

MICHIGAN FARM NEWS

MICHIGAN'S ONLY STATEWIDE FARM NEWSPAPER

MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU



MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU

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Southern Thumb Co-op sold to agribusinesses



This Marlette facility, one of six formerly owned by Southern Thumb Co-op, was sold by auction March 27. Four Michigan agribusiness companies purchased Southern Thumb's assets in Marlette, Lapeer, Yale, Imlay City, Dryden and Richmond.

Hepatitis A outbreak infects Michigan schools

Frozen strawberries linked to California processing plant

The USDA school lunch program brought more than nutrition to Calhoun County school children early in April when over 150 of them were infected with Hepatitis A and became ill. The problem stems from frozen strawberries illegally imported, processed in San Diego and sold to the school lunch program as U.S.-grown strawberries.

According to USDA officials, Michigan is the only state so far where illnesses have been reported. One school in Saginaw also had 10 children become ill after eating the contaminated strawberries.

Schools in five other states — Arizona, California, Georgia, Iowa and Tennessee — all received shipments bearing the same lot numbers as Michigan shipments.

According to Michigan Department of Agriculture spokesperson Phil Kirkwood, the strawberries from the suspect shipment were supplied to schools in 28 Michigan counties in the state.

School officials in the affected states have been ordered to stop serving strawberries in their school lunch programs, according to the MDA.

According to the Associated Press, Mexican agriculture officials quickly responded to claims that the strawberries — grown in northern Baja California, Mexico — were probably contaminated there. Baja California Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Israel Camacho said he thought it was more likely the berries were contaminated "during processing and packing rather than during cultivation."

Matthew Kramer, a vice president at Epitepe Inc., the parent company to Andrew & Williamson Sales Co. (A&W), the plant in San Diego that allegedly contaminated the strawberries, said the company is cooperating with state and federal agencies to figure out what stores the bad berries might have gone to.

Kramer said the USDA ordered 1.7 million pounds of strawberries from A&W for its school lunch program and another 900,000 pounds went to other customers. He said the company will recall all 900,000 pounds that went to brokers for distribution.

USDA purchases only U.S.-grown commodities for the school meals programs, and all suppliers must certify in writing that the product is, in fact, domestic. In addition to this requirement placed upon the vendors, USDA regularly conducts compliance audits regarding the origin of the product. A false statement to federal officials concerning the origin of a product is a criminal offense, punishable by up to five years in prison and significant fines.

Continued on page 7

Natural Resources Commission considers new deer hunting regulations

Management recommendations a step in right direction, MFB proposes additional alternatives to the newly proposed plan

Over strong concerns voiced about the escalating crop destruction by deer, a plan to reduce the state's deer herd being proposed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources is considered a step in the right direction. But Michigan Farm Bureau believes additional changes are needed to reduce the deer herd to a manageable size.

The proposal developed by DNR and thoroughly discussed by the Natural Resources Commission at its April 9 meeting would create a new, stand-alone antlerless license in certain areas of the state sold on a first-come, first-served basis instead of relying exclusively on a lottery system. A hunter would be able to purchase doe permits at the rate of one per day until that Deer Management Unit's (DMU) quota is met for the season.

The traditional doe permit lottery system would continue, but the application deadline would be moved from Sept. 24 to Aug. 1 so the stand-alone antlerless permits could be used during the October — November archery season. The plan also calls for boundary changes in 21 DMUs to allow more permits in areas with excess deer, to do a better job of micro-managing local deer herds.

The only question that remains now is whether the plan is aggressive enough to bring population levels down to the established levels within a reasonable period of time, according to Michigan Farm

Bureau President Jack Laurie. He notes that the DNR and the Natural Resources Commission have an obligation to adopt wildlife management policies based on sound scientific principles, adding that passage of Proposal G last fall established an ideal structure, combining staff expertise with public input on the new recommendations.

"Michigan citizens overwhelmingly voted to have the Natural Resources Commission adopt public policy with public input to manage the state's wildlife based on sound science," Laurie said. "The evolution of these deer herd management recommendations, developed by DNR experts, is a textbook example of how Proposal G is supposed to work in managing our state's deer herd. It's safe to say the entire agricultural industry is pleased to see the proposed changes."

"We believe DNR's proposal is a beginning," adds MFB Legislative Counsel Scott Everett, "but the changes may not go far enough and soon enough to protect Michigan's cropland. We suggested to the commission some other ideas based on Farm Bureau policy for consideration to more quickly reduce the deer herd in the state. For example, last year's deer harvest was approximately 300,000, and to reduce the number of deer from 2 to 1.3 million will take substantial change. We basically suggested that the DNR conduct the archery and firearm deer season in three distinct parts to achieve maximum and effective deer harvest."

"First, we suggested opening a six-day, antlerless-only archery season the beginning of September

Continued on page 4

COVER STORY

Southern Thumb Co-op sold

Six facilities split and sold to four major agribusinesses

Amongst tremendous turmoil and a bankruptcy declaration, the Southern Thumb Co-op's major assets were auctioned off March 27 to four agribusinesses all with strong ties to Michigan agriculture. Although each individual site's value was not disclosed, the total of all the facilities brought more than \$3.5 million.

"The value is about \$4.8 million on the books," explains former Southern Thumb Co-op General Manager Tom Ryan. "That's net of depreciation. The bank sent out a letter to potential bidders telling them that their minimum overall value is \$3.477 million."

The facilities were sold in an auction format offering each location on an individual basis for the first round of bidding and allowing for a grouping of facilities in the second round if an individual site went unpurchased.

According to Jim Byrum, Michigan Agri-Business Association (MABA) president, the total sale wound up between \$3.5 and \$3.6 million from the auction held in Flint.

"Once I realized we were going bankrupt," explains Ryan, "my two goals were 1) to make sure we had a place for our growers to do business and 2) to have our employees have jobs. There have been a few layoffs, but most of our employees have not had any interruptions in their paychecks and our customers have been able to get most services, other than grain from the co-op, even during the interim period."

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News in Brief

Ingham County third-graders to participate in Rural Education Day

More than 700 Ingham County third-graders will experience Michigan's rural life April 29 at Ingham County Farm Bureau's Rural Education Day.

Kids will learn how cows are milked and how butter and maple syrup are made. They will also learn about Michigan wildlife, agriculture commodities, soil conservation and gardening. Young farm animals will also be available to pet.

The event will be held at the Ingham County fairgrounds in Mason from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information or to volunteer, contact Loretta Benjamin, Ingham County Farm Bureau, at 517-676-5578. ■

Dutch "mad cow" incident raises EU concerns over feed controls

While the European Commission is happy with steps taken by Dutch authorities following the death of a cow from "mad cow" disease recently, the event has highlighted commission concerns that the EU ban on infected bonemeal feed is not being toughly implemented, officials say.

"Since infected bonemeal is the main theory for the cause of BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), there have to be concerns that it caught the disease this way," one EU official said.

But he said the commission was completely

ADM Milling will not consolidate headquarters in Decatur, Ill.

The Archer Daniels Midland Milling Co. will not move its administrative offices from Overland Park, Kan., to ADM (NYSE:ADM) corporate headquarters in Decatur, Ill., as previously reported.

ADM spokesperson Karla Miller confirmed ADM has decided to cancel the consolidation plans of all its milling administrative offices until further notice, and business will continue as usual.

"Senior management has determined that it would be in its best interest to leave things as they are for the time being," Miller said.

Miller also said there was no plan to re-evaluate this recent decision in a future meeting.

Originally, ADM had ideas of consolidating all milling administrative offices to the Decatur, Ill., headquarters by Aug. 1. ■

FB-backed estate tax bill introduced

A group of senators, led by Sens. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) and Max Baucus (D-Mont.), unveiled legislation that would provide farmers and ranchers and others who own family businesses with much needed estate tax relief. The senators, joined by Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.), explained why their "Estate Tax Relief for the American Family Act of 1997" would help keep farms within families.

Representing the American Farm Bureau Federation, South Carolina Farm Bureau President Harry Bell said, "Without estate tax law changes, agriculture's contribution to our economy is threatened. Farmers and ranchers need a break from exorbitant and punitive estate taxes so that farms and ranches can be passed from one generation to the next."

While Farm Bureau supports outright repeal of the "death tax," said Bell, the Grassley-Baucus proposal would go a long way toward easing farmers' concerns about estate taxes. The measure would increase the unified credit exemption from

its present \$600,000 to \$1 million, phased in over six years; would provide family owned businesses with a full exemption for the first \$1.5 million of qualified assets, with a 50 percent exemption up to \$10 million; and would increase the maximum reduction in value for special use valuation, which would apply to farms, from \$750,000 to \$1 million.

Across Capitol Hill on the House side, Missouri Farm Bureau Federation President Charles Kruse is scheduled to testify before the House Ways and Means Committee on the need for changes in the estate tax and capital gains laws.

Farm Bureau, while seeking the repeal of the capital gains tax, supports cutting the rate to 15 percent, maximum. Currently, the United States' 28 percent capital gains tax rate is one of the highest. "In order for farmers and ranchers to continue their high level of productivity, reform of estate tax and capital gains tax laws is needed without delay. The results will benefit farmers, consumers and the economy," Kruse's statement said. ■

Assemblyman seeks ways to curb ag "trash talk"

A California assemblyman doesn't like the disparaging remarks concerning Golden State agricultural products, and he seeks to determine the damage such trash talk creates. Tom Bordonaro has introduced a bill that would require state officials to study "the impact that false or disparaging statements about California agricultural products have had on the state's economy over the past 10 years."

Last year, the California General Assembly defeated a measure that would have allowed farmers to sue people who bad-mouth a perishable agricultural food product. Farmers in Arizona, Florida and Texas already have the right to sue on such grounds. Jasper Hempel, of the Western Growers Association, says joking about farm products is no laughing mat-

ter to producers. "It's not a joke at all," Hempel said. "If somebody stands up and says something false about a perishable commodity, it causes economic harm for which there is no remedy."

Free speech advocates say such laws violate civil rights. "We don't need a study to verify that the First Amendment gives folks the ability to say what they want about fruits and vegetables," said Francisco Lobaco of the American Civil Liberties Union.

The American Farm Bureau Federation encourages the adoption of anti-disparagement legislation, which provides a legal course of action against those individuals, groups or government bodies who make disparaging statements against agricultural products and/or production. ■

West Virginia farmers seek more control of deer problem

The West Virginia Legislature is studying a package of bills that would expand farmers' options in reducing crop damage and increasing compensation for damage resulting from deer.

Earlier, the West Virginia Farm Bureau planned to ask the Legislature to increase hunting fees and use the additional revenue to increase compensation to farmers. Hunters opposed that plan, and the West Virginia Farm Bureau backed off the plan because it didn't want to create animosity

between farmers and hunters.

The package supported by West Virginia Farm Bureau calls for, among other things, relaxing standards for permits that allow hunters to shoot deer that destroy crops, allowing the Department of Natural Resources to issue more permits, letting farmers sell permits for up to \$50 to increase their compensation for damages, and adding two farmer representatives to the Natural Resources Commission to oversee deer damage to crops. ■

Consumers support biotech food

A new national survey of 1,004 U.S. adults finds high awareness of food biotechnology, strong support for its benefits, and endorsement for the current labeling requirements of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Nearly eight out of 10 (79 percent) Americans are aware of biotechnology, with more than half (54 percent) saying biotechnology has already provided benefits to them. Three out of four consumers (78 percent) predict they will benefit from biotechnology in the next five years. Nearly half of the respondents realized foods produced through biotechnology were already in supermarkets. (Staples such as corn, potatoes and soybeans are among the foods enhanced through plant biotechnology.)

