Financial woes force Ada Beef to close its doors

C utting an inability to pay producers in a timely manner, Ada Beef announced Friday, Aug. 22 would be the last day for the large, West Michigan slaughterhouse to process market beef at least until early October after the plant goes through a remodeling process and opens under new management.

According to Eric Vanderboon, one of the company's founders, the Stryker-van Soelen company had been struggling for some time to make cash meet, and in its attempts to add profitability in other ventures did not come up to expectations, forcing the company to lay off its approximately 140-member workforce. Those workers have been told they can reapply for their jobs under the new management, but the hiring process and wage levels were unclear until the restructuring is complete.

"Ada Beef is temporarily closed and in the process of restructuring," Vanderboon explains. "They will open soon with a new partner negotiated on the behalf of Ada Beef. All producers will be paid for livestock and we intend to open it back up around October 1."

"We've got to pay for all the livestock in 48 hours," Vanderboon cited at the final blow for his company. He added that he attended official city weeks ago that Ada Beef couldn't meet that standard anymore and voluntarily began to cycle down on the number of animals processed from 239 per day to less than 200 before eventually closing. "They looked at our financial statements for the last quarter and they didn't close us down, but if we wouldn't have done it, they would have."

"Their losses were severe," explains Tom Reed, president and CEO of Michigan Livestock Exchange (MLE). "Small plants of that size are not economically has been their bank for the last couple of years, and they were not pulling themselves out of it at a time when they should."

Many of the decisions about the direction Ada Beef will take will open again when the new, larger partner brings in on the processor's board. The company's founders' Butterfield Banking has been bandied about as a potential partner, but sources have yet to confirm its involvement.

"The company that is planning on coming in has two slaughterhouses, just like Ada, that are up and running," Reed explains. "They're running as efficient satellites of a larger unit and that kind of a model works. But independent, owner-operated, small companies like that are just like anything else - it's not real management problems, it's sources problem problems."

"For the last several months their largest kill was the black Angus model that we were building," Reed states.

### Michigan’s 1997 cherry crop “phenomenal”

### Early this summer, outdoor-grown CSX and Norfolk Southern agreed on a plan to integrate the rail lines formerly utilized by Conrail in Michigan, thus opening up larger markets in the nation’s south and east and increasing the amount of competition for grain-handling railcars in the state.

"As far as our relationship to Norfolk Southern, it’s a plus for Norfolk Southern because we’re expanding our poultry market and we are often asked where we are going to get the grain, and Conrail just didn’t have the market."

"Norfolk Southern both stand to gain because of the improved access to markets throughout the east and southern coast of the U.S."

"The largest change will be that Conrail lines that go east across the lower portion of Michigan are now going to be in the hands of the Norfolk Southern,” adds Owen. "There are no Conrail lines that will be coming to CSX post-acquisition. So much of the excitement is going to be over on the Norfolk Southern end."

"Michigan should become a much bigger player for shipping grain and open up previously untapped markets,” adds Ed Martin, who handles agriculture marketing for CSX Transportation (CSXT). "It’s a plus for Norfolk Southern because we’re expanding our poultry market and we are often asked where we are going to get the grain, and Conrail just didn’t have the market."

"Our state is considered on the fringe of the corn soybean belt, but it is ideally suited for service to the southeastern U.S. livestock market," explains Bob Boehr, manager of CSX’s field crops division. "With a large majority of Michigan’s corn and soybean crop expanded out of the state, transportation is a major cost factor and expanded competition and improved rail service are very positive developments for Michigan producers and should lead to improved basis for Michigan-grown commodities."

"I think it’s going to create competition," adds Michigan Agri-Business Association President Jim Byrum. "I think that’s a win. Norfolk Southern is the one that’ll be really interesting, because CSX handles probably 60 to 85 percent or more of outbound corn from Michigan currently."

"We will pick up five new elevators, including facilities at Albion, Battle Creek, Chelsea, Mason and White Pigeon," Martin adds. "We needed to expand our points of origin because of our rapidly expanding poultry market, and getting into Michigan has been tough. We didn’t have the lines to get into those elevators, and with the expansion, now it spreads our risk better toward Indiana where we have the bulk of our lines."

"As far as our relationship to Norfolk Southern, the sourcing (of grain) competition would increase," states Owen. "But recognize we’ve been competing in Michigan against Conrail all these years anyway, so it’s just a different face, but it’s the same game. The lower part of Michigan that parallels our Grand Rapids-to-Lansing line might see Norfolk Southern bidding more for the eastern and southern markets."

Continued on page 4

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Continued on page 4
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Policy change could help both species, landowners

Proposed policy changes to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that would benefit both species and landowners, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF). In comments to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the farm group said the government’s proposed policy, called “safe harbor” and “no surprises” policies would create the type of “win-win” scenario for species and landowners that Farm Bureau has long advocated.

