows growers greater control of their cash flow. Whether an operating or capital loan is the right thing for a particular grower's operation is a question best answered after looking at that operation's ability to handle risk, its working capital position and its goals for the future. ■



Farm Credit Services
At the heart of a growing America.
1-800-444-FARM

Farmworker legal services announces new name and affiliation of migrant law project

Farmworker Legal Services (FLS), formerly part of Michigan Migrant Legal Assistance Project Inc. (MMLAP), announced in early May its new name and affiliation with Legal Service of Southeastern Michigan, Inc., located in Ann Arbor.

Services provided by FLS

FLS will provide statewide individual representation to eligible farmworkers in civil legal matters including: employment and wage claims, housing problems, health and safety conditions, public benefits, consumer complaints, educational issues and civil rights. FLS will continue to provide brief advice and referrals in other areas such as criminal matters, workers' compensation and immigration presentations.

According to sources with FLS, agencies and growers should continue to refer farmworkers with legal problems to one of FLS' offices to determine their eligibility for services or possible referral. Staff are also available to conduct community legal education presentations.

"This is another aid to farmers to possibly assist them in securing legal representation for their workers," explains MFB Legislative Counsel Howard Kelly. "Farmers now need to know that there are two specific legal firms supporting farmworker rights and labor issues in the state instead of the one."

Office locations and staffing

The Berrien Springs office is located at 4445 East Shawnee Rd., P.O. Box 208, Berrien Springs, MI 49103-0208, Tel (616) 471-2819, fax (616) 471-7664. Bilingual full-time staff include: Angela Walker, paralegal; Joseph Hughes, attorney; Tom Thornburg, managing attorney; and Victor Rodriguez, intern.

A new Kent County office will be opening by May 1997, with bilingual full-time staff including: Janice Morgan, managing attorney; Jose Sandoval, law graduate; and support staff (to be hired). The new address is: 668 Three Mile Road, Walker, MI 49544, (616) 785-8840. Both offices are currently seeking bilingual legal interns for the migrant season.

Services provided by MMLAP

According to Kelly, in 1995-96 MMLAP conducted a long-term planning process to decide how best to serve the legal needs of farmworkers in the future. It determined that two separate legal services organizations could serve the full range of farmworkers' legal needs more effectively than a single organization. The transfer of most direct client service functions to FLS is a result of that process. MMLAP will continue to provide statewide legal support, training and coordination, and direct services to farmworkers who are not eligible for assistance from FLS. ■

USDA: Don't let up on foreign market development

The Agriculture Department's top marketing official said for American agriculture to remain the nation's biggest export outlet, the industry must continue to focus on developing more foreign markets with an emphasis on growth.

"If we want to grow, we have to be looking overseas," said August Schumacher Jr., administrator of the department's Foreign Agricultural Service, who noted that the domestic market for farm goods is relatively flat.

Last year, U.S. agricultural exports reached a record \$59.8 billion — the 37th year in a row agriculture marked a trade surplus. American agriculture was just one of four U.S. industries last year to have

a trade surplus. The United States is the second largest exporter of agricultural goods behind the European Union, which is made up of 15 different European nations. Declining wheat prices, not declining demand, will force the trade surplus down to about \$56.5 billion this year, Schumacher said.

Schumacher listed Japan and other Pacific Rim nations among the best areas for market share growth for U.S. farm goods. He also noted that Canada and South America have potential for market growth. Rising incomes and increasing demand in the Middle East and North Africa will make those areas future strong markets for American goods, he said. ■

Bugs captured on CD-ROM

Farmers will soon have computer technology at their fingertips in the battle against insects. Two University of Illinois professors are in the process of publishing a computer CD-ROM program that will help crop growers identify insects. The software also will help growers determine whether the bugs are beneficial and, if not, whether they can be controlled using biological methods.

The two professors, Rob Wiedenmann and Joe Maddox, say they have been working on the project

for about a year. The project was originally based on the structure of a summer short course the two men taught on biological control. But the two entomologists quickly saw other audiences for the material.

Information about biological control — fighting pests with natural tools, such as introducing a predator insect species — has not been easily accessible to farmers, gardeners and crop consultants. A CD-ROM allows users to interact with the graphics, rather than just study a picture in an insect book. ■

Consumers Energy sponsors a fragrant fund-raiser for FFA Foundation

Spruce up your yard with "Grow Wild with FFA"

One 14-ounce bag of impatiens or wild-flower mulch can make your spring landscaping a breeze. Amturf, a product manufactured by Ampro Industries in Bradley, Mich., is being sold through Consumers Energy as a fund-raiser supporting the Michigan FFA Foundation.

Each bag contains mulch, seeds and fertilizer. Ampro uses approximately 14 million pounds of recycled, shredded newspaper each year to create the mulch used in Amturf.

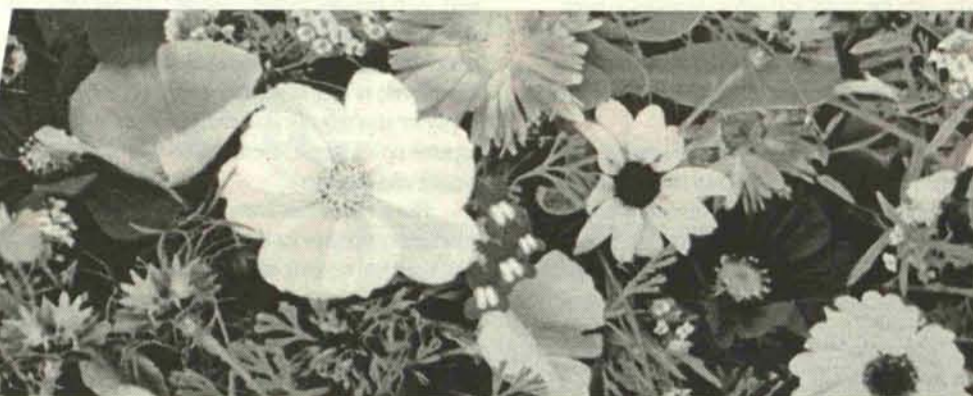
One 14-ounce bag of Amturf covers a 15-square-foot area. Follow the three-step planting instructions included in the bag, and look for growth in 15 days. Each bag costs \$5.99, plus \$2.95 for shipping and handling.

Since the fund-raiser is in its first year, the Grow Wild with FFA program was only offered to 400,000 Consumers Energy customers. "If this year goes well, we plan to offer it to more of our customers in the future," said Consumers Energy Agricultural Services Director James Schrandt.

All proceeds will go to the Michigan FFA Foundation where the funds will help create an endowment intended to support Michigan FFA programs.