When asked about current FDA requirements that mandate labeling of foods produced through biotechnology only when there is a substantial change in a food's composition, nutritional value or allergenicity, more than three-quarters (78 percent) of consumers indicated they support the FDA policy. However, when presented with the position of some critics of the FDA policy, who believe all food biotechnology products should be labeled, nearly 6 in 10 (57 percent) of Americans still maintained their support of the current labeling policy. The survey, commissioned by the International Food Information Council (IFIC), was conducted March 21-24, by the Wirthlin Group. ■

Consumer demands will keep label issue hot

European consumers' resistance to food products made from genetically altered crops will likely mean the labeling of products containing those crops will continue to be a hot issue.

"Labeling is still in the heat of the debate," said Arnold Mergell, chairman of the German Oilseed Crushers Association.

The European Union approved the use of genetically altered soybeans in food and seed in 1996, prompting several European nations to call for the labeling of all or some products containing the crops. The Austrian government has called for the labeling of all "genetically modified raw material and feeds," and several other nations are considering labeling requirements

because of consumer demands fueled by fervent environmental group protests, which Mergell said were highly visible and effective.

"They (Greenpeace — the lead environmental group in the gene-altered crops debate) really spread this mistrust," Mergell said. "So when they (consumers) hear this message from morning to afternoon, they become hesitant."

"It is well-known that German consumers have been very reluctant to accept genetically modified food products, and that groups such as Greenpeace have seen some success on this issue as a result," a U.S. Foreign Agricultural Service attache in Germany wrote in a report. ■

Planting intentions released; soybeans, corn up

The Agriculture Department has released a report on planting intentions and says farmers across the country this year will opt to plant more profitable soybeans and corn and forsake the currently lower priced wheat. USDA also says cotton plantings will be slightly down.

The report shows soybean plantings will near 68.8 million acres, the highest level since 1980. Farmers last year sowed 64.2 million acres of soybeans.

USDA's survey of 55,000 corn producers shows farmers this year will plant 81.4 million acres of corn, the largest amount of corn acreage since 1985. Those figures are up from 79.5 million acres of corn planted last year.

Taking a hit will be the number of wheat acres,

with projected wheat plantings down across the country to 17.8 million acres for spring wheat and 3.19 million acres in durum wheat plantings. Total wheat acreage is estimated at 69.2 million acres, down almost 10 percent from last year. Wheat producers last year planted 75.6 million acres of wheat, with 20.4 million in spring wheat and other wheat varieties.

Cotton acreage also will be slightly down this year at 14.5 million acres. Cotton producers in 1996 planted 14.67 million acres in the fluffy white crop.

Government soybean and corn acreage projections were "sharply" above commodity analysts' and traders' expectations and were expected to trigger price drops at the Chicago Board of Trade and other commodity markets. ■

Cows need to produce more in the Midwest

According to a report released by Mid-America Dairy, unless cows start producing more milk, residents of the Midwest will have to start importing milk and butter within 10 years.

Midwestern producers, says Gary Hanman of the dairy group, are losing ground to farmers in the

West and Southwest, where feed and labor are plentiful and cheaper.

Dairy production in the Southwest increased 75 percent from 1986 to 1996. Production in the West rose 45 percent during the same period. Output fell 11 percent in the Midwest. ■

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Capitol Corner

For more information on legislative topics in the Michigan Farm News, call 800-292-2680.

NATIONAL ISSUE

Ethanol tax incentives

A letter is being circulated among members of Congress requesting their support to retain federal ethanol tax incentives. The letter is being circulated by Congressmen Jim Nussle (R-Iowa), Bill Barrett (R-Nebraska), David Minge (D-Minnesota) and Lane Evans (D-Illinois) who are members of the Alcohol Fuel Caucus. It will also be sent to Congressman Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House and Congressman Richard Gephardt, House Minority Leader.

The letter opposes the repeal of the tax incentives for ethanol and explains that ethanol:

- Boosts net more than \$4.5 billion annually;
- Increases total employment by 192,000 jobs;
- Improves the balance of trade by over \$2 billion;
- Adds over \$450 million to state tax receipts each year; and

NATIONAL ISSUE

Earned income tax credit eligibility for farmers

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a tax credit available to low income-taxpayers who have earned income. Because of changes made in last year's welfare reform law, the IRS is declaring some farmers ineligible for the tax credit.

Low-income taxpayers can claim EITC provided they do not have more than \$2,200 of capital gain net income. Capital gain net income is defined by the Internal Revenue Code to be gains from the sale of capital assets.

The IRS is incorrectly characterizing profit from the sale of breeding livestock as capital gain

- Results in a net budget savings of more than \$3.5 billion.

It also states that Congress made a commitment to keep incentives in place until 2000 and that the programs reduce American dependence on foreign oil.

Meanwhile, H.R. 161 has been introduced by Congressman Phil English (R-Pennsylvania) and John Lewis (D-Georgia) to repeal the ethanol tax exemption. They cite a new GAO report that says the 5.4 cent per gallon ethanol tax exemption has cost the Federal Highway Trust Fund \$7.1 billion since 1979.

MFB Position: Farm Bureau supports the letter being circulated by the Alcohol Fuels Caucus and opposes H.R. 161.

MFB Contact: Al Almy, Ext. 2040. ■

net income therefore disqualifying farmers from claiming EITC. It can be argued that breeding livestock is not a capital asset but rather property used in a trade or business.

Senator James Jeffords (R-VT) and 16 other senators have written to the Internal Revenue Service Commissioner asking the IRS to correct this error administratively. Similar letters were proposed in the House and signed by 27 representatives.

MFB Position: Farm Bureau opposes the IRS action.

MFB Contact: Al Almy, Ext. 2040. ■

STATE ISSUE

Senate road funding plan

The Senate passed S.B. 303, sponsored by Sen. Hoffman (R-Horton), which would establish several transportation reforms and efficiencies. Several of the reforms are supported in Farm Bureau policy. Specifically, Farm Bureau supports reforms in the bill that:

- End all diversions from the Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF) within three years.
- Impose an administrative cap of 10 percent on all road projects.
- Require performance audits of local road authorities.
- Local road authorities may decide how to spend money on primary and local roads.
- Requires MDOT to seek opportunities for further privatization.

Farm Bureau feels these reforms should be part of any transportation reform package. An Action Request was sent on this bill. Farm Bureau favored a yes vote. It passed the Senate 30-2. Sen. O'Brien (D-Detroit) and Sen. Miller (D-Warren) voted no.

Two additional bills relating to transportation funding also passed the Senate. They were:

- S.B. 302, introduced by Sen. Hoffman, is a budget supplemental for FY 1996-97. It

would use \$50 million from the unreserved balance of the comprehensive Transportation Fund and \$13 million of new revenue from the new Diesel Tax for this construction season. The dollars would go through the P.A. 51 formula.

- S.B. 225, introduced by Sen. Steil (R-Grand Rapids), would use a one time appropriation of the interest from the Countercyclical Budget and Economic Stabilization Fund (Rainy Day Fund) and use it to repair roads. This would amount to \$69 million for FY 1996-97.

In effect, the Senate passed \$205 million in new money for roads. Only \$45 million, however, is a permanent increase — year one of the three year diversion phase out. The other \$160 million increase is only for one year.

While Farm Bureau supports the Senate's efforts to provide additional monies for roads, we continue to believe a gas tax increase will be necessary to provide a permanent increase in revenue for the roads. Latest estimates indicate \$5.4 billion over the next 10 years will be needed to bring roads and bridges up to standards.

MFB Contact: Tim Goodrich, ext. 2048. ■

STATE ISSUE

Truck weights

Rep. Leland (D-Detroit), Chair of the House Transportation Committee, will be introducing legislation to reduce truck weights from the current 164,000 pounds. He has appointed a subcommittee to research this issue and this committee will be holding hearings throughout the spring. In addition, Sen. Phil Hoffman (R-Horton), Chairman of the Appropriation Subcommittee on Transportation, has indicated he will be introducing legislation to reduce truck weights from 164,000 pounds to 127,000 pounds. This proposal calls for an overweight truck permit which will include a new fee.

MFB Position: MFB policy is opposed to any reduction in truck weights.

- The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) indicated that axle weight limits are substantially more important than a truck's gross vehicle weight.
- Michigan allows a gross vehicle weight of 164,000 pounds in total truck weight, which is about 15,000 pounds per axle spread over 11 axles. Other states allow a gross vehicle weight of 80,000, which is about 16,000 pounds per axle spread over 5 axles.
- The Michigan Department of Transportation believes that twice as many trucks on the road at 80,000 pounds creates far more damage than 1

Michigan truck at 164,000 pounds.

- The timely movement of several perishable commodities is critical to agriculture. Decreasing the allowable truck weights will require the use of more trucks and, thus, will have a negative impact on agricultural profits.

MFB Contact: Tim Goodrich, ext. 2048. ■

USDA lifts restrictions on Karnal bunt

The USDA researchers determined that Karnal bunt is not present in wheat in the Southeast.

The department had set quarantines at about two dozen sites, such as farms and grain elevators, in the region after Karnal bunt-like spores were detected. Officials said the quarantines would be lifted immediately.

USDA said last week its Karnal bunt testing in the Southeast had been called into question by the discovery of ryegrass smut with spores similar to the Karnal bunt. The department based its decision on the fact that bunted wheat kernels were not found in any samples in the Southeast, whereas contamination with bunted ryegrass kernels was common. Researchers have shown that spores from ryegrass do not infect wheat. ■

STATE ISSUE

Land Division Act

Public Act 591, sponsored by Sen. Leon Stille (R-Spring Lake), took effect March 31. It had been signed by the governor Jan. 22.

Content:

- Changed the name of the Subdivision Control Act to the Land Division Act.
- Allows certain land divisions to be exempt from meeting platting requirements (i.e., no review by local government, drain commission, road commission, public health department).
- The following land divisions are exempt from meeting the platting requirements:
 - Division of a parent parcel or parent tract that results in the following (Defines a parent parcel or parent tract as that parcel or tract which is lawfully in existence on the effective date of the amendatory act):
 - 4 parcels for the first 10 acres or fraction thereof
 - 1 parcel for each whole 10 acres in excess of the first 10 acres, for up to a maximum of 11 additional parcels
 - 1 parcel for each whole 40 acres in excess of the first 120 acres
 - If the parent parcel is 20 acres or larger, 2 additional parcels are permitted if either of the following occur:
 - A new road is established and none of the previous parcels have a driveway access to a previously existing road
 - One of the above resulting parcels comprises not less than 60 percent of the area of the parent parcel or parent tract
 - The division of all new parcels created after the effective date of the act if all of the following are met:
 - At least 10 years have passed since the parcel or tract was recorded
 - The division does not result in more than the following number of parcels, whichever is less:
 - 2 parcels for the first 10 acres or fraction thereof and 1 parcel for each additional whole 10 acres

- 7 parcels or 10 parcels if one of the resulting parcels comprises not less than 60 percent of the area of the parcel or tract being split
- The following land divisions are also exempt (and are not included in the above number of exempt parcels and approval by the local government is not required):
 - Any division which does not create any parcels under 40 acres in size
 - Any division which transfers property from one parcel to another contiguous parcel
- The local unit of government shall approve the above land divisions within 30 days if all the following are met:
 - A tentative parcel map is submitted and each parcel has an appropriate legal description
 - Each parcel less than 10 acres in size has a 4:1 depth to width ratio unless a local ordinance dictates a different depth to width ratio (parcels over 10 acres exempt)
 - Each parcel does not have a width or area less than required by a local ordinance
 - Each parcel has access to a public or private road via a driveway or an easement
 - If the parcel is a development site:
 - appropriate approval for on-site water supply and sewage disposal
 - adequate easements for public utilities
- Exempt divisions are now "transferable" from a parent parcel to a new parcel. A landowner can pass on the ability to create X-number of divisions that would be exempt from the platting requirements. A statement must be included on the deed to that effect.
- All deeds for parcels of unplatted land shall contain the following statement:

"This property may be located within the vicinity of farmland or a farm operation. Generally accepted agricultural and management practices which may generate noise, dust, odors and other associated conditions may be used and are protected by the Michigan Right to Farm Act."