“Farm Bureau believes that endangered species protection can be more effectively achieved by removing disincentives and recognizing the efforts of private landowners to protect public land users who provide food and shelter for listed species, rather than by imposing land use restrictions and penalties,” said Richard Newpher, executive director of AFBF’s Washington, D.C., office. “Safe harbor agreements can help reduce that disincentive.”

Under the safe harbor plan, the landowner would be responsible only for the protection of a predesignated baseline number of species or size of habitat. The landowner would not be restricted or penalized under the ESA for any additional numbers of the species that might take up residence on the property. Any increase in species number or habitat resulting from the safe harbor agreement is an asset to the species, and the landowner retains some flexibility to use the land in the most productive manner, Newpher said.

Farm Bureau praised the government’s plan to implement the safe harbor policy, which would allow landowner agreements instead of exclusively through habitat conservation plans (HCPs). Landowner agreements provide more flexibility and are less costly than HCPs, Newpher said. It has long been acknowledged that HCPs have not generally met the needs of private landowners, he added.

“While the ‘no surprises’ policy provides predictability for landowners by limiting additional regulations under the ESA when they enter into an HCP,” Newpher said. “People who agree to take certain actions to protect listed species need to know that their commitments will be honored and that no new obligations will be placed on them.”

This is especially true for farmers and ranchers, who might require a long lead time before committing to conservation practices.

Farm Bureau also expressed general support for the government’s proposed candidate conservation agreements and for working with farmers to enter into agreements that protect species threatened with extinction. The organization voiced concern, however, that the government’s approach might cost farmers too much to be considered as proposed approaches to landowners.

“If landowners are going to voluntarily sacrifice for use or activity on their land, it is only natural that they would expect some assurances in return,” Newpher said. “The assurances set forth in the proposal are reasonable at best.”

Farm Bureau believes permanent reforms are needed to make the Endangered Species Act work effectively and will continue to press for those legislative changes. But in this case, he said, the organization welcomes the government’s attempt to allow some flexibility in enforcing the law, in a new approach to land use.

“The lesson learned is that changing the terms of the Endangered Species Act from a negative enforcement mechanism into a positive and permanent approach that benefits both species and landowners,” Newpher said.

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Financial woes force Ada Beef to close its doors

Continued from page 1

Asada said they were sending them to specialty stores already, and this will be used to focus on that.

From my perspective,”Reed says, “this is a real, good-news issue for the Michigan farmers, not a bad-news issue, because we absolutely need

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Michigan Farm numbers decrease

Michigan Farm numbers decrease

The estimated number of farms in Michigan as of June 1 was 52,000, down by 1,000 from 1996, according to the Federal-State Agriculture Statistics Service. The median farm category was estimated to be 16,000, down by 1,000 from 1996. The two categories of farms remained the same at 20,000 and 16,000 respectively.

The land in farms was estimated to be 10.5 million acres, down from last year by 1 percent or 100,000 acres. The other two categories of farms remained the same at 20,000 and 16,000 respectively.

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The average farm size in Michigan was 202 acres per farm. By categories, the average farm size varied:

- 90 acres for the small (unchanged from last year, 90) for the medium (down 1 percent), and
- 775 acres for the large farm (up 2 percent).

Nationally, the number of farms was estimated at 2.06 million farms, a decrease of 1 percent from 1996. The average number of farms in the U.S. was 2.05 million, down by 1 percent or 100,000 farms. The median farm category was estimated to be 16,000, down by 1,000 from 1996. The two categories of farms remained the same at 20,000 and 16,000 respectively.

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Conrail acquisition to open new markets for Michigan grain

Continued from page 1

aggressively for that grain, given the larger demand base that Norfolk Southern brings to the equation. There, I think, is the key to the benefit to the Michigan shipper.”

Owens adds that efficiency can now be gained because the competition is coming from only one other railroad, instead of both Conrail and Norfolk Southern. “Grain typically did not want to move between those lines,” he added. “By having only two lines in the east, by definition, you have improved the efficiency, the reach, significantly.”

“Both Norfolk Southern and CSX have very well-developed feed and processing industries,” Owens explains. “That was not so on Conrail. So we’re very upbeat that the demand that a Michigan shipper, the reach that a Michigan shipper now has via a single-line haul is significantly increased. Many of our customers focus on the concept of liquidity, how many different markets can I get to, to try and sell 100,000 bushels of grain. We now give them access to an export market, a very vibrant feed industry, and a strong forward-position processing industry.”

According to Owen, the poultry and hog industry in the southeast currently represents 100,000 carloads of grain annually, with the processing industry approximately half of that. Railcar shortages

“Car supply is always a problem,” states Byrum. “Especially for facilities that are not located on what we would call a Class One rail operation. There’s very few major grain merchandisers that are located on either CSX or on Conrail currently, so it’s going to be interesting to see if we have a little competition on providing cars.”

According to Byrum, short-line rails that hook up to the major connections sought by CSX and Norfolk Southern will continue to serve the bulk of Michigan’s rural areas, and maintaining a consistent supply during harvest complicates delivery issues of the crop.