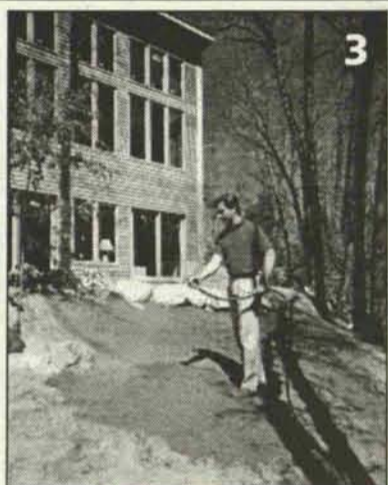
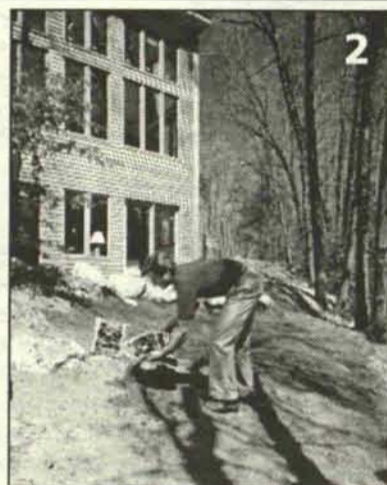
"The money will go toward annual events—those events dedicated to the FFA's career development contests," said Julie Chamberlain, FFA Foundation executive director. The FFA helps youth develop technical skills in agriculture and natural resources while expanding upon their leadership abilities.

To order, call toll-free: 1-888-826-8688. The offer ends May 31, 1997.



Instructions:

1. Loosen soil for planting
2. Apply flowers right from the bag
3. Water immediately, then twice daily. New growth will appear in 5-15 days



Michigan floriculture sales down

Michigan placed fourth nationally in value of wholesale of floriculture products in 1996, according to the Federal/State Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service. California, Florida and Texas reported larger sales than Michigan. Reports from Michigan's 536 commercial growers indicated an estimated wholesale value of \$182 million for all surveyed floriculture crops, down 1 percent from last year. This estimate includes summarized sales data as reported by growers with \$100,000 or more in sales plus a calculated wholesale value of sales for operations with sales from \$10,000 to \$99,999. Crop category breakdowns for Michigan operations with over \$100,000 in sales and the percent change from 1995 were as follows:

- First, bedding/garden plants with \$129 million in sales, down 2 percent;
- Second, flowering potted plants with \$27.4 mil-

lion in sales up, 5 percent;

- Third, cut flowers with \$10.4 million in sales, up 2 percent; and
- Fourth, foliage for indoor or patio use with \$3.7 million in sales, down 1 percent.

Michigan leads the nation in value of sale for four floriculture crops. They are:

- Potted Geraniums (seed) with 17.7 million pots sold, valued at \$13.8 million.
- Bedding Impatiens with 2.4 million flats sold, valued at \$14.5 million.
- Potted Easter Lilies with 1.5 million pots sold, valued at \$5.2 million.
- Geranium Hanging Baskets with 451,000 baskets sold, valued at \$2.8 million.

Other notable Michigan crops that ranked second in value of sales nationally were:

- Other Potted Flowering and Foliar Type Bedding Plants with 13.9 million pots sold, valued at

\$17.7 million.

- Bedding Petunias with 1.4 million flats sold, valued at \$8.6 million.
- Cut Gladioli with 36.2 million spikes sold, valued at \$5.5 million.
- New Guinea Impatiens Hanging Baskets with 435,000 baskets sold, valued at \$2.7 million.
- Bedding New Guinea Impatiens with 98,000 flats sold, valued at \$978,000.
- Cut Sweetheart Roses with 1.5 million blooms sold, valued at \$833,000.
- Petunias Hanging Baskets with 108,000 baskets sold, valued at \$623,000.

Total greenhouse cover for all operations in the state rose 2 percent to 32.9 million square feet. This includes both rigid and film plastic greenhouses as well as glass greenhouses. Only the states of California and Florida have more total greenhouse cover than Michigan.

Nationally, the value of floriculture crops continued upward in 1996. The total value of all crops at wholesale for all growers over \$10,000 of sales is estimated at \$3.42 billion for 1996 compared with \$3.33 billion in 1995. Area in production for the 36 states totaled 843 million square feet of covered area and 31,100 acres of open ground in 1996. The largest valued products were bedding and garden plants which increased 4 percent in 1996. Michigan ranks second nationally in this category. At \$1.41 billion, this category contributed 45 percent of the total wholesale value of production for operations over \$100,000 in size.

A commercial grower is defined as someone who has \$410,000 or more in gross sales. Growers with gross sales of \$100,000 or more provided data for cut flowers, potted flowering plants, bedding plants and cut cultivated greens.

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Michigan Farm Bureau joins estate tax reform campaign to "Kill the Death Tax"

Michigan Farm Bureau has joined the American Farm Bureau Federation in a nationwide campaign to "Kill the Death Tax," a grass roots effort to reform the estate tax. The two-month campaign will urge the Michigan congressional delegation to reform the estate tax, by either repealing it or raising the per-person exemption from \$600,000 to \$2 million.

In making the announcement, Michigan Farm Bureau President Jack Laurie said the estate tax is nothing more than a penalty for farmers and other family-owned small businesses who have invested in their operations.

"The estate tax is particularly insulting to farm families, because often the entire family is involved in the success and growth of an operation," Laurie said. "Estate taxes add an unneeded financial burden to the remaining family members attempting to keep the operation in business and intact."

Laurie said surviving members of a farm partnership often must sell all or a portion of the operation just to settle the estate tax liability. "Estate planning doesn't work in all situations, especially in unexpected and accidental deaths," he said.

The incidence of farm liquidation, due to estate taxes, could actually accelerate in the near future, cautions Laurie, noting that nearly 47 percent of all farm operators nationwide are 55 years or older and control about \$360 billion in assets, according to the 1992 Census of Agriculture.

"From an economic perspective, the correct tax rate for estate transfers should be zero," Laurie said. "The income that was invested back into those operations was taxed when it was originally earned. The estate tax actually encourages immediate consumption rather than saving and investing in the future."

Estates with a gross value over \$600,000 must file a return within nine months of death, unless an extension is requested, according to Ken Nye, director of the Michigan Farm Bureau's Commodity and Environmental Division. "The tax rate varies from 37 percent after the \$600,000 exemption to as high as 55 percent for estates over \$3 million."

Based on Internal Revenue Service figures, Nye said Michigan taxpayers shelled out roughly \$602 million in estate taxes to the national total of \$17.2 billion in 1995.

Nye estimates that 20 to 25 percent of the 46,000 Michigan farms identified by the 1992 Census of Agriculture exceeded the \$600,000 exemption threshold, which would mean that at some point in time, those operations could be subject to estate taxes.

"On average, estates ranging from \$600,000 to \$1 million paid out \$47,000 in estate taxes in 1995," Nye said. "Estates over \$1 million owed an average of \$375,000 in estate taxes."

Chances of an outright estate tax repeal may be slim, according to Michigan Farm Bureau Public Affairs Director Al Almy. He says the recent budget compromise leaves little hope for elimination, but it does create an opportunity for other reform measures, including raising the exemption. Although not specified, the budget agreement reached last week calls for a total of \$135 billion in tax cuts from five different taxes, including the estate tax.

"Our organization still remains committed to eventual repeal of the estate tax," Almy said. "At a minimum, we believe the per-person exemption should be raised from \$600,000 to \$2 million in assets and indexed for inflation. We are still a long way from having any meaningful estate tax reform. It is important for all citizens, not just farmers, to speak out on this issue and demand estate tax reform."

To participate in Farm Bureau's "Kill the Death Tax" campaign, simply write a letter to your member of Congress and send it to: Michigan Farm Bureau, Attn: Jack Laurie, P.O. Box 30960, Lansing MI 48909-8460.