Number of "exempt" parcels that can be created
Scenario 1 - land remains as 1 parcel under the same ownership for 20 years

| Parent Parcel size (acres) | CURRENT LAW (4 additional parcels allowed every 10 years) | Initial exempt divisions under P.A. 591 | Redivision of remaining parcel after 10 years | Redivision of remaining parcel after 20 years | TOTAL for 20 year period under P.A. 591 |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | 4 | 4 | | | 4 |
| 20 | 5 | 7 | 2 | | 9 |
| 30 | 6 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 12 |
| 40 | 7 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 14 |
| 60 | 9 | 11 | 4 | 4 | 19 |
| 80 | 11 | 13 | 6 | 5 | 24 |
| 120 | 15 | 17 | 7 | 7 | 31 |
| 160 | 19 | 18 | 10 | 10 | 38 |
| 200 | 23 | 19 | 10 | 10 | 39 |
| 240 | 27 | 20 | 10 | 10 | 40 |
| 280 | 31 | 21 | 10 | 10 | 41 |
| 320 | 35 | 22 | 10 | 10 | 42 |
| 400 | 43 | 24 | 10 | 10 | 44 |
| 520 | 55 | 27 | 10 | 10 | 47 |
| 640 | 67 | 30 | 10 | 10 | 50 |

Scenario 2 - remaining land is divided into 90 acre parcels after 10 years and then each 90 acre parcel is divided 10 years later to maximize number of exempt divisions

| Parent Parcel size (acres) | CURRENT LAW (4 additional parcels allowed every 10 years) | Initial exempt divisions under P.A. 591 | Redivision of remaining parcel after 10 years | Redivision of remaining parcel after 20 years | TOTAL for 20 year period under P.A. 591 |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 240 | 27 | 20 | 10 | 20 | 50 |
| 280 | 31 | 21 | 10 | 24 | 55 |
| 320 | 35 | 22 | 10 | 27 | 59 |
| 400 | 43 | 24 | 10 | 37 | 71 |
| 520 | 55 | 27 | 10 | 47 | 84 |
| 640 | 67 | 30 | 10 | 63 | 103 |

NOTE: All calculations using 2 acres as lot size. Two bonus lots allowed under P.A. 591 are included.

MFB Contact: Scott Everett, Ext. 2046. ■

All-Ag Channel Earth on the air

Millions of households can tune their television sets to a new channel devoted exclusively to serving those who live in or love the country. Channel Earth, channel 283 on DIRECTV, began its first day of programming March 28. Channel Earth will deliver more than 13 hours of daily programming every Monday through Friday and eight hours (5 a.m. to 1 p.m.) on Saturdays.

News, weather, commentary and much more, designed for today's rural residents, will be featured on Channel Earth. Orion Samuelson, executive producer and chairman of the board of Channel Earth, notes, "We're excited about the opportunity to meet the information needs of people in rural America. The satellite technology available today

gives us the best way to reach an audience beyond the city limits that deserves a steady, reliable, up-to-the-minute source of critical information on issues that affect their lives every working day. And we'll provide some fun, too."

Joining Samuelson is broadcasting colleague Max Armstrong. Together they will lead a team of regional and national correspondents, livestock and commodity market experts, meteorologists and talk show hosts. Mike Orso, a former member of AFBF's Public Relations Division, serves as a producer for Channel Earth, and Farm Bureau programming will frequently be featured on the new all-farm channel. ■

Michigan Department of Ag announces reorganization

Early retirement program could reduce department by 10 percent

Over 7,000 state employees will qualify under the early retirement program passed by the Michigan Legislature, of which 70 Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) employees will qualify forcing the department to reorganize into eight divisions from 13.

"The MDA has 500 employees, of which 70 qualify to leave early," explained MDA Director Dan Wyant. "We'll probably have 50 take the early-out program and so we're going to manage the impact of that."

"We're taking the opportunity to reorganize our department," Wyant added. "We'll go from 13 divisions down to eight. The major changes include putting all our pollution prevention programs in one division. The other is creating an office of agriculture development to work on value-added food processing opportunities. And the third is putting a focus on food safety and creating a dairy and food division. Our food and dairy, food safety programs and all will be housed again under one division with one leadership."

According to Wyant, the merging of the dairy and food safety programs will not affect any current programs either division maintains. "The only thing we're doing is seeing a change at the top," he adds. "Tom Whelan is no longer the head of the dairy division; Kathy Fedder is now in charge. Nothing else changes — no diminishment of program, no diminishment of resource, other than some people that we anticipate to take advantage of the early-out."

"I've asked Fedder, who has been heading our marketing efforts department, to take on that role," Wyant continues, "Tom Whelan, our current dairy

division director, will move to the laboratory as our manager of the lab retires. He's an excellent leader, a great support of our laboratory and consumer protection programs."

Timeline for the reorganization

"It'll all be in place by June 1," Wyant adds, "So we'll move through this transition period, and my staff is working to put together a transition plan that can make this all occur."

Wyant says that the department evaluated other options but feels the final decision is best for Michigan agriculture "There were some concerns or rumors that we were going to split the dairy division up between animal and food," he explains. "We took a look at that for efficiency reasons and concluded it was best to keep one comprehensive unit. We recognize that what goes on in the farm affects what goes in the bottle, and we have to make sure there's a connection or relationship. We think the new organization structure is going to put an emphasis on food safety, strengthen the family farm and pollution prevention, and we'll be a stronger organization because of it."

"We're going to see about a \$500,000 savings with our whole reorganizational plan for the whole department on an annual basis," Wyant concludes. Eight consolidated MDA divisions:

- Dairy and food
- Finance and technology
- Animal industry
- Marketing and commodity
- Environmental stewardship
- Pest and plant management
- Laboratory
- Human resources ■

Southern Thumb Co-op sold

Continued from page 1

"We (management) will probably be in the job market for a couple of weeks," concedes Ryan. "Right now because we're so actively involved in this thing, I don't think any of us have really put resumes out."

"What happened was very clearly some experienced agribusiness companies wound up with the remaining assets of the company," explains Byrum. "Lapeer Grain is going to be active in Lapeer and Imlay City. MAC is going to be active in Marlette. Grower Service Corporation wound up with both the Dryden and Richmond locations. And IMC is going to be in Yale. They're all experienced companies, they all have major commitments to Michigan agriculture, and they will be ready to serve farmers."

"If you look at the proceedings, it certainly wasn't fun to sit there and watch something like that be dismembered," Byrum adds. "All of those operations have been profitable and provided occupations for a lot of people, and been really major forces in their individual communities. And this is going to cause change."

In explaining the decision to go after the Marlette location, MAC President Herm Geers commented that "Marlette was probably best suited to us, geographically it's in good farming country. Imlay City would've been our second choice because of its geographic location."

According to Geers, Marlette's facilities were attractive because it has 1.5 million bushel storage for grain with good unloading and drying capability and is on a mainline railroad.

On the marketing ability MAC brings to grain and bean producers in the Marlette area, "We're a full-service elevator for the farmer with a quality line of feed and fertilizer. Our marketing service will be the same as before and we offer a number of options for them to consider. We give the benefit of bids domestic or export with 20 years of marketing experience. We think that we've got fresh approaches to the marketplace and we don't play games with the market."

"They're going to be pretty aggressive," Byrum explains. "I think that could be a win for producers compared to some of the other options that may have been out there. It would've been nicer if this, perhaps, would have happened 60 days ago, but it didn't. If I were a producer in that neighborhood, I would have been nervous if there hadn't been experienced companies buying."

"We're looking at improving the transfer equipment and we're going to ask the farmer what he wants through field surveys," Geers adds.

"Overall, we're optimistic," Geers continues. "We're excited about the area and looking forward to working with the people. We want to make the Marlette MAC a place that people want to do business and keep getting better at it."

Resolution of negative equities from Southern Thumb Co-op

The marketing instruments that sent the co-op spiraling into bankruptcy were not completely resolved in late March when the assets of the co-op changed hands. A majority of producers have yet to settle their negative equities with the St. Paul Bank for Cooperatives and the former Southern Thumb Co-op.

"The St. Paul Bank had been unable to find a solution with the growers, so the management made a proposal to our growers that about 40 percent decided to go with," Ryan explains. "The bank had never been willing to do anything other than a 50-cents-on-the-dollar settlement. Our most recent settlement that we were able to negotiate averaged about 35 percent. We got about 40 percent of our growers settled and those growers have this pretty much behind them now. The other 60 percent of those people will likely be sued by the bank once the co-op is sold."

"The legacy of Southern Thumb will be around for a while," adds Byrum. "My sense is that the cards and letters will stop coming from Southern Thumb and will probably start coming from the St. Paul Bank. It is their desire to collect as much as they can. So I would be surprised if they weren't pretty aggressive."

Byrum adds that the severity of this situation was very isolated in Michigan. "I think that's the key point. The instruments that caused these problems to develop at Southern Thumb are not widespread." ■

Glickman splashed with rotting bison entrails

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, in Montana to discuss the bison situation in Yellowstone National Park, was splashed with rotting bison entrails Sunday by an animal rights protester angry about the killing of more than 1,000 bison who strayed out of the park's boundaries.

The protester, Delyla Wilson, rushed into a high school cafeteria near Yellowstone carrying a five-gallon bucket filled with the rotting innards. Wilson intended to dump the bucket on Montana Gov. Marc Racicot, but she was stopped and the contents of the bucket fell on a table, splashing Glickman and Racicot the most, with some hitting Sens. Conrad Burns (R-Mont.) and Max Baucus (D-Mont.) Despite being hit with the foul-smelling offal, none of the officials were injured.

"I won't forget this meeting for a long time. It's a tough job being secretary of agriculture," said Glickman, who earlier in the year was confronted by nude protesters at a World Trade Organization meeting in Brussels.

Wilson, a member of the newly-formed Bison Action Group, was held by the local sheriff's department and will be charged with disorderly conduct. After cleaning up, the officials resumed the meeting. ■

Natural Resources Commission considers new deer hunting regulations

Continued from page 1

September for private land in areas with extensive deer numbers," Everett explains. "After the early archery season, open up a two-week antlerless-only firearm season in those areas the DNR shows high deer numbers — which is about half of the state."

"Once the early season concludes, we suggest an archery season be opened until Oct. 31, then conduct an early five-day firearm deer season followed by the traditional archery and firearm season. One of the DNR proposals is an experimental September firearm season for antlerless deer in Menominee County beginning Sept. 19. We simply want to expand that."

According to Everett, the early five-day firearm season in addition to the traditional season would provide economic and social benefits to Michigan farmers, businesses and hunters.

"The economic benefits are to the thousands of businesses throughout Michigan's prime hunting areas that thrive on the 800,000-plus hunters and

the goods and services they purchase for their sport," adds Everett. "And hunters would benefit from the added time available to harvest deer."

"We want to expand both archery and firearm seasons to give hunters every opportunity to participate in the fall harvest by increasing the number of days available to hunt by over 28 days with short breaks in between, which allows the deer to resume their normal habitat patterns," he adds. "This will also provide landowners additional opportunity to provide access to private land."

According to Everett, the proposals submitted by Michigan Farm Bureau may not have to be carried out each and every year — "but the decision to increase the aggressiveness and number of days needs to be based on sound deer herd management guidelines, and right now drastic measures need to be taken."

The DNR's Natural Resources Commission is scheduled to take final and formal action on the proposals during their May meeting for the proposals to be implemented during the 1997 season. ■

Computer program predicts presence of food pathogens

Easy to install and easy to use, an updated computer software package can help the food industry predict the fate of harmful microorganisms in products.

Scientists with USDA's Agricultural Research Service developed the Pathogen Modeling Program to track the survival and growth of E. coli O157:H7 and other pathogens. The program supplies a first-round estimate of the safety potential of foods during product development by industry or during safety evaluation by regulatory agencies. It gives microbiologists in the food industry and regulatory agencies a quick, accurate, inexpensive way to "engineer" safety into foods.