“We quickly acknowledge we do not have all of the cars to meet the combined demand on top of the existing CSXT demand today,” Owens remarks about the Conrail demand coupled with the existing CSX demand. “In quarter four when harvest first spikes, historically we’ve never had enough cars to meet that spike. So we’re not saying anything that’s new, it’s just a matter of the degree of which we’re unable to meet that demand.”

“Work very closely with the short-lines, both on the operational and commercial end,” he adds. “On our part, we are encouraging customers to be more efficient by actually writing contracts that pay them for turning a train around inside of 24 hours. We’ll leave power with the units, and it’s a natural incentive for the successful loading of that train. So in essence, that manufacturer’s capacity right there is making more total cars available on the network.”

According to Owen, CSXT also provides a car guarantee program to short-line customers. “We’ve had a 99.7 percent success ratio in placing cars at that time,” Owens explains. CSXT and Norfolk Southern’s operating plan will not result in any rail line abandonments in Michigan.

New test detects harmful E. coli bacteria

According to Dan Glickman, the USDA’s Secretary of Agriculture, the new test detects the pathogenic E. coli O157:H7 strain and related strains present in food samples. The test has the potential to be more effective than other rapid tests currently on the market.

USDA’s Agricultural Research Service found the test gives a “state-of-the-art reading on whether E. coli O157:H7 and related strains are present in food samples. Based on laboratory and preliminary testing of inoculated meat samples, this new test could be an improvement over tests now used in the food industry.”

After overnight incubation, this test can detect a single bacterium in a small – one gram – sample of meat. The test is simple to perform and may be more accurate in detecting specific harmful bacteria than existing tests. This new test could help the food industry reduce testing costs and could ultimately benefit consumers by increasing food safety.

In 1992, E. coli O157:H7 caused the deaths of several children in the Pacific Northwest. In this outbreak, the E. coli was ultimately traced to under-cooked, contaminated hamburgers. This highly infectious strain of E. coli has also been isolated in fruits and vegetables, fresh juices, sausage, dairy products, and even water. The O157:H7 strain produces toxins that cause bloody diarrhea and kidney failure.

USDA scientists at Clay Center, Neb., developed the material used in the test that will now be marketed by private industry. This rapid test may potentially be used in test food animals and for diagnosis of E. coli O157:H7 and related infections in humans. Availability of simple, rapid tests with improved specificity will facilitate additional testing and further reduction of pathogens in the food supply.

Elevators throughout Michigan will depend now on their short line rail network and only two major interstate carriers, Norfolk Southern and CSX Transportation, because their acquisition of Conrail.

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Medicare supplemental coverage — for seniors over 65.

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TELEPHONE
COUNTY

WHERE BELONGING MAKES A DIFFERENCE.
1997 Michigan land values and farmland lease rates

**A** significant portion of Michigan farmland is controlled by leases. Table 1 provides information on the characteristics of the leasing arrangements in Michigan reported by the respondents. The southern lower peninsula, 44 percent of crop acres are controlled by leases, while only 17 percent of the crop land in the upper and northern lower peninsula is leased. Of the leased crop land in the southern lower peninsula, 74 percent is in the form of a cash lease and 26 percent is shared. Not enough responses were received in the upper and northern lower peninsula to report information on share and cash leases.

For the land that is shared in the southern lower peninsula several output-share arrangements were used. The most common form of output-share is split at 1/3 landlord, 2/3 tenant. Ten percent of the share leases use the 1/3-2/3 split. The other common share arrangements are a 1/2-1/2 split and 2/3-1/3 split. The 1/2-1/2 split comprises 18 percent of the share leases while the 2/3-1/3 split accounts for 16 percent of the share leases. The tendency is for the larger share of the lease to use some other output split.

A potentially important determinant of the share split is the amount of inputs supplied by the landlord. Typically in a share lease arrangement the landlord will supply the land and the tenant the machinery and labor. The responsibility for the remaining inputs is often regressed between landlord and tenant and may impact the meaning of output-share split. In the 1/3-2/3 and 1/2-1/2 share leases, the tenant supplied labor, seed, and fertilizer costs, 91 percent and 82 percent of the time, respectively.

The 1/2-2/3 share lease had the tenant supplied fertilizer, seed, and pesticide only.

The smaller the CV the closer the variability and can be thought of as the amount calculated by dividing the standard deviation of price by the average price. CV provides a "standartization" of CV's which is used to evaluate the CV's by being divided by the standard deviation by the average value. The CV provides a 'standardized' measure of variability and can be thought of as the amount of variability in proportion to the average land value. The smaller the CV the closer the responses tend to be the average land value. This means the smaller the CV, the more representative the average value of land is prices received by respondents. The higher quality C-SB-H farmland in the upper and northern lower peninsula and irrigated farmland show the largest CV at 0.4 above and 0.5 below average. Sugar beet land and C-SB-H land in the upper and northern lower peninsula are below 0.4 above and 0.3 below average. The CV for the southern lower peninsula shows CV levels between 0.3 and 0.9.