All of the letters received will be hand-delivered to Michigan's congressional delegation in mid-July following a news conference to be held in Washington, D.C. ■

MDA provides advice for livestock management and tuberculosis in northeast Michigan

State Veterinarian Mike Chaddock and his staff provided the *Michigan Farm News* readers with management and husbandry suggestions to help reduce the risk of cattle and deer contact for tuberculosis control.

The greatest risk would appear to be contamination of feedstuffs or pasture by infected deer rather than direct deer-livestock contact. The emphasis, however, should be to reduce all forms of direct or indirect livestock-deer interaction to a minimum.

According to Chaddock and his staff, the following is a summary of possible actions that producers could take to reduce the risk of introduction of *M. bovis* tuberculosis into domestic livestock herds from the endemically infected white-tailed deer population.

- Reduce livestock-deer contact
- Feed livestock only by or in barns, outbuildings, or other high human traffic areas.
- Keep livestock out of high-risk/deer traffic areas either voluntarily or mandatorily. This might be seasonal or year-round as the circumstances dictate.
- "Deer proof" fencing of livestock yards and enclosures at a minimum, and possibly entire fence lines or fields in high risk or high deer traffic areas.
- Confine livestock to barns and/or fenced enclosures during times/seasons when livestock-deer interaction is most likely.

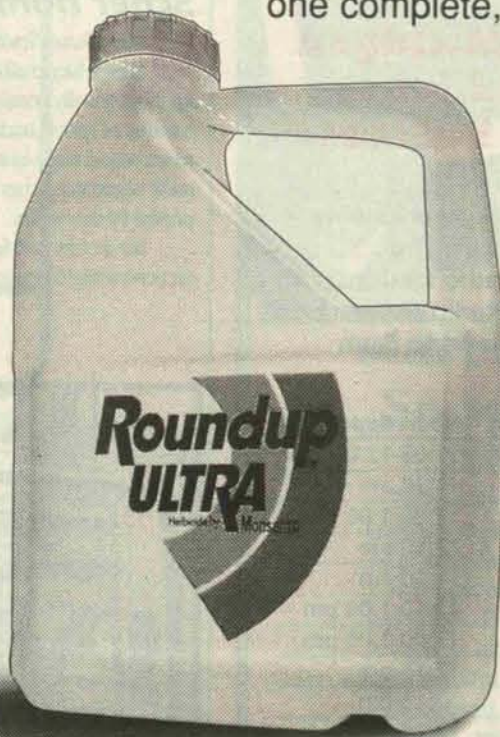


- Other possible deterrents or deer repellents such as chemical or ultrasonic repellents at strategic or widespread points.
- Dogs kept with livestock or outside livestock areas but confined by an invisible fence.
- Eliminate any baiting or other feeding of deer on agricultural, more specifically, livestock utilized land.
- Provide feed for deer, but well away from livestock-utilized lands.
- Issue open permits for producers to hunt deer on their property.
- Reduce deer-livestock feed contact
- Fence and securely cover stored livestock feeds.
- Fence livestock feeders that are not by barns, etc., leaving a limited entry way for cattle. ■

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FB: 'Shotgun' approach to clean air will backfire

The "shotgun" approach to proposed new clean air standards will not result in significant change, but instead will only hurt American agriculture, Farm Bureau told a Senate panel recently.

California Farm Bureau President Bob Vice, testifying before a Senate Environment and Public Works clean air subcommittee, said the agricultural community supports efforts to improve air quality. The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposal to revise the National Ambient Air Quality Standard for particulate matter, however, raises many concerns because it would impose severe restrictions on farming and ranching practices, Vice said.

"Make no mistake: we are all for clean air," Vice told the panel. "This debate today is about how to continue to achieve those goals."

Vice, a Fallbrook, Calif., citrus and avocado grower, said he is concerned that EPA's studies blame agriculture and forestry for a disproportionate share, 34.3 percent, of "fine particulate matter" (PM) emissions. Experts have questioned the accuracy of this large estimate, he told the panel, noting that EPA data was based on erroneous factors.

Vice, an American Farm Bureau Federation



board member, said the emissions inventory used by EPA in a central and southern California air district "has proven that it has many flaws" regarding agricultural practices.

"Inaccurate estimates of the number of times a farmer drives his tractor over a field is one major example: eight times for an alfalfa crop, 13 for rice and two for rangeland," Vice said. "But probably the

most blatant example, which would have cost the agricultural industry thousands of dollars, was the initial emission inventory for combustion engines used to operate irrigation pumps."

He said the original inventory estimated emissions of nitrogen oxide, a precursor of particulate matter, at 626 tons per day from all the pumps in the San Joaquin Valley. This would have exceeded all mobile sources including cars and trucks, which together emit 353 tons per day. Prompted by agricultural inquiries, a new study was commissioned based on actual interviews with 360 farmers, Vice said. The new study determined the nitrogen oxide emission rate for the pumps is only 32 tons per day. The Farm Bureau leader said farmers and ranchers should get credit for the many conservation practices they've undertaken that have improved air quality. Vice cautioned the panel against "wasting money on control measures that have little or no effect on cleaning up the air of this nation," but impose costly regulations on agriculture.

"The concerns of America's farmers and ranchers must be addressed by the EPA in order to ensure a continued safe, abundant, healthy and affordable U.S. food supply," Vice said.

U.S. Naval Academy agrees dairy farming is tough

At the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., the nation's best and brightest learn many skills, from basic leadership to the latest principles of naval combat. However, they can't seem to keep their dairy operation afloat.

According to Naval Academy spokesman Capt. Tom Jurkowsky, "We have asked Congress to let us do away with the dairy because, frankly, we can buy milk cheaper than we can produce it and serve it to midshipmen."

The Academy got into the dairy business in 1911, after an outbreak of typhoid fever was traced to milk from a commercial supplier. Congress wanted to make sure the brigade of midshipmen had a safe milk supply, so it provided them with their own dairy.

Today a herd of 321 Holsteins provide 4,000 midshipmen with their daily rations of milk, but the dairy continually operates at a loss. Capt. Jurkowsky said, "This is not a reflection on our management, because we have the best. It

simply costs too much to feed cows and produce milk. Last year it cost us 50 cents a gallon more to produce milk than we could buy it from a large distributor."

Dairy farmers can relate. For years they have tried to balance increasing production costs with stagnant consumer milk prices. No longer able to squeeze a living out of dairying, many dairy farmers have been forced to quit production.

Capt. Jurkowsky said, "My hat is off to the men and women who make a living in the dairy business. We know first-hand how tough it is and can appreciate what is involved in modern dairy production."

Milk builds strong minds and bodies, but even the best minds at the U.S. Naval Academy cannot overcome basic economic realities. When production costs continually exceed the break-even point, something must be done. Simply put, if you are to have dairies, farmers must receive more for their product.

Senators consider changes to crop insurance

Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Dick Lugar said in a news release that the committee will discuss legislation to change the Agriculture Department's Risk Management Agency's administration of crop insurance programs.

"Crop insurance and new revenue insurance programs are vital risk management tools for farmers," Lugar said. "Long term, it is fair to ask whether it is necessary to provide large subsidies for revenue insurance permanently. Market-based commercial reinsurance could be developed based on exchange traded futures and options contracts."