The user types in information on food formulation or storage conditions, including temperature,

salt levels and acidity. Then the program graphically predicts the growth or death of the pathogen.

The newest version of the program — the fifth — contains growth models for *Aeromonas hydrophila*, *Bacillus cereus*, *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Salmonella*, *Shigella flexneri*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, and *Yersinia enterocolitica*. Earlier versions have been distributed worldwide to over 800 users.

Free of charge, the program can be downloaded from the World Wide Web site of ARS' Eastern Regional Research Center in Wyndmoor, Pa. The WWW address is: <http://www.arserrc.gov>.

Scientists at the center's Microbial Food Safety Research Unit designed the program. It runs on IBM-compatible computers with Windows operating systems. ■

SARE grants worth \$200,000 for on-farm research, marketing

Individual farmers who would like to do on-farm research might receive \$5,000 or a group of farmers interested in creative marketing might receive \$10,000 from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program.

The SARE is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's North Central Region. Michigan is part of the NCR, which consists of 12 states.

The grants are awarded on a competitive basis. This year the SARE program will distribute \$200,000 in grants.

Farmers receiving the grants get help in

getting started and they in turn help other interested producers. The purpose of the grants is to allow farmers the opportunity to take risks or make changes they might not otherwise undertake.

The grant application deadline is May 1. The funds will be available by midfall.

To obtain a grant application and other information, contact the NCR SARE Program, 13A Activities Building, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE 68583-0840, or call 402-472-7081 or fax 402-472-0280. ■

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Agricultural Marketing Service administrator tackles Tart Cherry FMO

MACMA annual meeting provides forum for growers to give input to chief administrator

In late March, the Michigan Agricultural Commodity Marketing Association's annual meeting in Rothbury featured the USDA's administrator for the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Lon Hatamiya discussing what's on many tart cherry producers' minds — their recently adopted Federal Marketing Order (FMO).

Hatamiya's department is charged with administering all FMOs. "It will allow an industry to come together to better market their product," he explains. "There has been a lack of information as to production around the country, a lack of real planning and strategy on how to grow markets, as well as to get a better handle on the markets that are out there."

"A marketing order really allows an industry to collectively come together to determine some of those longer term strategies. This marketing order with the various components that it has in terms of quality control, supply, dealing with surplus as well as the other aspects, will enable the industry to work together, not only in Michigan, but around the country, to benefit from that creation of the Federal Marketing Order."

"The beauty of the marketing order is the fact that it is the industry that determines how they're governed," states Hatamiya. "And what regulations they work under, the kinds of plans and strategies they put together for the future. We're not there to dictate how the tart cherry industry should operate, but we give them the mechanism to work among themselves to come up with those answers."

According to the AMS administrator, the AMS provides the resources of data collection, of past history on how the FMOs work, and provide helpful information on how marketing order operate better. "But those ultimate decisions are made by the committee members who are producers or handlers themselves in the field, and we think that's a model for a public/private partnership without being overburdensome on the public side," he adds.

"In this day and age, people are not looking for more regulation from government, but less," Hatamiya explains. "We point to it as a prime example of how the federal government can really assist the private industry without being too burdensome."

The most recent efforts of the AMS have revolved around the creation of a grower-supported FMO for cherries. "We have been very actively involved with the creation of the Tart Cherry Marketing Order," states Hatamiya. "We certainly have had a constant relationship with farmers in Michigan on a most recent basis, but also on a daily basis. In Benton Harbor, we have our market news reporters who collect and disseminate information on the various fruits and vegetables that are grown in Michigan and in neighboring states and how that might affect the agricultural economy in the state of Michigan."

Status of the Dairy Federal Milk Marketing Order

According to Hatamiya, the FMO for milk is undergoing a public comment period to gather producer input. In the past, Federal Marketing Orders on the dairy side have had to go through rule making which requires hearings and a number of months of review.

"Under this process, what we're trying to do is

CRP deferral — bad idea

The American Farm Bureau Federation has asked Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman to oppose the administration's proposal to defer the sign-up of two million Conservation Reserve Program acres in 1997. The administration has said that action is necessary in order to fund the \$65 million Crown Butte Mines agreement, under which the federal government would buy the mine.

In a letter to Glickman, AFBF President Dean Kleckner said, "Deferring sign-up in order to fund the Crown Butte Mines agreement circumvents congressional intent and support for CRP."

In 1997, 22 million acres of land will be released from CRP contracts. In his letter, Kleckner noted that Congress reiterated its support for CRP in the 1996 farm bill. Kleckner also said that the action proposed by the administration would set a dangerous precedent of shifting funding from CRP and other farm programs. ■

basically set up a program by which we solicit comments from the industry and from the public and then we come back out with various proposals which we're doing now," he adds.

"These proposals are really in response or as a result of meetings and various town hall gatherings that we've had around the country to gather information," according to Hatamiya. "The result of working with experts in the field from various universities, Cornell, Texas A&M, Wisconsin and various others to take a look at what proposals they've come up with that are possible solutions to the current system. It is really an ongoing iterative process by which we're looking and interacting with the industry to make sure that what we ultimately propose is something that everybody has seen and reviewed."

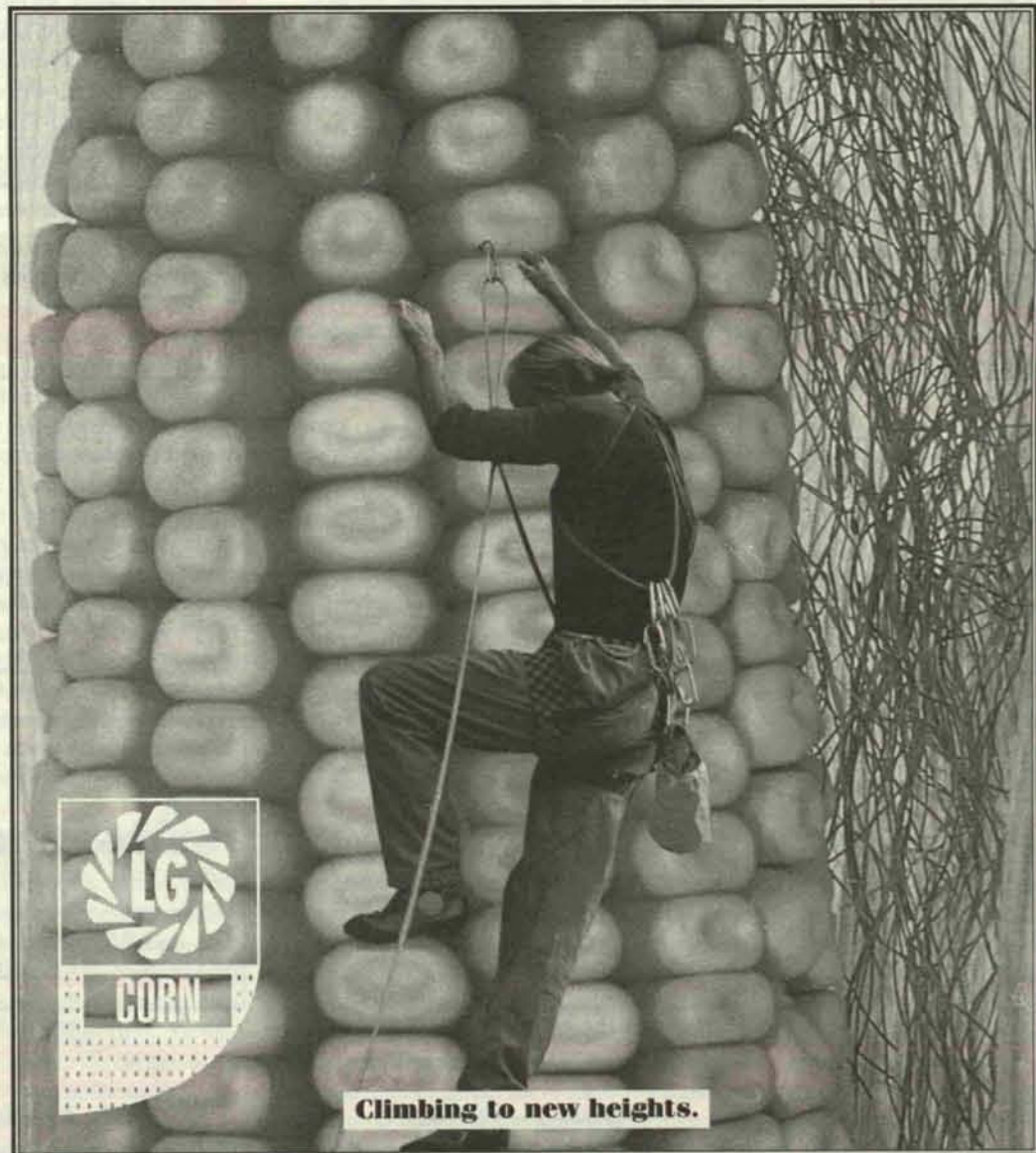
"You're not going to get consensus opinion on any of these things," he adds. "But we're trying to reach some kind of decision that has the utmost and input from the industry."

How does the AMS receive feedback?

"We continue to have meetings around the country, we get written feedback," he explains. "People have not been hesitant to give us their comments. We're getting different comments, but we're taking it all into consideration and hopefully coming up with a changed program that will benefit everyone." ■



Lon Hatamiya, administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service, an arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, addresses cherry producers. He talked about Federal Marketing Orders at the annual meeting of the Michigan Agricultural Commodity Marketing Association.



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Market Outlook

by Dr. Jim Hilker,
Department of
Agricultural Economics,
Michigan State
University



CORN

Nothing like new, unexpected information and worries during the new planting season to keep the market hopping. On March 31, the USDA released two important reports. One report was the quarterly *Stocks Report* which gives us updated information on the rate of corn use through the first half of the year. The second report was the *Planting Intentions Report* which gives us corn producers' intentions as of March 1.

The *Stocks Report* showed corn disappearance at a faster rate than the trade expected. This is an indication of higher-than-expected feed use. Animal numbers on feed are slightly above last year with cattle on feed and poultry increases making up for the slightly smaller hog numbers. We are also starting to feed to higher weights, whether this continues partially depends on the corn price from now through summer.

To show this faster disappearance, on the balance sheet for corn (Table 1 below), I have increased the 1996-97 feed use number by 125 million bushels, to 5,325 million. The USDA released their updated estimate April 11. Exports to date and export sales are lagging behind what is necessary to meet the 1,900 million figure projected by the USDA in February, so I have lowered the 1996-97 number to 1,875 million—we'll see what they do. These two changes lowered ending stocks by a net of 100 million bushels, to 859 million. While this is adequate, it is tight enough to

Seasonal Commodity Price Trends

| | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Corn | ↑ ↓ |
| Soybeans (explosive) | ↑ ↓ |
| Wheat | ↔ ↑ ↓ |
| Hogs | ↔ |
| Cattle | ↔ |

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

keep old crop corn prices near \$3 until the market is confident about next year's crop.

The *Planting Intentions Report* showed U.S. corn producers planning to plant 81.4 million acres of corn this spring. This is almost 2 million more than last year, but almost the same as last year's intentions, which were thrown off by the wet spring and late plantings. This was about a half million more than the average expectation, but well within the range. Using this new number in my 1997-98 estimates, shown below in Table 1, column 3, average corn prices for next year would average about \$2.55, given a trend yield and middle-of-the-road use figures.

Michigan producers intend to plant 2.6 million acres, down 50,000 from a year ago, but up 150,000 from two years ago. Remember, this *Planting Intentions Report* is not a guarantee this number of acres will be planted and is not supposed to be. Rather it is information to the market that should help in the proper allocation of land to various crops. The market can now react and a final set of decisions can be made, given the weather cooperates.