The change in the value of farmland during the last 12 months is reported in table 2. High-and low-quality C-SB-H land increased in value by an average of 8.4 percent and 8.1 percent, respectively, during the last year in the southern lower peninsula. In the upper and northern lower peninsula and irrigated farmland, respectively. Low-quality C-SB-H land in the southern lower peninsula experienced small increases in the amount of land on the market of 0.7 percent and 1.2 percent, respectively. Sugar beet land on the market also increased by around 0.7 percent last year. Irrigated land on the market declined by 1.4 percent and higher quality C-SB-H land on the market in the upper and northern lower peninsula declined by 6.4 percent.

**Table 1. CHARACTERISTICS OF LEASED FARMLAND**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop-Acres Leased</th>
<th>Leased Land Under Cash Lease</th>
<th>Landowner/Tenant-Output Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>64.8%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>3/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2. CHANGE IN FARMLAND VALUE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Type</th>
<th>Southern Lower Peninsula</th>
<th>Upper and Northern Lower Peninsula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corn-Soybean-Hay (above average land)</td>
<td>$1,300</td>
<td>$393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn-Soybean-Hay (below average land)</td>
<td>$197</td>
<td>$53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar Beet</td>
<td>$976</td>
<td>$23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigated</td>
<td>$1,414</td>
<td>$47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3. CHANGE IN LAND SUPPLY IN LAST 12 MONTHS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Type</th>
<th>Southern Lower Peninsula</th>
<th>Upper and Northern Lower Peninsula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corn-Soybean-Hay (above average land)</td>
<td>+0.7%</td>
<td>-0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn-Soybean-Hay (below average land)</td>
<td>+1.2%</td>
<td>-8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar Beet</td>
<td>+0.7%</td>
<td>-8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigated</td>
<td>-1.4%</td>
<td>-1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4. AGRICULTURE-USE VALUE PER ACRE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Development</th>
<th>Southern Lower Peninsula</th>
<th>Upper and Northern Lower Peninsula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>$4,568</td>
<td>$1,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial/Industrial</td>
<td>$10,897</td>
<td>$3,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational</td>
<td>$5,096</td>
<td>$700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5. PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN LAND VALUE FROM 1991-97 IN THE SOUTHERN LOWER PENINSULA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>C-SB-H Below Average</th>
<th>C-SB-H Above Average</th>
<th>Sugar Beet</th>
<th>Beet Irrigated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusions**

Farmland values in Michigan continued to show a strong upward trend based on the results of the 1997 land value survey. In the southern lower peninsula, C-SB-H land values showed gains of 8.1 percent for lower quality land and 8.4 percent for higher quality land. Sugar beet land values rose 5.3 percent while irrigated land values rose 6.4 percent for lower quality land and 10.0 percent for rental land. Gains in the southern lower peninsula averaged $48 per acre for lower quality C-SB-H land and $71 per acre for higher quality C-SB-H land, 4% over in the southern lower peninsula and $1,045 per acre in the upper and northern lower peninsula.

The value of farmland converted to commercial industrial development averaged $10,897 in the southern lower peninsula and $3,638 in the upper and northern lower peninsula. Farmland converted to recreational uses was valued at average of $2,095 and $750 in the southern lower peninsula and upper and northern lower peninsula, respectively.

The pressure of non-agricultural influences on farmland values appears to have increased in some areas. Non-agricultural influences typically pressure to develop farmland for residential, commercial, or recreational use. In many areas, it is difficult to completely remove the influence of non-agricultural influences. In an effort to gain a better understanding of the effects of these non-agricultural development pressures, the Michigan Farm Land Survey asks for information on the percentage of land in farmland converted to recreational development.
WHEAT

The August Crop Report increased the U.S. wheat production estimate by 100 million bushels as the "Kansas Kansas wheat" came in at record levels. After several years of 'wondering' if we would ever get new highs for the U.S. wheat yield it finally appears it will happen in 1997, if the spring wheat yield comes in as expected. As shown below in Table 2, the U.S. average wheat yield is expected to be 39.9 bushels per acre. Michigan decided to go in on the act as well, establishing a new record at 61 bushels per acre, versus the previous record of 60.

This higher production estimate will keep the pressure on prices. On the use side, food use is expected to climb marginally, but feed use is expected to drop to 1995 levels. The biggest issue is a situation where a broken record, exports are the wild card. While they are expected to grow marginally, due to our major competitor having smaller crops, larger crops in most of the importing countries will limit their needs.

At this point, futures market suppliers are saying they will pay 5-6 cents per bushel more. While this may cover the opportunity cost of no-farm storage, it will not cover commercial storage plus lost interest. If you want to stay in the market, consider a basis contract or a call option versus commercial storage. For those who are and can store farm, it is a close call. I am slightly bullish, but the rally may come after the soybean and corn harvests have begun and is not a sure thing.