The committee heard testimony from witnesses from USDA, the General Accounting Office (GAO), the crop insurance industry and the commodity trading industry. Senators and witnesses said the following issues should be addressed:

- Whether some federal reimbursements for administrative expenses are issued for illegitimate expenses. The GAO cited lobbying expenses, a baseball stadium sky box and other questionable expenses. Industry witnesses said about 1 percent of all reimbursements are illegitimate.

- Whether the USDA Risk Management Agency's approval process takes enough consideration of actuarial information. Late last year, Chairman Lugar questioned whether a new Crop Revenue Coverage proposal was being approved without enough information, which might put the federal government at risk to lose money in a subsidy of insurance companies and agents.

- Whether there is enough evidence that a federal subsidy to the insurance industry is necessary. It was suggested that commodity market hedging might be used to offset the insurance policy risk.
- USDA's inadequate financial data on federal spending on the crop insurance program.

Lugar said, "The crop insurance program may face a budget crisis later this year. In order for the program to be in place for the 1998 crops, approximately \$200 million in discretionary funding must be provided in this year's agriculture appropriations bill to fund sales commissions of crop insurance agents. At the moment, it is unlikely that additional funding of this magnitude can be provided without at least some changes in the crop insurance program."

Scher nominated for ag ambassador

United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky crushed the rumor mill in mid-April by formally nominating Peter Scher to the position of special trade ambassador for agriculture, which would make him the senior U.S. agriculture trade negotiator. Scher's nomination must be approved by the Senate.

Barshefsky said Scher will begin by focusing on persuading China to drop trade barriers to U.S.

farm goods — a priority she called "key." Scher also will work on agriculture-related trade issues in other key U.S. markets and negotiate vigilantly in upcoming NAFTA expansion and World Trade Organization meetings, Barshefsky said.

"He will be a valuable leader in the administration's efforts to promote agricultural trade around the world and fight unfair trade restrictions," said Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman.



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Station	City	Frequency	Morning Report	Noon Report
WABJ	Adrian	1490	5:45 am	11:05-12:00 pm
WATZ	Alpena	1450	5:30 am	11:30 am
WTKA	Ann Arbor	1050	6:05 am	12:00-1:00 pm
WLEW	Bad Axe	1340	6:30 am	12:50 pm
WKJF	Cadillac	1370	5:45 am	11:10 am
WKYO	Caro	1360	6:15 am	12:10-1:00 pm
WTVB	Coldwater	1590	5:45 am	12:00-1:00 pm
WDOW	Dowagiac	1440	6:05 am	12:15 pm
WGHN AM	Grand Haven	1370	5:45 am	12:15 pm
WGHN FM	Grand Haven	92.1	5:45 am	12:15 pm
WPLB	Greenville	1380	6:15 am	11:50 am
WBCH	Hastings	1220	6:15 am	12:30 pm
WCSR	Hillsdale	1340	6:45 am	12:45 pm
WHTC	Holland	1450		12:15 pm
WION	Ionia	1430	6:45 am	12:30-1:00 pm
WKZO	Kalamazoo	590	5:00-6:00 am	12:00-1:00 pm
WPLB FM	Lakeview	106.3	6:15 am	12:15 pm
WOAP	Owosso	1080	7:15 am	12:40 pm
WHAK	Rogers City	960		12:15 pm
WMLM	St. Louis	1520	6:05 am	12:20 pm
WSGW	Saginaw	790	5:55 am	11:30-12:30 pm
WMIC	Sandusky	660	6:15 am	12:45 pm
WKJC FM	Tawas City	104.7		12:40 pm
WLKM	Three Rivers	1510	5:45 am	12:15 pm
WTCM	Traverse City	580	5:45 am	11:10 am

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Michigan's "Best of Beef" recipe originated in Dietlin's kitchen

Patti Dietlin of Kewadin, impressed the judges with her original Mediterranean beef sandwich recipe at the Michigan Beef Cook-Off. Her winning entry, "Patti's Pesto Beef Hoagies," features thinly sliced roast beef served in a hollowed-out round bread loaf that's been brushed with a pesto-mayonnaise mixture and topped with roasted red peppers, mixed salad greens and feta cheese. This easy meal idea is especially colorful when it's sliced into serving wedges.

Judges for the event included: Nancy Johnson, Food Science and Human Nutrition instructor at Michigan State University; Shannon Kopke, co-host of cable cooking show "At Home Cooking with Stella Cash;" and Dennis Rudat with the *Michigan Farm News*. The entries were evaluated for taste, ease of preparation, overall appeal and appearance.

Prior to moving to Michigan, Patti competed in the Illinois Beef Cook-Off. However, this is the first time she has been awarded the grand prize. She received \$500 and will advance to the National Beef Cook-Off contest. If her recipe is selected as one of the top 15 in the nation, Patti will be invited to participate in the National Beef Cook-off event in Tampa, Fla., Sept. 18-20. Participants in the national contest compete for more than \$45,000 in cash prizes, including the \$25,000 Grand Prize.

The second prize winner at the Michigan Beef Cook-Off was awarded to Richard Rizzio, Traverse City, for his "Beef with Currant-Glazed Carrots and Onions." Third prize went to Wendy

Biegas, Livonia, for her "Italiano Burgers" and honorable mention went to Ron Cubberly, Brooklyn, for his "Pepper Loin and Cheese Pasta" and Linda Ackerman, Portage, for her "Mexicali Meatballs" entry.

The Michigan Beef Cook-Off is sponsored by the Michigan Beef Industry Commission, which works on behalf of Michigan's beef producers to promote beef and beef products through research, education and promotion programs. To receive the top five beef recipes, send a self-addressed, stamped business-size envelope to: Michigan Beef Industry Commission, 2145 University Park Drive, Suite 300, Okemos, MI 48864. ■



Patti Dietlin, Kewadin, (center) displays her award-winning beef hoagie with Michigan Beef Industry Commission's Maggie Nelson (left) and Kathleen Hawkins.

FB: CRP cut violates commitment to agriculture

A legislative proposal that will potentially reduce the Conservation Reserve Program re-enrollment by one-third is "a violation of the commitment Congress made to America's farmers and ranchers," according to American Farm Bureau Federation President Dean Kleckner.

"This is not the time to make significant changes that will delay the Agriculture Department from meeting the mid-June deadline it has set for signing up qualifying farmers who have offered to take 26 million acres out of production as a means of improving environmentally sensitive land," Kleckner said.

The House Appropriations agriculture subcommittee voted 6 to 5 to limit the amount of acreage that can be enrolled in the current CRP sign-up. The language does not save money since the CRP re-enrollment payments will come in the next fiscal year.

The proposal evolved from northeastern and western congressmen seeking to redirect the use of the CRP program to their states to protect water quality. Few farmers in those states offered bids because they were either unaware of the current sign-up or historically have not participated in farm programs.

"With 22 million acres coming out of the CRP this fall and another 5 million acres for which 10-year contracts are scheduled to expire next year, we

need to be moving ahead with both the re-enrollment and new enrollment to help our farmers and their lenders plan for future use of their land," Kleckner said.

"We can't let the appropriations process decide what land should be farmed and what needs to remain out of production," the farm leader said. "We have been involved as USDA has carefully developed sound criteria to determine which land needs to be in a conserving use and which can be brought back into production. That effort needs to proceed and it is premature to judge the outcome."