Old crop corn prices may be near their peak if the planting and growing season goes well. The projected ending stocks is not low enough to support \$3 prices once the market feels we will have a decent crop next year. As soon as the market sees the crop, I expect the price to drop 20 to 40 cents, and that could be as early as late June. For this reason I would consider having most of my old crop sold now. Poor weather could send the market up, so I wouldn't be adverse to keeping a little on a basis contract.

New crop decisions are less clear, so consider spreading them out. First of all, recognize that December futures at around \$2.90 are very good given the fundamentals. The only thing keeping them there versus \$2.60-2.70 is the potential for poor weather. Consider pricing up to 15-30 percent of your expected new crop now, if you haven't already. Be ready to

price more sometime in June or early July. By then, we will either have had a weather scare and we will need to price more at higher levels, or the probability of weather problems will have decreased and we may want to price more before a drop.

WHEAT

The third quarter wheat *Stocks Report* showed no surprises, so we will move on to new crop. As reported last December, winter wheat acres are down; the number in this report shows plantings down 3.77 million acres. This report shows spring wheat planting intentions down by 2.65 million acres for a total decrease in wheat acres of 6.42 million. These numbers were on the low side of trade expectations, but within the range.

Trend yields would still bring a slightly larger crop this year than last, even with fewer acres due to last year's poor yield. As we develop the 1997-98 column of the wheat Balance Sheet (Table 2 below), we also have to make some assumptions about the rest of the world. For example, Canada increased wheat acres at the expense of canola acres last year in the neighborhood of 2 million acres. Now there is talk of switching back 1.5 million acres. This should help next year's exports as long as Europe and Australia don't have super crops again.

The bottom line in my estimation is wheat prices have just come into the bottom range of my expectations with a trend yield as July futures in Chicago hit \$4. At this point, there are no big growing problems unless the wet planting situation in the Northern Plains has continued. Consider pricing 15-25 percent of your expected wheat if summer soft red wheat futures break back through \$4. Then set some more pricing points considering both price levels and crop conditions.

SOYBEANS

Surprise, surprise—we have significant changes in both old crop and new crop expectations after the new reports were released, but they are in opposite directions in a price sense. The quarterly *Stocks Report* showed 10-30 million less soybeans in stock than the trade expected half-way through the marketing year. The *Planting Intentions Report* was also a shocker at 68.8 million acres. This is 3 million more acres than the trade's average (and my) expectations, and 2 million more than the highest guess.

Michigan soybean producers intend to plant 1.7 million acres, an increase of 50,000 acres from 1996 and 200,000 from 1995. I think us analysts still have some things to learn about how the new farm bill planting flexibility will be used by producers.

The *Stocks Report* will call for some adjustment in the supply/demand numbers for the 1996-97 crop year. My new estimates are shown below in Table 3. I have raised my estimate of seed, feed, and residual by 20 million bushels, although it may turn out the crop was overestimated a bit. I also lowered my export projection by 5 million bushels in recognition that higher prices lower use. This still puts ending stocks at an extremely low level. Think back to last year and corn, the first sign of reduced yields even with the high acres and the market could explode upwards, but if we get a decent yield in the end, the market will drop quickly.

Where does a 4.5-million-acre increase in soybeans planted come from when corn acres planted are also expected to increase 2 million acres? In some states, the acres come from fewer winter wheat acres, but the huge new acres in Iowa and Minnesota must come from, to a large extent, acres that were in the CRP.

Putting this planted acres figure into Table 3 below for the 1997-98 year shows ending stocks would be adequate next year, even given strong demand. My analysis would suggest average prices next year to be around \$6.40, given what I would call strong use figures. New crop futures near \$7 suggest higher prices.

Even though the situation with soybeans is more explosive than corn, my advice is about the same. Have most of your old crop soybeans sold at today's great prices. However, if you want to hold on to your last 10 percent or so, go ahead—just do it on a basis contract versus paying storage. I feel new crop cash prices at around \$6.70 are quite good—don't let it pass without pricing some. And have some pricing goals if prices start up; unfortunately, they can turn around at any time.

HOGS

The March 1 quarterly USDA *Hogs and Pigs Report*, released March 27, definitely had a bullish bent. All hogs and pigs were only 99 percent of a year ago. Kept for breeding showed a 1 percent increase in year-to-year numbers. And, while this was in the range of expectations, it is on the low side, given hog prices and returns over the past year and the pricing opportunities over the next year. Hogs kept for market were 99 percent of last year and near expectations overall.

While the total number of market hogs was near expectations, within weight classes they were not. The heavier hogs, 120 pounds and up, were 99-100 percent of last year, a couple percent higher than expected. Pigs below 120 pounds were 98-99 percent of a year ago, a couple percent lower than expected. This means fewer hogs through the summer.

Farrowing intentions were also lower than expected. March-May 1997 farrowing intentions are equal to 1996, and June-August 1997 intentions are up 2 percent; both of these were a couple percent lower than expectations. These are hogs that will come to market next fall and winter.

At first glance, Michigan numbers look bad. Hogs and pigs kept for breeding as of March 1 were down 13 percent and kept for market were down 4 percent. Upon further investigation, maybe we are going to rebound. December-February farrowings were equal to the previous year, and March-May intentions are down 8 percent, but June-August intentions are down only 4 percent.

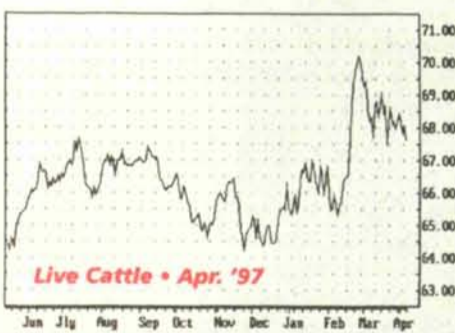
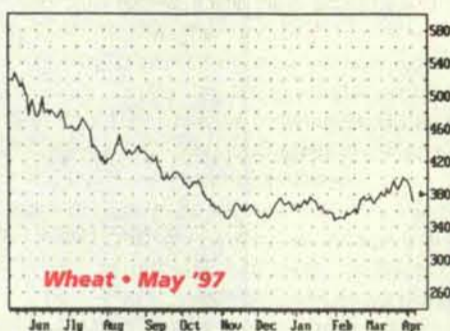
The report would indicate hog prices will be good for a longer period than previously expected. How good returns are still depends on feed prices and, therefore, this summer's weather. I would agree with the futures market that prices may reach \$60 this summer and stay over \$50 through the rest of 1997. However, I also think these are good prices. Consider locking in a price on a portion of next year's expected production. There is a real risk more hogs will show up.

It is not real clear what disease problems in Taiwan will mean to U.S. hog prices other than it will be positive. Japan will have to come to our market not only for increases in their per capita consumption, but also to make up for the decrease in hogs from Taiwan, which has been their biggest source.

CATTLE

The abundant number of cattle on feed continues to weigh on the market and will continue to do so through summer. Fed prices will drop into the mid \$60s this summer before recovering to the high \$60s by late fall. As we go into 1998, we will

COMMODITY PRICE TRENDS



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 | 859 |
| Production | 7,374 | 9,293 | 9,662 |
| Imports | 16 | 10 | 9 |
| Total supply | 8,948 | 9,729 | 10,530 |
| Use: | | | |
| Feed and residual | 4,711 | 5,325 | 5,500 |
| Food/seed & Ind. uses | 1,583 | 1,670 | 1,750 |
| Total domestic | 6,294 | 6,995 | 7,250 |
| Exports | 2,228 | 1,875 | 2,100 |
| Total use | 8,522 | 8,870 | 9,350 |
| Ending stocks | 426 | 859 | 1,180 |
| Ending stocks, % of use | 5.0 | 9.7 | 12.6 |
| Regular loan rate | \$1.89 | \$1.89 | \$1.89 |
| U.S. season average | | | |
| Farm price, \$/bu. | \$3.24 | \$2.70 | \$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 | 63.1 | 60.2 |
| Bu./harvested acre | 35.8 | 36.3 | 38.5 |
| Stocks (million bushels) | | | |
| Beginning stocks | 507 | 376 | 474 |
| Production | 2,182 | 2,282 | 2,318 |
| Imports | 68 | 80 | 78 |
| Total supply | 2,757 | 2,738 | 2,870 |
| Use: | | | |
| Food | 884 | 910 | 920 |
| Seed | 104 | 104 | 105 |
| Feed | 152 | 300 | 260 |
| Total domestic | 1,140 | 1,314 | 1,285 |
| Exports | 1,241 | 950 | 1,100 |
| Total use | 2,381 | 2,264 | 2,385 |
| Ending stocks | 376 | 474 | 485 |
| Ending stocks, % of use | 15.8 | 20.9 | 20.3 |
| Regular loan rate | \$2.58 | \$2.58 | \$2.58 |
| U.S. season average | | | |
| Farm price, \$/bu. | \$4.50 | \$4.20 | \$3.75 |

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 | 2,176 | 2,383 | 2,576 |
| Imports | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Total supply | 2,516 | 2,570 | 2,705 |
| Use: | | | |
| Crushings | 1,370 | 1,420 | 1,430 |
| Exports | 851 | 895 | 900 |
| Seed, feed & residuals | 112 | 130 | 115 |
| Total use | 2,333 | 2,445 | 2,445 |
| Ending stocks | 183 | 125 | 260 |
| Ending stocks, % of use | 7.8 | 5.1 | 10.6 |
| Regular loan rate | \$4.92 | \$4.97 | \$4.97 |
| U.S. season average | | | |
| Farm price, \$/bu. | \$6.77 | \$7.30 | \$6.40 |

Source: Knight Ridder Financial

Source: USDA and Jim Hilker

Continued on page 7

Business Strategies

by Sherrill Nott, Dept. of Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University

Michigan farm profits in 1996

Now that taxes are filed and financial results summarized for 1996, it's time to calculate profit measures. The tables below show what groups of early reporting dairy, grain and hog farms achieved last year, along with how they compared to 1995. Use them to compare with your own farm results.

Table 1 shows two ways to measure farm profit: 1) dollars of net farm income, and 2) percent return on farm assets. Net farm income includes all cash farm income plus (or minus) inventory changes. Deductions are for cash expenses, depreciation and interest paid. Nothing is taken out for operator and unpaid family labor.

To calculate percent return to assets, any cash interest is added back to net farm income. Then an opportunity cost for unpaid labor is subtracted. These unpaid labor rewards for the 1996 average lines in Table 1 were \$57,700, \$29,900, and \$41,300

for the dairy, grain and hog farms, respectively, in 1996. The adjusted amount is divided by the average farm assets to get the percent return.

Table 1 shows profits were down on dairy and crops farms in 1996 compared to 1995. Weather and prices are alleged to have much to do with the drop in profits. The weather impacted crop yields, which in turn affected sales.

Table 2 shows how crop yields and related inventories compared in 1996 compared to the previous year. There was a dramatic decrease of crop yields in 1996 for the farms in this sample.

The inventory changes in Table 2 are only for crop and feed inventories on the different farms. They are a combination of price and quantity differences. These inventory reductions were subtracted in calculating the net farm incomes in Table 1. They help measure the impact of a poor growing season on farm profitability.

Market Outlook

Continued from page 6

once again see \$70 fed cattle. Returns will depend on feed prices. Because feed stocks are relatively tight, we could see a significant increase in feed prices if the growing season turns poor in the Corn Belt. Consider having a good portion of your summer feed needs priced soon.

DAIRY OUTLOOK

Larry G. Hamm

The dairy markets have settled into a quiet phase in anticipation of more clear-cut trends in dairy production in the months ahead. Dairy products have been trading in a narrow range. The result will be that the March Basic Formula Price (BFP) will show little change.

The dairy product markets have been trading in a very narrow range. The wholesale price for butter traded on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) increased by only 1 cent per pound during the entire month of March. On the National Cheese Exchange (NCE), barrels of cheddar cheese have shown weakness through much of March. Because there is a large spread, by historical standards, between the price per pound of cheddar sold through barrels versus those sold through 40-pound blocks, block prices were bound to react. During the last trading day in March, 40-pound blocks on the NCE declined 1 cent per pound.