SOYBEANS

The August Crop Report also showed a huge U.S. soybean crop coming. Huge acreage, as previously reported, along with a projected yield of 39.3 bushels per acre, the second highest on record, adds up to a lot of soybeans. Michigan projections of 40 bushels per acre would equal the previous high set in 1995, and dwarf last year's disastrous 25. And when it is multiplied by the record acreage, we may have a new record production level of 75.6 million bushels, compared to the 1995 record of 59.6 million.

The crop conditions since the report have been worse than the expected. This middle of August may help soybeans even more, especially the double-crop soybeans. It is unlikely the U.S. estimate will drop in the next report.

While the huge production number ramps prices up, it appears strong demand will keep them from falling in the gutter, as long as the crop doesn't grow too much by famine. The increase in projected late-season soybean carryouts of 100 million bushels will keep soybean prices from growing, and due to the South American soybean harvest is not expected to start until January, most of their beans early to take advantage of high prices.

Even with the strong demand, ending stocks are estimated to grow to adequate levels. At this point, the Finns, with November Nov. 10, are about what fundamentals would suggest. Consider waiting for a rally from Nov. 16 to a good forward pricing; some of you may want to get some downside protection. However, don't wait for the rally of all rallies to price soybeans. I am thinking 15-20 depending on the crock quality.

CATTLE

Cattle-on-feed in the traditional seven states was up 19 percent on Aug. 1, compared to a year ago. With a 1,200,000 head feed on feed lots up 14 percent. This is several percent higher than expected. Placements were up 10 percent and 14 percent in the feven-state and U.S., respectively, the average gain was placement would equal last year. On the plants, marketing in July was the strongest for the year, with the August report at up 9 percent versus the 5 percent decreased.

This news will hit the farmers the hardest as the strongest meal production is in July, followed by July and August. As long as the feed trough is empty, farmers will run into more competition as we move into the fall. At this point, I don't see any great forward pricing opportunities; if feed prices move back toward their highs, consider it.

Wheat bran's possible role in fighting colon cancer explored

Medical researchers at the University of California at San Francisco have recently found low wheat bran helps laboratory animals battle colon cancer. Could processed wheat bran be the key to human protection against the disease? Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientists in Albany, Calif., and colleagues from Kellogg Co., Battle Creek, Mich., and other research groups want to find out.

Bran is the outer layer of the wheat kernel. Processed bran is used in breakfast cereals, wheat breads and other products. Kellogg Co., the world's largest maker of breakfast cereals and other grain-based convenience foods, has a cooperative research agreement with the scientists, or CRADA, with ARS for the investigation. The study is underway at ARS' Western Regional Research Center in Albany. ARS chemist Wallace Hall will lead the research effort, with the USDA Agricultural Research Service Utilization Research Unit, leads the experiment.

Scientists have found for a more than a decade that laboratory animals fed high amounts of bran have fewer cells known as aberrant colon crypt cells. Aberrant colon crypt cells are thought to be precancerous. The new studies look into how the raw bran reduces formation of these cancer cells.

ARS investigators are experimenting with small laboratory animals that do not normally eat bran and at Kellogg Co. They will determine whether laboratory animals fed the processed wheat bran in place of raw bran have a significantly lower number of aberrant cells. They will also find out if differences in the way bran is processed affect cell turnover - the rate at which the body replaces old colon cells with new ones. The findings may help them uncover new clues about how wheat bran reduces formation of the aberrant colon crypt cells.
Michigan's 1997 cherry crop "phenomenal"

Continued from page 1

grew soybean cyst nematode (SCN) in a microscope worsens the pathogen's potential to reduce yields by 80 percent, depending on the soybean variety planted and growing conditions. According to USDA's National Soybean Varietal Registry at the University of Illinois, a farmer's soybean cyst nematode management practices can reduce yields by 80 percent, depending on the soybean variety planted and growing conditions. According to USDA's National Soybean Varietal Registry at the University of Illinois, a farmer's soybean cyst nematode management practices can reduce yields by 80 percent, depending on the soybean variety planted and growing conditions.

Soybean cyst nematode (SCN) was first discovered in 1953 and has since been found in almost all soybean-growing areas of the United States. The SCN is a soil-dwelling nematode that feeds on the roots of soybean plants, causing stunted growth, yellowing of leaves, and reduced yields. SCN populations can increase rapidly, leading to significant yield losses if not managed effectively.

Promotion and Education Committee Chair Mike Heisler, Bruce Barton, Wayne Cornell and Calhoun County Farm Bureau President Nancy Dietz at a soybean variety testing site during the land-use planning and farmland preservation tour at Barton Farms.

Soybean cyst nematode is a soil-borne pest that affects soybean plants by feeding on the roots, causing stunted growth, yellowing of leaves, and reduced yields. SCN populations can increase rapidly, leading to significant yield losses if not managed effectively.

Some of the rotations could run longer than nine years, depending on the severity of the SCN infestation, Warner says.

The soybean cyst nematode is one of the most damaging and economically important pests affecting soybean production worldwide. It is caused by the soil-dwelling nematode Heterodera glycines, which feeds on the roots of soybean plants, leading to stunted growth, yellowing of leaves, and reduced yields.