Farm Bureau is committed to using the CRP to protect fragile soils and improve water quality. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service is slated to begin a major promotional effort next month. AFBF will encourage farmers to sign up filter strips along waterways in an ongoing enrollment section of the CRP. It has been estimated that up to 8 million acres will be needed for water quality purposes.

The subcommittee also authorized moving \$20 million from the agricultural research portion of the farm bill's rural development program to provide additional funding for the Women, Infants and Children nutrition program. ■

Ban lifted from most of Arizona's wheat crop

The Agriculture Department lifted a year-old quarantine on most of Arizona's wheat. The quarantine, which has crippled the state's wheat industry, had been instituted after the discovery of Karnal bunt during a March 1996 inspection.

Arizona officials said the federal government had overreacted to the discovery of the fungus. Rep. Jim Kolbe (R-Ariz.) announced he has amended a bill to require USDA to treat Karnal bunt less drastically. The amendment read that "this minor wheat disease has caused major problems in the international trade of wheat, thus impacting the domestic wheat industry." Farm Bureau supports the bill.

USDA spokesperson Larry Hawkins said the department decided to lift the restrictions after

realizing the test for the fungus was unreliable. Nonetheless, the quarantine is still in place for areas known to have had infestations of Karnal bunt. Andy Kurtz, executive secretary for the Arizona Farm Bureau, said 21 fields in La Paz, Maricopa, and Pinal counties were found to have the fungus. Farmers are prohibited from growing wheat on those fields for the next four years.

The state's 1996 durum wheat crop has been sitting in warehouses or turned into animal feed, resulting in losses from \$30 million to \$100 million to the industry. Ken Evans, president of the Arizona Farm Bureau, said, "We need to restore the excellent reputation our designer durum wheat enjoyed before the federal quarantine." ■



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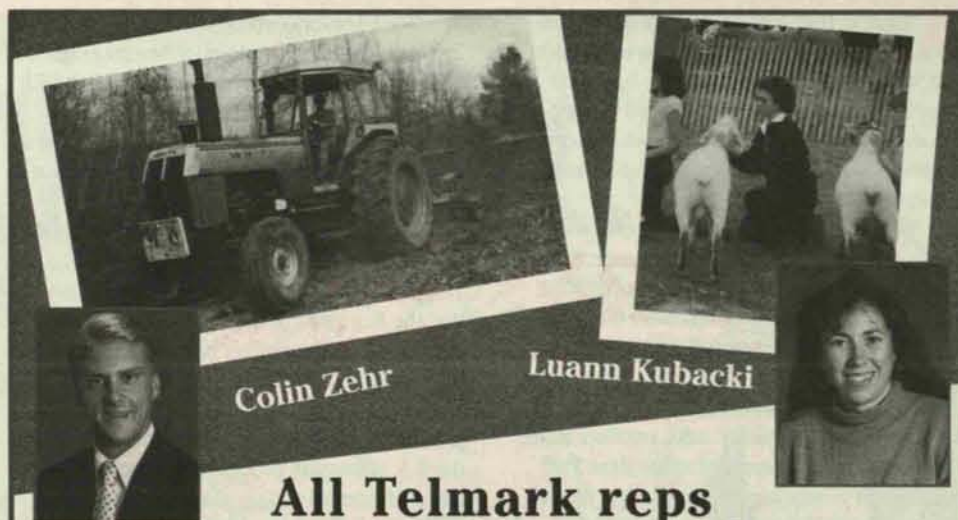
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Horses and riders: Are you safe?

by Kara Endsley

As springtime sets in, Michigan's more than 40,000 horse riders are anxious to enjoy the fresh air, but in their cabin-fever haste, they should remember safety.

"Horses react on a fight or flight-type mechanism, and that's just what they're born with," explained Christine Corn, MSU horse specialist. "All of the training goes to try to tame that initial instinct to reaction, but sometimes it creeps up on us when we least expect it."

According to a study by Dr. David Nelson in the *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, more than 27 million Americans ride horses each year, an activity which results in as many as 92,000 emergency room visits in a single year. Twenty percent of those injuries were to the head and neck.

The Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center found that head injuries account for more than 60 percent of equestrian-related deaths.

"Head injuries are probably about third on the list of horse-related injuries, but they are by far the most serious," said Deborah Reed, assistant professor at the University of Kentucky's Southeast Center for Agricultural Health and Injury Prevention. The two most common injuries are soft tissue lacerations and fractures.

According to Nelson, although 70 percent of riders own a helmet, only 35 percent actually wear one regularly. Of the helmet owners, 41 percent believe their helmets prevented at least one injury.

Why the reluctance?

The top excuses for not wearing a helmet are that they're too hot, too heavy and too unattractive. Equestrian helmet manufacturers have worked to make them more comfortable. They're lighter, have more ventilation holes and come in a range of new styles, including helmets that look like the western cowboy hat.

Prices range from \$40 to \$100. Many manufacturers will replace any helmet that is cracked or damaged, so a \$100 investment is an invest-



ment for life.

Equestrian helmets meeting the American Society for Testing Materials and the Safety Equipment Institute standards are designed to withstand a triple gravity impact — an impact three times the force of gravity. They closely resemble bike helmets, but Reed strongly cautions against mixing sports equipment: "Equestrian helmets cover a larger portion of the head, and they withstand much stronger impacts." Buyer beware: not all equestrian helmets are ASTM/SEI certified. Only labeled helmets meet the safety standards.

According to Nelson, 67 percent of all persons younger than 15 and 60 percent of all 15- to 24-year-olds belong to riding clubs. Some riding clubs do mandate that riders wear helmets, but that choice is left up to the discretion of the club. "These clubs may provide the best opportunity for educating riders about helmets."

Michigan's 4-H program takes safety into

account. "All participants in hunter and gymkhana classes are required to wear an ASTM/SEI certified helmet," said Stacey Doumit, MSU equine Extension youth specialist. Some Michigan counties require youth to wear helmets in all events and while practicing. "Some counties have a more encompassing rule," she said.

At present, no statewide mandate has been established regarding helmet use. "It's an arena that needs to be addressed," said Barb Heyboer, Michigan Horse Council president. "We're actually the spokes organization for the industry, and hopefully the issue will be addressed in the future."

Although head injuries are the most serious, injuries to the arms, legs and torso are more common. According to the American Medical Equestrian Association, 32 percent of horse-related injuries are to the arms, hands and shoulders, 21 percent to the legs and feet and 25 percent to the torso.

Finding equipment that fits is important in reducing all accidents. "It is important to have equipment that fits both the horse and the rider. Buy a small saddle for a smaller rider," Reed said.

Corn cautions that equipment is not the only safety key. "Sometimes people use equipment as a bandaid and still go on and practice unsafe horsemanship."

Leather footwear, helmets, heavy jeans, long-sleeved shirts and even chest protectors help reduce injuries, but too often protective gear is associated solely with riding. "People forget that ground work is a leading cause of injury," Reed said.

Many people are injured during non-riding activities such as leading, grooming and feeding. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

noted that 15 percent of children hospitalized for horse-related injuries were kicked.

Ground injuries can be prevented by using a little common sense and extra caution. First, avoid a horse's blind spots, which are located about 6 feet directly in front of or behind the animal. A horse may be startled if approached in these zones. When leading a horse, walk alongside the horse's shoulder to avoid being stepped on.