The BFP is constructed by using the change in component values generated from changes in the prices of manufactured dairy products between the months of February and March. The change in the wholesale prices of manufactured dairy products has been relatively insignificant. Milk production in the Minnesota-Wisconsin area continues to be affected by low forage quality and high forage prices. While milk production is increasing fairly rapidly in the West and the Southwest, milk production in the upper Midwest

has been holding steady. Since the Basic Formula Price is constructed by the market conditions for farm level milk in Wisconsin and Minnesota, and adjusted for changes in manufactured dairy product prices, steady production and prices mean little change in the March BFP.

Clearly, production trends in the next two months will help indicate the direction that dairy prices will take. The rapid recovery of milk production in the West appears to assure that this summer's milk prices will not run up to the levels that the industry experienced in 1996. However, prices can go higher if milk production does not recover in the traditional northern tier dairy region. These current stable dairy markets are holding in anticipation of a clear indication as to which way total milk production will be going for the remainder of 1997.

EGGS

Henry Larzelere

Egg prices in March averaged about 9 cents a dozen below March of 1996. Feed ingredient prices were nearly 6 cents a dozen eggs below last year.

New York wholesale prices for Grade A large white eggs in cartons are likely to average in the 70s during the April, May, June quarter, with May prices being the lowest of the year, getting into the 60s.

Hens and pullets on farms on March 1 were about 2 percent above a year ago. The production of eggs was more than 2 percent above last year.

The egg-type chick hatch in February was 2 percent above February 1996. However, the number of layer-type eggs in incubators on March 1 was 4 percent below a year earlier. These figures might suggest that there will be a small decline in production by late summer, but the increase in egg product uses and expanded export trade will continue to stimulate the demand side of the egg market and prevent any sizable decline in egg prices.

Young farmers optimistic, innovative

Despite concerns about government regulations, profitability and taxes, America's young farmers are increasingly optimistic about the future of agriculture

These young rural professionals are adopting new farming practices, harnessing new technology and employing services that benefit the environment and their business.

Those were among the findings of an informal annual survey of young farmers and ranchers, ages 18-35, conducted by the American Farm Bureau Federation, the nation's largest general farm organization. Overall, the fifth annual survey found that the future of American agriculture is promising and continues to be in able hands.

This year's survey of 339 young farmers tracked their attitudes and choices on issues ranging from government regulations to the use of technology.

According to this year's survey, 28.6 percent of the young farmers said their top challenge was government regulations, followed closely by a related topic — overall profitability — selected by 26.2 percent of the respondents. Those two challenges flip-flopped rankings from last year's survey. Over the survey's history, regulations have been the top concern twice, while overall profitability has topped the list three times.

The third biggest challenge this year was tax burdens, selected by 14.9 percent. Fourth on this year's list of challenges was the availability of land

and facilities, cited by 8.6 percent. Fifth on the list was urban encroachment on prime farmland (6 percent). This year's list of other challenges, in descending order, includes: health care availability and cost, availability of agricultural financing, competition from established or larger farms, the willingness of parents to turn over the operation's reins, and inadequate rural support services.

Protecting property rights still a priority

When asked to select the most important step government could take to help them and their farm, 29.7 percent said government should do more to protect property rights. Protecting property rights has ranked first for four consecutive years.

Federal tax reform was second on this year's policy wish list with 21.7 percent of the vote. Boosting U.S. agricultural exports was third with 14.7 percent. Fourth was providing more financial assistance for beginning farmers (11 percent). Balancing the federal budget through spending restraint was fifth with 8.3 percent. Sixth was approving meaningful regulatory reform with 6.1 percent.

Other recommendations, in order of preference, were: continue to support current farm programs, fund research for alternative crops and new uses for traditional commodities, ensure the availability of crop protectants, and a tie between increasing voluntary environmental incentives and developing better risk management programs.

When asked their opinion regarding the

Change in net worth is another measure of progress in a farm business. Based on the market value balance sheets for 1996, the dairy, grain and hog farms had an average change in net worth of \$32,200, \$28,500 and \$92,300, respectively.

Net farm income, percent return on assets, and change in net worth are all ways to measure your farm's performance for the year. Calculate one or all of them for your farm in 1996. Think about how you compare to your competitors. Then spend some management time setting goals and tactics that will help you to do better in 1997. We'll

all hope for better weather this year!

Data source. Each group is the average of a few farms that processed their year end analysis with Michigan State University Extension agents. In 1996, the average dairy data was for 53 farms from southern and western Michigan. The low and high groups each had 13 farms. The average grain data was for 29 farms. The low and high groups each had 7 farms. The average hog data was for 13 farms. The low and high groups each had 7 farms. 1995 data came from "Michigan Farm Database, New Directions for 1995" by Nott and Hepp in 1996. The University of Minnesota's software was used for the calculations.

Table 1. — Profits

| Item | 1996 | 1995 |
|--------------------------|------------|-----------|
| Dairy Farms: | | |
| Low net income | \$-33,600 | \$-4,000 |
| Average net income | \$55,300 | \$75,700 |
| High net income | \$160,800 | \$194,500 |
| Low return on assets | -1.7 % | -3.5 % |
| Average return on assets | 3.4 % | 6.9 % |
| High return on assets | 9.8 % | 12.1 % |
| Grain Farms: | | |
| Low net income | \$-120,100 | \$-37,100 |
| Average net income | \$-1,300 | \$64,100 |
| High net income | \$119,700 | \$192,000 |
| Low return on assets | -15.8 % | -3.4 % |
| Average return on assets | -2.4 % | 5.6 % |
| High return on assets | 12.1 % | 11.1 % |
| Hog Farms: | | |
| Low net income | \$6,600 | |
| Average net income | \$99,900 | \$83,800 |
| High net income | \$206,700 | |
| Average return on assets | 15.6 % | 9.7 % |

Table 2. — Crop Yields and Inventory Changes

| Item | 1996 | 1995 |
|----------------------------|-----------|----------|
| Dairy Farms: | | |
| Corn silage yield per acre | 10.4 | 15.9 |
| Hay yield per acre | 3.9 | 4.6 |
| Inventory change, crops | \$-8,600 | \$14,900 |
| Grain Farms: | | |
| Corn grain yield per acre | 92117 | |
| Wheat yield per acre | 4261 | |
| Soybean yield per acre | 3142 | |
| Inventory change, crops | \$-27,200 | \$15,100 |
| Hog Farms: | | |
| Inventory change, crops | \$-22,200 | \$18,400 |

Hepatitis A outbreak infects schools

Continued from page 1

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a highly infectious liver disease that is relatively mild in children, but can be more serious in adults, especially those who are elderly or have weak immune systems. The disease causes liver inflammation. Symptoms include jaundice, fatigue, abdominal discomfort, vomiting, fever and dark urine.

Hepatitis A causes a mild liver infection and can be spread by uncooked food and the contaminated hands of food handlers. According to Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention David Satcher, the Hepatitis A infection has a 28-day incubation period and usually can be combated by a shot of immune system protein called gamma globulin within

14 days of exposure.

How to prevent Hepatitis A

To prevent person-to-person spread, careful hand washing is the single most important means of prevention. For close contacts of a case, immune globulin shots are recommended to minimize the risk of disease. For long-term protection, a new hepatitis A vaccine became available in 1995.

The vaccine, which costs about \$40 a dose, is made up of killed virus that prompts the body to create antibodies of its own. It's given through an injection into the arm, with a booster administered several months later. Together, they provide lifetime protection. For 90 percent of those who take it, the vaccine takes about two weeks to become effective.

source of agricultural income once the current farm program expires, 71.7 percent said farm income should come totally from the marketplace, while 28.3 percent said farm income should continue to be supplemented by farm program payments.

Environment, economics important for the group reported greater use of conservation and environmentally beneficial farming practices this year. More than 73 percent said they employ conservation tillage on the farm (69 percent in 1996). Nearly 59 percent said they regularly test soil or crop tissue prior to nutrient application (46.3 percent last year) and 58.3 percent said they practice crop rotation with three or more crops (49 percent last year). One-third said they use integrated pest management techniques such as field scouting to reduce crop protectant use (24 percent in 1996).

Regarding other farming practices, 33 percent said they regularly test their well water, 26 percent use contour farming or strip cropping, 22 percent have land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program; 18.8 percent actively manage wetland resources; and 18 percent leave crop strips unharvested for wildlife.

Management, marketing sharpened

This year's survey indicates that young farmers employ a number of business management and marketing practices and services to gain a competitive edge. The most commonly used services were marketing information services, used by 49.3 percent of respondents. Accounting services and crop

consultants tied for second, with 42.8 percent. More than 40 percent of those surveyed said they use futures and options to market their commodities. Nearly a third, 32.2 percent, said they are involved in contract production, and more than a fourth, 25.4 percent consult, with agricultural marketing/management specialists.

According to the survey, young farmers' use of global positioning systems and global information services, where satellite technology is used to plot field applications, continues to see steep increases — 13.6 percent this year, compared to 6.6 percent in 1996 and 3 percent in 1995. More than half (50.8 percent) of those responding said they currently — or plan to within the next two years — plant biotech crop varieties.

Computers, Internet utilized

Overall, young farmers are on the cutting edge when it comes to the use of electronic and communications technology. Computers are used on the farm by 83.8 percent of those surveyed. Nearly three-fourths, 73.2 percent, reported owning cellular telephones and 41.9 percent communicate by fax.

Internet use has exploded since last year. Nearly one-third, 32.2 percent, reported having access to the Internet, compared with 10.5 percent last year. E-mail is used by 22.7 percent and computer bulletin board services by 17.1 percent. Home satellite reception was reported by 28.9 percent of respondents (62 percent of those respondents reported having small dish technology).

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The Michigan Bison industry: Rich in American history — an alternative for the future

by Kara Endsley

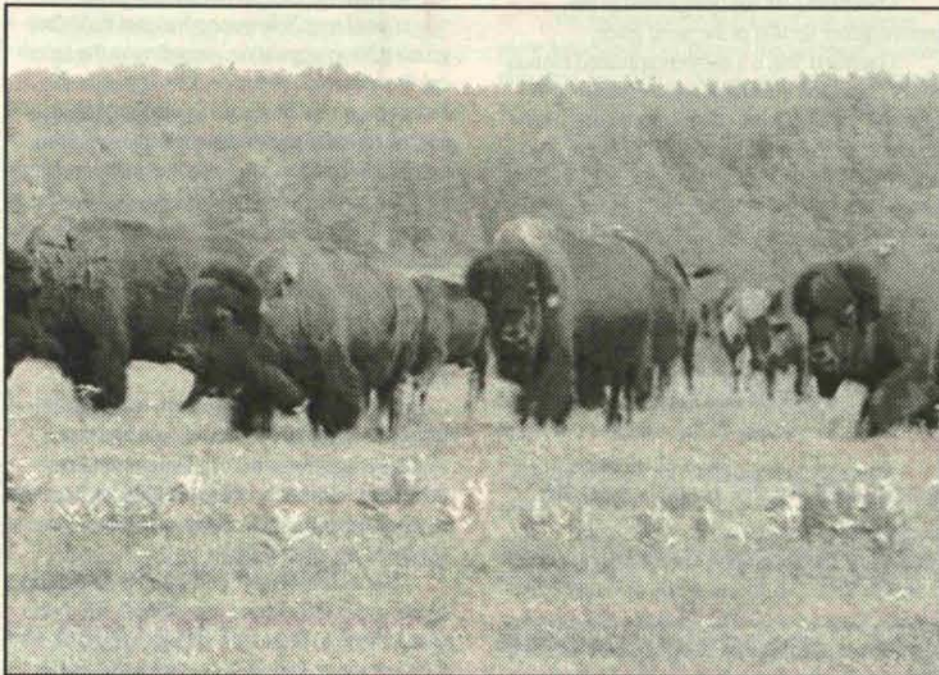
The once near-extinct American bison has made a new home on the range in numbers and in restaurant and grocery store popularity through the help of conservationists and producers.