Some of the rotations could run longer than nine years, depending on the severity of the SCN infestation, Warner says.

Warner says the SCN is spread primarily by tillage and planting equipment and other farm machinery that track dirt from field to field. To some extent, migratory birds can contribute to the spread of the parasitic nematode. Known carriers of SCN include the blackbird, starling, and European starling, which are common in many soybean-growing areas.

The soybean cyst nematode can be managed through various strategies, including the use of SCN-tolerant soybean varieties, crop rotation, cultivar selection, and chemical and biological control methods. Crop rotation with non-host crops such as corn, sorghum, or wheat can help reduce SCN populations. Selecting soybean varieties with high SCN resistance can also be effective. Chemical control options include nematicides and biological control agents such as beneficial nematodes.

The soybean cyst nematode is one of the most challenging pests that affect the soybean industry worldwide. It is estimated that the SCN causes significant yield losses in millions of hectares of soybean fields each year, leading to substantial economic impacts. Effective management strategies are crucial to mitigate the impact of SCN on soybean production.
MASA signs training agreement with MDA, MSUE and NRCS

A recent Aglogy Biological Station Field Day, four agricultural groups, the Michigan Agricultural Stewardship Association (MASA), Michigan State University Extension (MSUE), the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA), and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) joined together to develop training programs aimed at encouraging Michigan farmers to develop sustainable agricultural practices on their farms.

"This provides an educational opportunity where a farmers-based organization, MASA, has gone into a partnership with MSUE, MDA, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's NRCS," explained George Bird, Michigan State University's coordinator of the professional development program for Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE). "This partnership is to develop training opportunities in the practices, systems and philosophy of sustainable agriculture."

During the course of the next 12 months, the four groups will jointly sponsor educational programs on such topics as cover crops, rotational grazing, composting, local value-added opportunities, regenerative nature of soil quality, on-farm research, rotational grazing and management-intensive grazing, according to Bird.

"They're a little different. From some that we've done in agriculture over the past 20 years," he added. "But I think they're some things that are important for the future."

"There will be farmers who will be doing...

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According to Bird, there are no other agreements similar to this one in the state. "If I find a lot of interest in this agreement in every state that I go to, but I haven't yet found another state that's pulled it off."

For more information on the training programs, you can contact your local Extension office or Bird at (517) 353-3900.

Jane Hardisty, NRCS State Conservationist, Arlen Leholm, MSU Extension Director; Russ Lathou, MASA Executive Director, and Keith Cregg, MDA Assistant Director sign the agreement which allows for the partnership of the four organizations.

Grassley reports ethanol progress

Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) says he has commitments from President Clinton, Vice President Gore, House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) to work to extend the present ethanol tax program when Congress takes up key highway legislation in September.

In a letter to President Clinton, Grassley, a leading ethanol supporter, said he wanted to avoid a repeat of "mistaken made with the reconciliation bill." Grassley referred to last-minute negotiations by White House representatives with congressional negotiators when final touches were put on the budget-balancing tax bill that was signed into law by President Clinton.
Grain handling equipment safety

Don't occur often, but once in a while a farmer in wheat fields or a combine just to make sure a curious child had not crawled inside.

"People not required for the operation should not be allowed in the area, especially children," Dosss says. If children are working in the area, make sure the task is appropriate for their age and are properly supervised — do not allow children to unplug the auger. If grain trucks are unloading, keep children away from the grain box while it is being raised and lowered because they could become trapped in the grain or crushed by the grain box as it is being lowered. Make sure that auger grain intakes are properly guarded. Auger are considered one of the most hazardous types of farm equipment.

"The nature of the injuries most often involves the loss of a foot or hand when operators attempt to remove debris or unplugging the auger." Dosss says. "If a grain plug occurs, turn off all power and use a rod or stick to remove the plug. Never use your hand or foot to push material into or out of a plugged auger." If a problem develops in the combine grain tank, disengage the auger and turn the engine off before working on the problem with a stick, rod or small shovel.

"If you have any problems or remove trash or to put the last bit of grain into the unloading auger," Dosss says. "You can get caught in the auger and pulled in before you can turn off the engine, take the key out of the ignition and use a broom to clean away the grain." Dosss says the best rule is to not permit anyone around grain handling equipment unless they have a specific job to do and know how to handle it, know what needs to be done if a problem develops, and are capable of solving it.
As farmers monitor their success in corn, one number keeps coming up.

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Russian students call Michigan home for summer

Tom Guthrie Jr., Sergei Korabline and Tom Sr.

Sergei Korabline is 20 years old and is staying with Tom and Nancy Guthrie and family on their farm near Delton.

Sergei has finished his third of five years at Voronezh Agricultural University, where he's studying agriculture mechanics. After college, he's off to the army. His mother teaches mathematics at the school, and his father, at age 45, is a retired military officer.