Since horses are easily spooked, avoid sudden movements. Never wrap lead ropes around your hands or neck. A scared horse may bolt, making it impossible to unwrap the rope. A saddle with break-away stirrups will also prevent dragging. If the rider falls and his or her foot is caught in the stirrup, it will detach from the saddle.

Another important factor in safe horse riding is to know the animal. "Horses have bad days, just like we do," Reed said. "That's why it's so important to know your animal; know the body language of your animal."

The age of the horse is yet another factor. "You need to have a mature horse. Most horses reach a mature, trained age at 8 to 12 years old," Reed said. A well-trained horse is an important match to make with a rider lacking in experience.

The most important factor in avoiding horse-related injuries lies in taking time to make rational decisions. An anxious or hurried rider only creates more opportunity for accidents.

"I don't know how many times I've heard someone say 'If I had only waited two seconds,'" said Heyboer. "Those who've had accidents are very aware of safety issues. It's those who've never had an accident who think they're safe."

Additional safety suggestions:

1. Provide experienced supervision for young and new riders. An experienced aide better understands how horses act and behave.
2. Work in pairs. If an accident occurs, having someone close by will make valuable use of time through quicker medical response.
3. If you plan to ride alone, let someone know your route and when to expect you back.
4. Be aware of rough terrain or any event that could spook your horse, such as a passing car. Know the area and plan routes around rough terrain.

Stable and ranch owners can protect themselves from lawsuits claiming someone was injured on their property or while using their horse or equipment through the Michigan Equine Activity Liability Act. Unless negligence can be proven, owners can protect themselves by posting this sign: WARNING: Under the Michigan Equine Activity Liability Act, an equine professional is not liable for an injury to or the death of a participant in an equine activity resulting from an inherent risk of the equine activity. ■

Kleckner disappointed over EU agreement

American Farm Bureau Federation President Dean Kleckner recently said he was pleased with the agreement the United States had made with the European Union on the matter of meat import regulations, but that did not outweigh his disappointment over the failure to resolve the poultry issue.

"We are pleased with the agreement on the framework for recognizing veterinary inspection equivalency. This involved three years of difficult negotiations. However, all of this effort is overshadowed by the failure to make sufficient progress on the poultry issues."

U.S. and EU negotiators reached an agreement in the "veterinary equivalency" talks, averting a trade war. Washington had threatened to halt about \$300 million worth of meat imports from Europe. But the agreement leaves the poultry issue unresolved.

The EU has objected to the U.S. poultry industry's use of chlorinated water and anti-microbial agents to decontaminate poultry carcasses. On April 1, the EU imposed stricter rules, halting imports from the U.S. The American poultry industry could lose \$34.2 million in broiler trade with the EU, \$10 million in turkeys and \$8 million in spent hens, according to the National Broiler Council, the National Turkey Federation and the USA Poultry and Egg Export Council.

Kleckner said, "It is a great disappointment that the European Union has not been able to recognize that the poultry industry's decontamination method and inspection system for poultry in the U.S. is as safe as their own. We still believe the EU continues to demand changes in the U.S. inspection process that are not consistent with science and do not recognize the equivalency of our standards." ■

Milk production slips

Dairy herds in Michigan produced 465 million pounds of milk during March, down 3 percent from a year ago according to the Federal/State Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service. Milk per cow was 1,520 pounds compared to 1,485 last year. The dairy herd was estimated at 306,000 head, down 4,000 head from last month and 15,000 head below March 1996.

The preliminary value of milk sold was \$13.60 per hundredweight in March, 30 cents less than in March 1996. The mid-month March slaughter cow price was \$36.20 per cwt, compared to \$32.40 in March 1996.

Milk production in the 20 major states during

March was 11.5 billion pounds slightly above production in these states in March 1996. Production per cow was 1,491 pounds in March, 22 pounds above March 1996. The number on farms in the 20 major states was 7.73 million head, 90,000 head less than March 1996 and 11,000 head less than February 1997.

Dairy manufacturing plants in Michigan produced 1.5 million pounds of butter in February, 14 percent less than a year ago. Ice cream output totaled 1.65 million gallons compared to 1.8 million gallons in February 1996. Nonfat dry milk production was 1.36 million pounds, compared with 3.58 million pounds a year earlier. ■

Poll to chair Hamilton Farm Bureau board

Randy Poll of Hamilton has been elected chairman of the Hamilton Farm Bureau Board of Directors. Elected as vice chairman was John Zoet, Holland, and elected to serve on the executive committee was Paul Lubbers, Hamilton.

Poll has been on the HFB board since 1992, serving as vice chairman since 1993. Poll is involved with Poll Farms, a family corporation with two brothers and their father.

Zoet was elected to the HFB board in 1995. He and his wife, Beth Ann, own Zoet Farms, Inc., a grain and poultry farm.

Lubbers, who has been on the HFB board

since 1993, has a farrow-to-finish hog operation and raises corn and soybeans.

Recently, two new board members were elected by the HFB membership. They are John Bussis of Hamilton and Gale Loew of Byron Center. Rounding out the Board of Directors are: Bill Gruppen, Zeeland, and Dr. Dave Steenstra, professor of management at Davenport College in Grand Rapids.

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Dealers Wanted In Many Areas

Discussion Topic

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



Huron County Extension agent Jim LeCureux knows full well how ag research can benefit farmers in his area and, in turn, improve the economy of the entire state of Michigan.

While that may seem like a big task, it's one being taken on by the organizers of Project GREEN — Generating Research and Extension to meet Economic and Environmental Needs.

Project GREEN is an effort to boost the economy by expanding plant-based agriculture and processing systems, all while preserving the quality of the environment and the safety of our food supply. Funding is provided to Michigan State University by a combination of industry investments and appropriations by the state legislature.

Research and educational programs are the tools used to meet project objectives, and that's where people like LeCureux fit in. He and a group of Thumb-area farmers submitted a proposal to use Project GREEN money for a research project.

"We're doing an alfalfa study, looking at the feasibility of an alfalfa processing plant," he says. "We need to extend the rotation of the sugarbeets in the area, and one way to do that is to put alfalfa into the rotation."

Plant industry hopes to improve state's economy through MSU's Project GREEN

"We've had a four- to five-ton-per-acre loss in the sugarbeet yields," LeCureux continues, pointing out how adding alfalfa to a sugarbeet rotation can increase the beet yield by two or three tons. "At \$40 a ton, that's about \$1.5 million a year. If we can increase that yield by a couple tons per acre, that's significant."

LeCureux says research and educational projects like this boost Michigan's economy. "Any time the farmers make money, the small towns around here are better off. The shoe stores, the grocery stores — they're all better off because when the farmers make money, they spend it," he says.

According to Bob Boehm, commodity specialist for the Michigan Farm Bureau, that type of economic growth is exactly what Project GREEN is intended to foster. "Project GREEN was started in response to a need by the crop industry to focus on broad issues of crop commodities," he says. "It's not a program for brick and mortar — it's for people, programs, research projects and ongoing funding for those kinds of projects. And it's designed to be cross-commodity, not necessarily focusing on any one."