Although the bison population was estimated at 40 million at the time of European settlement, those numbers declined to near-extinction in the late 1800s. Now with more than 2,000 producers registered with the National Bison Association, the number of bison is near 200,000.

The Gladwin-based Michigan Bison Association was formed January 1996 and boasts 55 members. Producers are scattered throughout the state from Grand Rapids to Cheboygan to Lansing.

The Great Lakes Buffalo Company, located in Cheboygan, is one of the largest operations in the state. The 1,000-head farm is owned by four producers: Walt Romanik, Orv Kabat, Bob Pulte and Harry Peterson.

As with many producers, Harry Peterson's bison fascination lies within their rich history.



A few of the 1,000-head herd roam the 3,000-acre range at Great Lakes Buffalo. This herd is a small portion of the 200,000 bison in the United States.



A cow and her calf spend a lazy summer day grazing the land of Great Lakes Buffalo.

"With the mystique and the connection to the American past — I was hooked immediately," Peterson said.

Bison at the Great Lakes Buffalo Company graze for 24 to 32 months, and spend the last 90 days in a feedlot, where they are fed grain.

Although Bison are native to North America, the meat is considered exotic. Unlike the beef, chicken or pork industries, the bison industry pays for inspection of the meat. "All of our meat is USDA inspected. Since it is treated as exotic, we're paying \$60 to \$70 per animal to have our meat inspected," Peterson said.

The National and Michigan Bison Associations are lobbying to have bison, beef, chicken and pork inspected under the same standards.

The Great Lakes Buffalo Company ships their meat across the country to grocery stores, restaurants and individuals. The National Bison Association estimates that 15,000 bison are slaughtered annually, yielding 7.5 million pounds of meat.

Brenda Sangster, of Great Lakes Buffalo, explained the growing trend toward bison meat. "I think a lot of people are becoming more health conscious," she said. "It's low in fat and

cholesterol, and that's a large part of our market factor."

Millie's Grill in Ferndale has been selling bison meat for nine years. "You wouldn't know the difference. It tastes just like beef," owner Mildred Horan said.

This tiny restaurant with a mere eight stools and three tables is a popular hangout for bison meat lovers. "We sell more buffalo burgers than regular hamburgers — we're known as the buffalo place," Horan said.

Both the smell and taste of buffalo burgers, hot roast sandwiches and hoagies keep buffalo meat connoisseurs at Millie's Grill coming back for more.

If you would like more information about bison or would like to receive a copy of the Michigan Bison Journal, contact the Michigan Bison Association secretary, Amanda DeShano, at 517-426-1412.

For the curious:

The following Michigan restaurants offer bison entrees

- Audie's Restaurant, Mackinaw City
- The Brown Trout, Indian River
- Family House Restaurant, Cheboygan
- Maple Valley Restaurant, St. Helen
- Millie's Grill, Ferndale
- Mr. Mike's Restaurant, Detroit
- The Old Depot, Johannesburg
- One Water Street, Boyne City
- Perry, Petoskey
- Pier, Harbor Springs

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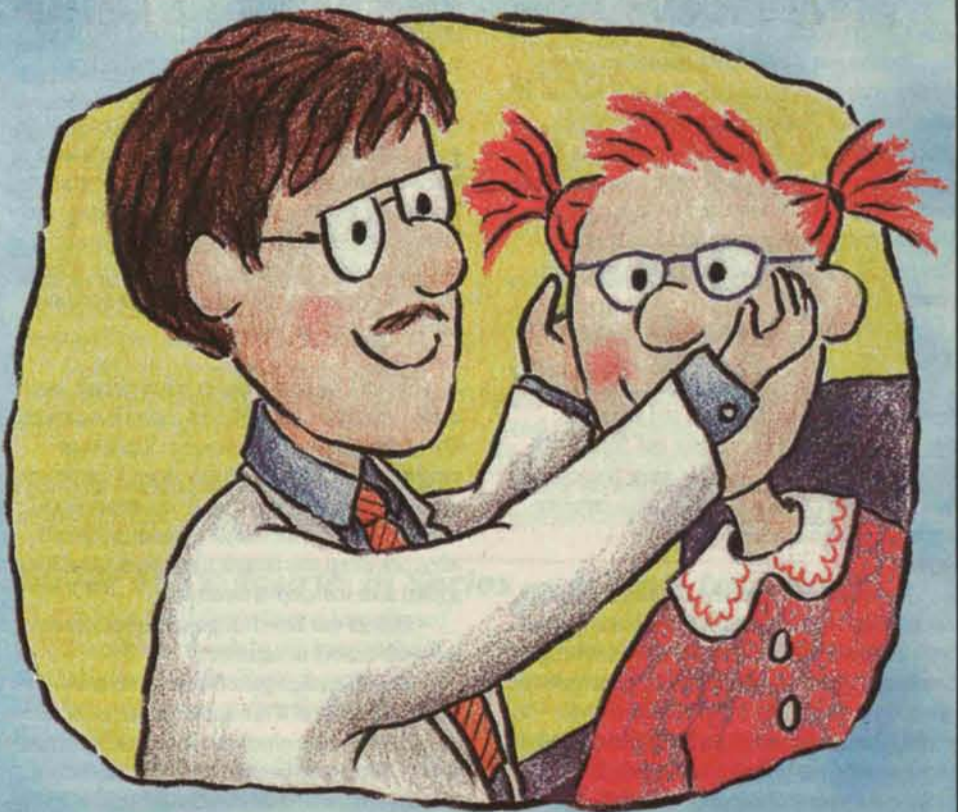
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Weed control update

Jim Kells and Karen Renner, MSU Crop and Soil Sciences

The Weed Control Guide for Field Crops (Extension Bulletin E-434) was updated for 1997. We have outlined below the major changes in the guide for 1997.

Corn

The special weed problems section now includes only velvetleaf and triazine-resistant lambsquarters. Control recommendations for perennial weeds are available in the IPM Fact Sheets, which were revised in December 1996.

A new section for weed control in Sethoxydim resistant (SR) corn was also added to the guide. SR corn can be treated postemergence with Poast Plus for control of annual grasses. Poast Plus should be applied to actively growing grasses between 2 and 4 inches in height for best control. It is the most effective postemergence option in corn for crabgrass control. Poast Plus can be tank-mixed with Basagran, atrazine or Laddok for control of broadleaved weeds. Note: SR corn is not tolerant to other postemergence grass herbicides.

Table 1J - *Herbicide: Insecticide Compatibility Chart for Conventional and IT Corn* summarizes the restrictions related to combining sulfonylurea herbicides and organophosphate insecticides on corn. The table includes both at planting and foliar applications of organophosphate insecticides.

Basis Gold has been added to the postemergence section for control of annual grasses and broadleaves. It is a three-way premix of atrazine, Accent and rimsulfuron (a component in Basis). It should control most common annual grasses except crabgrass and most common broadleaves. It is expected to give only fair control of cocklebur, jimsonweed, and triazine-resistant lambsquarters. It is labeled for broadcast application to corn up to 12 inches or 6 collars. Basis Gold can be tank-mixed with Banvel or Clarity to strengthen broadleaf control. There are insecticide interaction and crop rotation restrictions. The following restrictions should be followed to minimize risk of corn injury:

- Do not treat if nighttime temperatures are below 40° F or daytime temperatures are above 92° F.
- Do not treat corn hybrids with a relative maturity (RM) rating of less than 88 days.
- Risk of injury is greater following several days of cool, cloudy conditions.
- Risk of injury increases with corn height.

Touchdown was added to the burndown tables for corn and soybeans. It contains the same active herbicide as Roundup Ultra but is formulated as a different salt.

Touchdown is labeled for burndown prior to planting corn or soybeans only. It is NOT labeled for Roundup Ready Soybeans. Non-ionic surfactant must be added with Touchdown. Ammonium Sulfate (AMS) at 17 lbs/100 gal of water often improves control of both Touchdown and Roundup Ultra. Touchdown application rate should be Roundup Ultra rate 72. Availability of Touchdown will be extremely limited in 1997.

Two new products were added to the premix table for corn: Fultime and Headline.

Fultime is a premix of Topnotch and atrazine. Headline is a co-pack of Laddok and Poast Plus. Hornet is a premix of Broadstrike and Stinger that was sold in 1996 under the trade name Broadstrike Plus. It is labeled preplant incorporated, preemergence and postemergence.

Soybeans

The special weed problems section in soybeans was deleted as there are numerous herbicide options for the control of velvetleaf, cocklebur, and nutsedge in soybeans. The no-till section now includes tables for burndown in no-till fields and a special section for control of marehail in no-till soybeans. Preemergence and postemergence herbicide recommendations are the same as in conventional tillage soybeans.

Salute (premixure of Treflan plus Sencor) and Lorox Plus have been deleted in the weed guide, as they are no longer being manufactured. New premixures that have been added to the weed guide include Steel (premixure of Pursuit plus Prowl plus Scepter), Manifest (premixure of Galaxy plus Post), and Stellar (premixure of Cobra plus Resource).

New herbicide names in the weed guide include Prestige (Poast Plus), Status (Blazer), and Pentagon (Prowl). The formulation for Synchrony STS[®] is the 42 percent DF. There are two formulations of Frontier available in 1997: a 6.0lb and a 7.5lb gallon. Rates for both formulations are referenced in the weed guide. All references to Roundup

have been changed to Roundup Ultra.

Command 3ME has been added to the preemergence section of the weed guide.

Command 3ME is a microencapsulated formulation of Command that is applied preemergence for grass and broadleaf weed control in soybeans. There are buffer zones required around fields where Command 3ME is applied. Please see the label for detailed information. Command 3ME can be tank-mixed with other herbicides such as Dual, Lasso, Canopy, or Lorox. Command 3ME will not volatilize from soil following a rainfall so vapor drift is not an issue. However, direct application of Command 3ME to off-target vegetation will cause that vegetation to turn white. Use caution when applying Command 3ME near alfalfa, wheat, and other non-target areas.

Dry Beans

Assure II has been added for weed control in dry edible beans. Assure II controls volunteer corn, annual grasses, quackgrass, and small grains in dry bean fields. The application rate for Assure II varies from 5 to 10oz/acre depending on the target grass species. Assure II should be applied with crop oil concentrate when applied alone or tank-mixed with Basagran. Do not tank mix Assure II with Pursuit because annual grass control will be poor.

Ultima 160 has also been added for postemergence grass control in dry beans.

Ultima 160 is a different formulation of Poast. Ultima 160 controls annual grasses and suppresses quackgrass. The label suggests adding Dash or a methylated seed oil as adjuvants with Ultima 160.

Frontier has been added for weed control in dry beans. Frontier can be applied preplant incorporated or preemergence for control of annual grasses, yellow nutsedge, redroot pigweed, lambsquarters, and black nightshade. Frontier should not be applied to dry beans that are cracking or at the unifoliate or first trifoliate stage of growth. Frontier controls weeds under conditions of limited rainfall. However, navy and black beans tolerance to Frontier is not as great as tolerance to Dual. Pinto, kidney, and cranberry bean tolerance to Frontier is good. Therefore, the benefits of better black nightshade control than Dual should be weighed against the potential for crop injury (burning of the unifoliate and stunting of the bean plants) when considering use of Frontier on navy and black bean varieties. There are some differences in dry bean variety response within the navy and black bean classes of dry beans but information is still sparse in this area.

Potatoes

Ultima 160 has been added for postemergence control of annual grasses and suppression of quackgrass in potatoes. Ultima 160 is a different formulation of Poast. The Ultima 160 label suggests adding either Dash or a methylated seed oil as the adjuvant.

Matrix has been registered for preemergence and postemergence grass and broadleaf weed control in potatoes. Matrix effectively controls many grasses, including barnyardgrass and foxtails, and controls some broadleaf weeds including redroot pigweed and mustard. When Matrix is applied to emerged weeds a nonionic surfactant must be added.