It's easy to tell that Sergei didn't have much trouble becoming part of the Guthrie family. "It's pretty much like having my little brother Joe around," said Tom Guthrie Jr., Tom and Nancy's eldest son. "He's been teaching me Russian." Sergei has finished his third of five years at Voronezh Agricultural University, where he's studying agriculture mechanics. After college, he's off to the army. His mother teaches mathematics at the school, and his father, at age 45, is a retired military officer.

It's easy to see why Sergei didn't have much trouble becoming part of the Guthrie family. "It's pretty much like having my little brother Joe around," said Tom Guthrie Jr., Tom and Nancy's eldest son. "He's been teaching me Russian."

Tom Sr. said the experience has been valuable. "It just confirmed for me that people in Russia aren't so different from people in the USA," he said.

Dimitry Popov is the guest of Jan and Nellie Lou Vosburg, of Climax. He recently celebrated his 20th birthday in the States. Like Sergei, Dimitriy is also studying agriculture mechanics. He'll begin his third year when he returns to Russia.

Jan has kept Dimitry busy working on the farm, especially in the shop. Jan said that although they don't share the same native language, communicating with his international guest doesn't necessarily require words.

"He's very adept at figuring out mechanical things," Jan said, recalling how young Dimitry was the one who figured out how to remove an uncooperative combine part. "He's very quick. We don't have to use a lot of words. We use a lot of hand signals, though."

Nellie Lou said Dimitry has made his way into their family easily. Their younger grandson even included him in his bedtime prayers. "I don't even visualize him as a Russian sitting here," Nellie Lou said.

Vasiliy Shipilov has been living with Jim and Patty Miller on their fruit and vegetable farm near Coloma, where they also operate a farm market. Jim is a 23-year-old working toward his master's degree at Voronezh Agricultural University. He has finished two years of his three-year program. There, he also teaches geography, biology, chemistry and ecology. He did his undergraduate work at Voronezh State University. Vasiliy is married and his wife works in government. Jim and Patty don't have children so they're not used to sharing their home with others, let alone a visiting foreign visitor to live with them for several weeks. But Patty said it has been a wonderful experience. "He's really become a part of our family in a very short period of time," she said.

"I've learned a lot about Russia — an insight you cannot have unless you've had this experience to have someone live with you," Jim related. "You get your conception of another country from documents and CNN," he said, "and that probably isn't very accurate."

Vasiliy visited a 700-cow dairy farm in Michigan and called it small. But when you consider many Russian farms are in transition from when they were collective farms, that is small. There are three large farms in the Voronezh area, all are government-controlled. One has 8,000 head of beef cattle. The largest is about 4,000 or 5,000 acres, according to Vasiliy.

"In Russia, very often people do not have land," Vasiliy said. "Those who can pass it on to their children but cannot sell it. Many, including Vasiliy's father, lease their land to others under a sharecropping agreement. 'Now Russian people have farms, but not big,' he said, of the private operations.

Political change

Sergei was only 12 years old when the Berlin Wall came down and was just a teenager when the Soviet Union broke apart. Though he said he's too young to really compare communism to the current system of government, he does know what affects his family.

"Now it's better than earlier," Sergei said, "but my grandfather and grandmother, they don't think so."

Under communism, everyone was taken care of, Sergei said. People of retirement age became pensioners and the government gave them ready pay. Now, people are left to fend for themselves in a democratic government that's on its way to a free market. "It thinks it's not good, not stable," Sergei said of the state of transition. "Many young people have... skepticism," Vasiliy said, after drinking through his Russian English dictionary for the right word. "I don't have skepticism."

But the political transition in Russia from communism to capitalism hasn't been a smooth ride. "When it was Gorbachev the first time, many people think one year and it all right. Now, one year, two years, and not all right."
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The 1997 State Wheat Variety Trial was harvested at eight county sites: Lenawee, Ionia, Saginaw, Kalamazoo, Huron, Tuscola, Sanilac, and Ingham. Pots were 11 feet long and had four one-foot wide rows. The eight county sites were implemented as three replication alpha lattices (25 blocks of 5 pots each). Second order interactions and error terms were included in the model. The dependent variable was percent yield. The model included variety, the variety by the location with the block nested within the location and interaction terms between variety by location and error terms nested within the block. The data were analyzed by the PROC GLM procedure, applying the SAS statistical software.

The data analysis indicated that there are significant differences in yield among the varieties evaluated. The cultivar that had the highest yield was 'Terra5R205', followed by 'Freedom', and 'Pontiac'. The lowest yielding cultivar was 'MariIee'. The table below shows the yield data for each cultivar at each of the eight county sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Lenawee</th>
<th>Ionia</th>
<th>Saginaw</th>
<th>Kalamazoo</th>
<th>Huron</th>
<th>Tuscola</th>
<th>Sanilac</th>
<th>Ingham</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Terra5R205'</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Freedom'</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>66.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Pontiac'</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>67.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'MariIee'</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis also showed that the variety by location interaction was significant, indicating that the yield performance of the varieties varied across the different counties.