Many people have drawn comparisons between Project GREEN and the Animal Industry Initiative. "The Animal Industry Initiative was designed to address animal agriculture issues at Michigan State University, with the major portion of funding used to upgrade the university in terms of infrastructure," Boehm says. "In plant agriculture, we have the infrastructure in place at MSU; Project GREEN focuses on procedural and organizational changes to improve the university's response to industry needs and to bring in additional dollars to provide flexible funding for projects on the crop side of agriculture."

The state legislature has added a \$500,000 standing appropriation to the budget to fund Project GREEN. Another one-time appropriation of \$500,000 came in a supplemental budget.

"Ultimately, the goal is to have \$6 to \$7 million on a continual, annual appropriation basis to fund

the program through the university," Boehm said. The plant based industry is working diligently to increase funding from the state. They hope to show the governor and legislators the successes of Project GREEN so far, and garner their support for more funding.

Michigan farmers already grow a diverse array of crops, and our state is home to many processing companies that add value to plant products by turning them into baby food, cereal, pickles, potato chips and a host of other food and non-food products. Proponents of Project GREEN say that for the industry to thrive, research is essential to generate new products, ingredients and processes, along with new technologies that allow growers to remain competitive and protect environmental quality.

"The key word in Project GREEN is flexibility," Boehm says. "We want to demonstrate that dollars invested through Project GREEN to advance and sustain plant-based agriculture in Michigan pay back big dividends to producers and the general public in Michigan." ■

Coalition touts U.S. 'engagement' overseas

Unilateral sanctions and secondary boycotts have created havoc in agricultural markets whenever they have been enacted, American Farm Bureau Federation President Dean Kleckner said recently at a Capitol Hill news conference. Kleckner spoke during the kickoff of USAEngage, a coalition of groups representing business, agriculture and trade associations committed to American "engagement" overseas. The groups are pushing for steady, firm and principled foreign policy, and against unilateral economic sanctions. "Farm Bureau believes that all agricultural products should be exempt from all embargoes except in cases of armed conflict," Kleckner said. "The Freedom to Farm legislation of 1996 makes producers more dependent on, and supportive of, open and freer world markets. We support this new farm program, which leaves no room for unilateral sanctions." Other spokespersons for USAEngage included Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), Reps. Doug Bereuter (R-Neb.) and Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.), Caterpillar Inc. Chairman and CEO Donald Fites, and National Foreign Trade Council President Frank Kittredge. ■

Discussion Questions

1. Plant-based agriculture was responsible for \$11 billion and 125,000 jobs in the state in 1993. How might Project GREEN increase those numbers?
2. Besides alfalfa in sugarbeet rotations, what are some other cultural practices that Project GREEN should evaluate and promote? What new crops could be planted in your area that need research to bring them to reality? What types of new or updated processing is needed in Michigan to stimulate new crops or to revitalize production of existing crops?
3. How could Project GREEN aid the development of successful producer-processor integration, or value-added, "new-wave" cooperatives?
4. Is Project GREEN a valid use of government funds? Is it financing for a select few farmers, or is it a good program for all Michiganders? Why?

North Carolina hog industry facing criticism

Large-scale hog farms in eastern North Carolina have residents there stirred up and fearful their property values will continue to drop. They blame the hog operations for environmental problems and tourism officials are concerned about expansion of the industry and its affect on the tourism industry due to public perception.

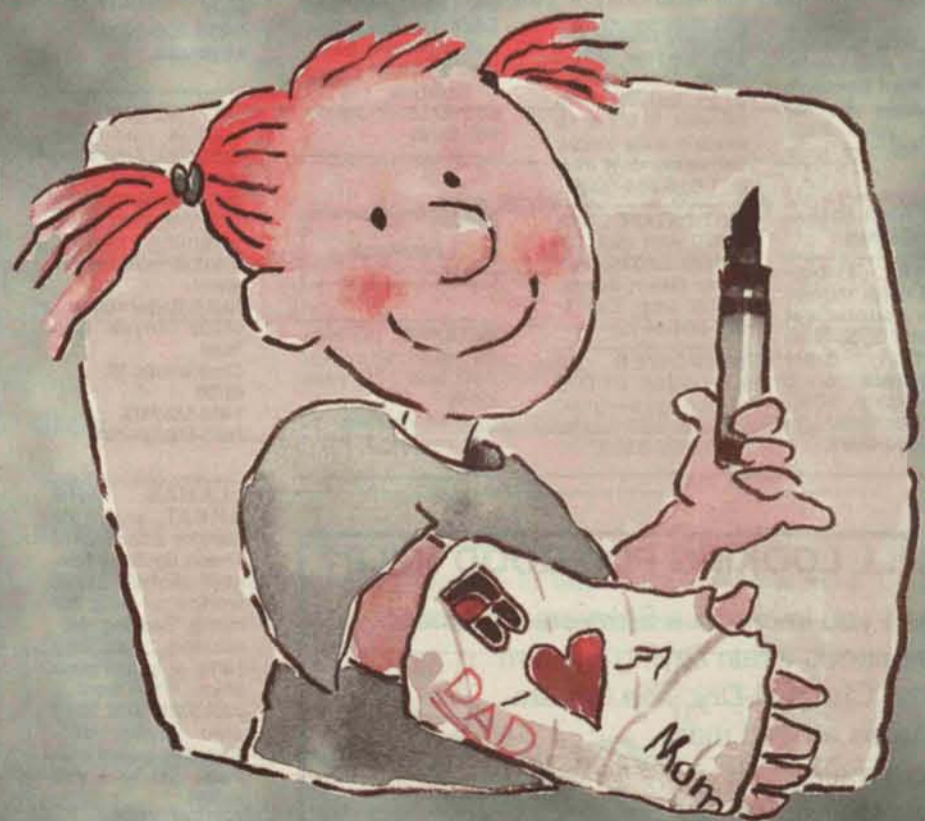
The uproar has one state lawmaker fighting mad. Richard Morgan, a Republican state legislator, introduced a bill that would halt new large-scale hog lot construction for one year and allow county commissioners to decide where big farms could open and triple the space between hog waste lagoons and nearby property. North Carolina Gov. Jim Hunt (D) recently said he would support a two-year ban on new and expanding hog operations, but he would not endorse zoning authority for counties. ■

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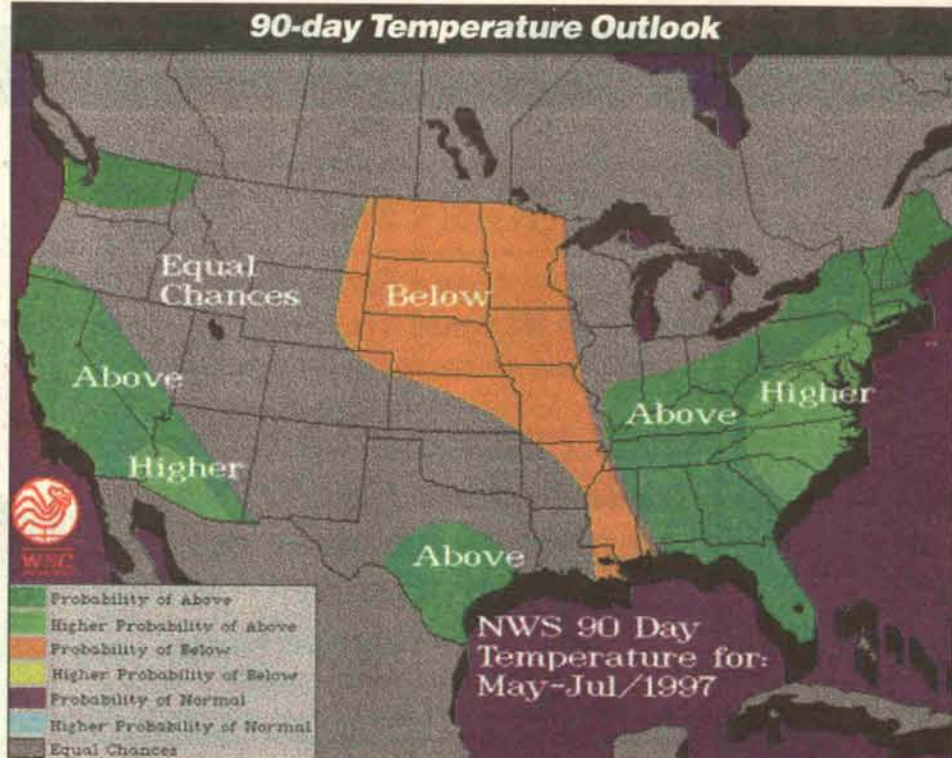
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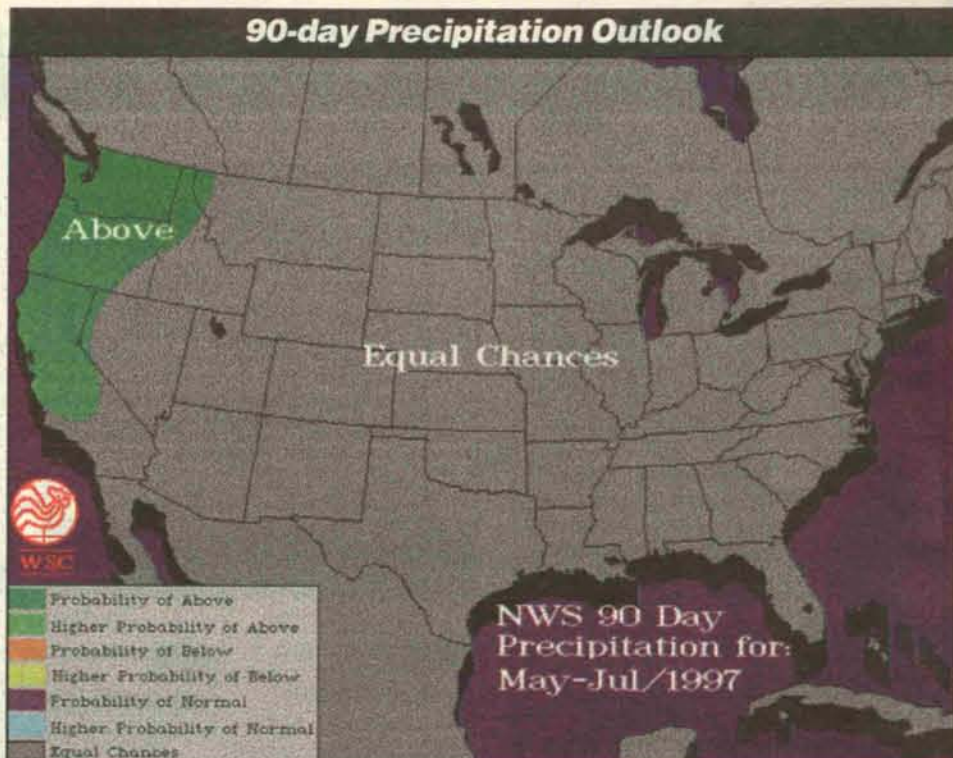
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Circulation over 46,000 in State of Michigan.

90-day Temperature Outlook



90-day Precipitation Outlook



Weather Outlook



Michigan Weather Summary

4/16/97-5/15/97	Temperature		Growing Degree Days		Precipitation	
	Obs. mean	Dev. from normal	Actual	Normal	Actual (inch)	Normal (inch)
Houghton	36.0	-1.4	17	55	0.33	2.28
Marquette	34.8	-2.1	24	55	1.03	2.28

Sault Ste. Marie	35.9	-2.2	18	24	2.10	2.43	Saginaw	44.4	-1.1	91	97	1.89	2.55
Lake City	40.0	-2.0	49	68	2.00	2.69	Grand Rapids	43.7	-2.4	79	124	1.75	3.41
Pellston	38.1	-1.8	33	68	2.20	2.69	South Bend	45.3	-3.8	98	124	1.54	3.41
Alpena	38.9	-1.5	40	60	1.92	2.52	Coldwater	44.7	-2.6	83	122	1.96	3.19
Houghton Lake	39.8	-3.1	46	60	1.87	2.52	Lansing	42.6	-3.3	71	122	1.75	3.19
Muskegon	42.3	-3.1	58	90	1.60	3.16	Detroit	45.8	-1.6	87	111	1.51	3.21
Vestaburg	42.4	-3.3	85	101	2.24	3.07	Flint	42.6	-3.4	72	111	1.24	3.21
Bad Axe	41.5	-2.6	65	97	0.90	2.55	Toledo	46.8	-0.9	100	111	0.50	3.21

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



In terms of temperature, April 1997 was very similar to April of 1996, a year with many agricultural weather challenges. In terms of precipitation, however, the comparison is one of contrasts. Drier-than-normal conditions developed early in the month statewide and continued through month's end. April temperatures averaged much cooler than normal (1 to 4° F below normal), while April precipitation averaged much less than normal (precipitation totals generally from 25 to 50 percent of normal). The drier-than-normal weather allowed a rapid start of spring field work, including early corn planting in many sections. Severe thunderstorms caused at least two tornadoes and wind damage on the 30th. By month's end, seasonal growing degree day accumulations (summed from March 1st) and vegetative development had generally fallen to seven to 10 days behind normal.

The near-term outlook is for an active jet stream through the middle of North America, leading to above-normal precipitation totals and to field-work delays. In this transitional season, you may see a reversal of temperature patterns between April and May, suggesting warmer-than-normal conditions in the weeks ahead. National Weather Service long lead outlooks call for increased odds of below-normal temperatures for May, with near-equal probabilities of below-, near-, and above-normal temperatures and precipitation. For the May-July early summer period, the outlook is still for equal odds of all three scenarios of temperature and precipitation. NWS outlooks call for increased odds of below normal temperatures and above normal precipitation by late summer into the early fall.

Potato stocks down

All potato stocks in Michigan on April 1 were placed at 2.5 million hundredweight (cwt.), 7 percent below stocks on hand last year, according to the Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service. This year's stocks represented 18 percent of the total production, 1 percentage point above a year ago. Fall potato production for Michigan neared 13.8 million cwt. in 1996.

Michigan disappearance of this year's crop, from harvest to April 1, totaled 11.3 million cwt. Disappearance from last year's crop during the comparable time period was 13.65 million cwt. It included sales, shrink and waste.

Nationally, potato stocks totaled 143 million cwt. on April 1, 1997, up 23 percent from last year and 11 percent above two years ago. Disappearance for the season was a record high 298 million cwt. of potatoes, 7 percent above the past two years. Shrinkage and loss of 29.3 million cwt. was 5 percent above a year ago.



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