The results suggest that 'Terra5R205' is the most suitable variety for the state as a whole, but the choice of variety should be based on the specific county where the crop will be grown.
Nematodes: A serious threat to Michigan corn growers

Fred Warner, a dairy and corn producer in Stanton, was having problems with his corn crop. Almost half of his 300 acres of 1997 corn, which he picked from 75 to 80 bushels, Keeler thought he was doing everything right by rotating his corn with alfalfa hay and oats on a four- to five-year basis. But something was still going wrong.

Keeler consulted Lee Bailey, a farm products dealer in Montclare, who helps area corn growers figure out why their corn isn’t producing high yields. Keeler, many of Bailey’s customers who have low yields to water, wind, and nutrient deficiencies in soils. Often believed their field was off. Soil tests also allowed the problem to supply enough water and nutrients for their corn field.

Mystery solved

What is the cause of this mysterious problem affecting Michigan corn growers? Bailey has diagnosed the problem as nematodes, an unsuspected menace which only recently has been identified as a serious threat to corn in Montclair and elsewhere in the state. Bailey estimates that heavy populations of these pests are expected to continue increasing into the future, and that the yield losses in Michigan’s sandy, sandy loam soils.

Nematode identification difficult

Bailey said there isn’t a sure way to identify. Bailey believes the problem is compounded by growers who aren’t accustomed to using soil in- secticides on corn. Steve Peterson, an extension crop specialist at Michigan State University, said that nematodes are the nematode capital of Michigan for soybean nema- todes, but almost no materials have been used here them for nematode control. Blending corn root- worms and nematodes comes last,” he says.

Looking for damage indicators

He said that nematode damage in corn is usually not a lack of uniform growth. You can walk down a row and see good plants in one area and bad plants in another area. The plants are often growing along a line, even growth straight across the field,” he said. “Affected plants may be off-color too.

Problems in other states

Fred Warner, a nematode diagnostician at Michigan State University, said, “We know that nematodes can cause yield reductions, but we haven’t really recovered at least one species of parasitic nematode in virtually every corn field in the state.” Warner said that nematode damage is caused by nematodes are highly effective for the control of plants. When nematodes are present, they can cause yield reductions. Warner warned the importance of looking at the history of each location. If yields have fallen off and especially if the yields are off-color, then the samples should be taken to determine the cause through lab tests. He explained that nearly 1,000 le- son nematicides and 250 herbicides, expecta- tion, per cent of root tissue and 100-centime- ter soil samples would represent heavy pressure. “This would indicate it’s time to start reining three or four strips down the length of a field to see the results in a positive response growth,” he said.

Evaluation of control materials

If a grower is growing any other crop to use the soil for the insect control in his corn, he will benefit from using nematicide. Warner said that the nematicides are highly effective on this material are known to have activity against nema- todes as well as nematodes. He warned that soybeans were followed by corn or soybeans, expecta- tion, per cent of root tissue and 100-centime- ter soil samples would represent heavy pressure. “This would indicate it’s time to start reining three or four strips down the length of a field to see if this results in a positive response growth,” he said.

Types of Nematodes

Warner said that nematodes are highly effective for the control of plants. When nematodes are present, they can cause yield reductions. Warner warned the importance of looking at the history of each location. If yields have fallen off and especially if the yields are off-color, then the samples should be taken to determine the cause through lab tests. He explained that nearly 1,000 le- son nematicides and 250 herbicides, expecta- tion, per cent of root tissue and 100-centime- ter soil samples would represent heavy pressure. “This would indicate it’s time to start reining three or four strips down the length of a field to see if this results in a positive response growth,” he said.

**Caution:** multi-year data are more informative than single-year averages. Single-year results should not be used to make variety choices decisions.
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- Angel-wood: large size wood, quality assurance, for home construction.

**LAMAS:***

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<td>2. Livestock Equipment</td>
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Weather Outlook

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

A series of upper air disturbances and associated surface fronts have brought much-needed rainfall to nearly all of the state in early August, helping ease moisture stress for most summer crops. The focus of weather concerns this season will likely shift from the lack of moisture to the lack of heat and warm temperatures. Mean temperatures for the previous 30 days generally ranged from 1-2°F below normal, continuing a cooler than normal trend during much of the season thus far. By mid-August, seasonal late 50°F growing degree day accumulations also have fallen from one to more than two weeks behind normal.

The message in new NOAA Climate Prediction Center long lead outlooks is one of continuity, with strong El Nino conditions continuing in the equatorial Pacific. The outlook for September calls for persistence of the present pattern, with cooler and possibly wetter than normal weather, especially across southwestern sections of the state. Looking further ahead, the outlooks for the late summer and early fall months also call for increased chances for cooler and wetter than normal weather, gradually giving way to milder and drier than normal conditions by early winter and continuing through early next year.

Given the current seasonal deficits in growing degree day accumulations and prospects for more cool weather, some full season crops may have trouble reaching maturity this season. Even though the historical skill of long lead weather outlooks during the transitional fall season is low, growers should consider this possibility and their own management response options now, as well as the potential difficulties and complications caused by cool, wet conditions at harvest.

Michigan Weather Summary

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