Sugarbeets

Assure II has been added for volunteer corn, annual grass, quackgrass, and small grain control in sugarbeets. The application rate changes from 5 to 10oz/acre depending on the target grass species. Assure II can be tank-mixed with Betamix but no crop oil concentrate should be added. Therefore the control of grasses by Assure II when tank-mixed with Betamix is less than if Assure II was applied alone with crop oil concentrate.

UpBeet was added for postemergence broadleaf weed control in sugarbeets.

UpBeet applied postemergence controls emerged velvetleaf. When applied alone, UpBeet should always be applied with a nonionic surfactant. When UpBeet is tank-mixed with Betamix, control of smartweed, wild buckwheat, and foxtails is improved compared to Betamix alone. When sugarbeets are small, nonionic surfactant cannot be added to an UpBeet plus Betamix application. Crop rotation restrictions for some herbicides have changed in 1997. Please consult Table 11 in the weed control guide and/or the herbicide labels. The rotation restriction for planting sugarbeets following Exceed is now 18 months. Basis Gold has been added to the table.

A copy of E-434 Weed Control Guide for Field Crops can be purchased for \$6 from your local county Extension office or from the bulletin office at Michigan State University (517) 355-0240. ■

Federal mismanagement at core of bison problem

The National Park Service should exercise more control over Yellowstone National Park's burgeoning bison population, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation. Due largely to the Park Service's indifference, the mismanaged, malnourished and disease-ridden Yellowstone bison herd has become a source of concern to ranchers in Montana and neighboring states.

A large number of the starving bison have been killed by Montana officials lately in an attempt to control the overpopulation of bison. The migration of bison from Yellowstone Park resulted from the federal government's mismanagement of the park.

"There simply isn't enough forage in Yellowstone National Park to nourish the bison," said American Farm Bureau Federation President Dean Kleckner. "Montana officials have had no choice but to kill the bison. The Park Service left them no alternative."

Fear of brucellosis in the bison is among the concerns of ranchers and state officials. The bison pose a threat to livestock and to Montana's brucellosis-free status. Brucellosis is a virus that causes cows to abort their calves. It also causes undulant fever in humans.

Nearly 4,000 head of bison roamed Yellowstone National Park in early winter. As forage disappeared, the bison were forced to wander from the park in search of food. Montana officials, attempting to protect cattle from contracting brucellosis, have been forced to kill or send to slaughter approximately 1,000 bison. Nearly 1,000 more have died in

Yellowstone Park.

Complicating the situation further is the fact that the policies of two federal agencies are in conflict. The Agriculture Department's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has threatened to revoke Montana's brucellosis-free status for cattle if the bison share their grazing area. And Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt has questioned whether the bison pose any brucellosis threat to cattle. He has called for a moratorium on killing the bison until a study determines the risks.

Montana Gov. Marc Racicot (R) says the Park Service has left state officials no option but to control the free-roaming herd. Someone has to take responsibility in controlling the bison, Racicot said. Farm Bureau agrees.

"A land management plan by the Park Service would have helped avoid this situation altogether," Kleckner added. "Montana officials acted correctly trying to protect the state's cattle and livestock industry."

"The federal government has not been a very good neighbor," said Dave McClure, president of the Montana Farm Bureau Federation. "They have a pool of infected animals and they are not controlling them. The federal government feels once the bison leave the park, it doesn't want anything to do with them."

"Secretary Babbitt strongly supports rangeland reform for cattle. We recommend that Mr. Babbitt institute the same rules for grazing in Yellowstone Park that private and federal-grazing permittees comply with for their cattle." ■



Survival of family farm dependent on meaningful tax reform

The heavy burden of estate and capital gains taxes threatens the future of the family farm, the American Farm Bureau Federation told the House Ways and Means Committee.

With nearly half of America's farmers and ranchers nearing retirement, American agriculture is fast approaching a transformation. Unless estate and capital gains tax reform is produced soon, the survival of thousands of family farms could be endangered.

"Farmers and ranchers work long, hard hours over a lifetime to build their businesses," said Charles Kruse, a member of the American Farm Bureau Federation board of directors and president of the Missouri Farm Bureau Federation. "Often, farm heirs must sell business assets to pay estate taxes. When taxes drain capital from a farm business, the profit-making ability of the farm is destroyed and the farm business dies."

Kruse told the committee that Farm Bureau, while seeking repeal of federal estate taxes, would support increasing the exemption to \$2 million, up from the current \$600,000, and halving the current tax rate for assets over \$2 million. This would erase the burden of estate taxes on thousands of farmers and ranchers.

"Farmers and ranchers should be able to save for the future without having to worry about sharing the outcome of their efforts with the federal government, especially after already paying a lifetime of income taxes," said Kruse, a corn, wheat, cotton and soybean producer. "Along the way they

paid income taxes on their earnings. It is wrong to tax those earnings again at death."

The federal government reaps little revenue from estate taxes, said Kruse. Estate taxes generated just \$17.2 billion (out of \$1.4 trillion collected) in fiscal 1996, according to the Office of Management and Budget. Estate taxes produced only 1 percent of federal receipts that year.

Capital gains taxes, added Kruse, are just as burdensome on farmers and ranchers. Farm Bureau, while seeking the repeal of the capital gains tax, supports cutting the rate to a maximum of 15 percent. Currently, the United States' 28 percent capital gains tax rate is one of the highest among industrialized countries.

"Capital gains taxes result in the double taxation of income from capital assets," Kruse said. "I don't know any farmers who have bought farmland, buildings, equipment or livestock with untaxed dollars. It's wrong to tax earnings twice."

Kruse said farmers and ranchers are discouraged from selling land or other assets because of the punitive capital gains tax.

The time has come, said Kruse, for fundamental reform of the current tax system. "Consideration should be given to a new and different taxing system that encourages savings, investment and entrepreneurship," Kruse said. "In order for farmers and ranchers to continue their high level of productivity, reform of estate tax and capital gains tax laws is needed without delay. The results will benefit farmers, consumers and the economy." ■

Facts about graduated licenses

A long standing Farm Bureau policy called for the adoption of graduated licenses for young people who need more experience on Michigan roadways. After passing the Michigan legislature, the new graduated licensing for young drivers went into effect on April 1, here are some of the major questions answered by the Secretary of State's office about our new system for licensing young drivers:

Graduated Licensing Questions and Answers

Q. What is graduated licensing?

A. Graduated licensing is a step-by-step process for issuing driver licenses to young people. It is designed to help young drivers gain the knowledge and skills they need to drive a motor vehicle safely. This is accomplished by gradually increasing driving privileges as the young driver gains experience behind the wheel. While graduated licensing is a relatively new method of licensing young drivers, it has been introduced in some states, including California, Florida, New York and Wisconsin. The goal of graduated licensing is to reduce crashes, serious injuries, and traffic-related fatalities involving new, young drivers.

Q. Why do we need graduated licensing?

A. Evidence shows that young, inexperienced drivers pose serious safety threats not just to themselves, but to other drivers who share the road. Statistics show teen drivers are over represented in at-fault crashes and fatal crashes. Young drivers lack experience and are often prone to risk taking behavior. The restrictions in place at each level of licensing are intended to help young drivers develop safe driving habits, while allowing them to gain knowledge, skills and experience.

Q. When does graduated licensing go into effect?

A. Public Act 387 took effect on April 1, 1997.

Q. Who will be affected by the new graduated licensing law?

A. Teens and their parents. Teens who begin a driver education course after March 31, 1997, will be subject to the new graduated licensing requirements. Any teen who has started a driver education course on or before March 31, 1997, will not be subject to graduated licensing. However, everyone applying for an original license after March 31, 1997, will be required to take a road test.

Q. How will parents be affected by graduated licensing?

A. Before a young driver can obtain driving privileges at Level 1, written approval from a parent or legal guardian is required. A parent or legal guardian must certify that the young driver has accumulated at least 50 hours of behind-the-wheel experience before advancing to Level 2. The young driver's parent, legal guardian, or responsible adult will be given an information packet that contains a Log Book to record behind-the-wheel experience. Under the graduated licensing program and until the young driver reaches age 18, a parent or guardian will be sent information by the Secretary of State about any violation of the graduated license law received by the young driver.

Q. How will driver education differ under graduated licensing?

A. The curriculum will be developed by the Michigan Department of Education and consist of two segments. Segment one must be completed before obtaining a Level 1 license and segment two completed before the Level 2 license is issued.

Q. How many levels of licensing are there and what do they require?

A. There are three licensing levels under the graduated license law. Here is what they require:

To obtain a Level 1 license, teens must:

- Be at least age 14 years, 9 months.
- Complete segment one of a driver education course approved by the Michigan Department of Education, including six hours of on-the-

- road driving with an instructor.
- Pass a vision test and meet health standards set by the Secretary of State.
- Obtain written approval from a parent or legal guardian to obtain a Level 1 license.

To obtain a Level 2 license, teens must:

- Be at least age 16.
- Successfully complete six months of practice driving at Level 1.
- Complete segment two of a driver education course approved by the Michigan Department of Education.
- Have no convictions/civil infractions, license suspensions or crashes during the 90-day period immediately prior to applying for a Level 2 license.
- Complete a minimum of 50 hours of behind-the-wheel practice driving, including 10 hours of nighttime driving, that is certified by a parent or legal guardian.
- Pass a road test conducted by an independent road testing agency approved by the Secretary of State.

To obtain a Level 3 license, teens must:

- Be at least age 17.
- Hold a Level 2 license for six months.
- Complete 12 consecutive months of driving without a moving violation, an at-fault crash that resulted in a moving violation, a license suspension or a violation of the graduated license restrictions.

The graduated licensing program ends for all young drivers when they reach age 18.

Q. Who has to take a road test?

A. Anyone age 16 or older who obtains an original driver license on or before March 31, 1997, and has not held a driver education certificate for more than one year, will not need to take a road test. Any person who is age 16 or older who applies for an original driver license after March 31, 1997, must take a road test. This includes anyone who has completed driver education on or before March 31, 1997.

Q. Are there other restrictions when driving with a Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3 license?

- A.** Yes.
- Level 1 allows a young driver to operate a motor vehicle only when accompanied by either a licensed parent or licensed legal guardian, or a licensed driver over age 21 who has been designated by the parent or legal guardian.
 - Level 2 allows teens to drive without supervision except from midnight to 5 a.m. Driving is only permitted from midnight to 5 a.m. if driving to and from employment or if driving with a parent, legal guardian or designated licensed driver over the age of 21.
 - Level 3 offers full driving privileges with no restrictions.

Q. Does the graduated license replace Michigan's probationary system for new drivers?

A. No. In fact, graduated licensing complements the probationary program to create a stronger program. Probation begins whenever a new driver receives an original license. Probation lasts for three years and until the driver has been violation and crash-free for the last 10 months of the probation period. In addition to the requirements established by the graduated driver license program, drivers are also subject to the probationary license requirements. Both programs may result in an extension of probation or delayed advancement to the next licensing level.

Q. Where and when can I enroll in driver education?

A. Driver education requirements are established by the Michigan Department of Education. For information on where and when you can enroll in driver education, contact your high school principal.

Q. What fees will be charged for a graduated license and road test?

A. Driver license fees remain unchanged. The \$12 fee for an operator's license will be collected at Level 2. A separate fee will be charged for the road test. The amount of this fee will be determined by the independent agency conducting the test. ■

MCIA, Michigan Foundation Seed Association merge

All but the final paperwork is completed on the merger of the Michigan Crop Improvement Association (MCIA) and the Michigan Foundation Seed Association (MFSA), which are dedicated to providing top quality field crop seed to farmers.

Randy Judd, MCIA manager, says the move has been considered by the directors of both associations for several years.

"The decision was made during the respective annual membership meetings this winter," Judd says. "The reason is to improve efficiency and reduce overhead, which we think can be done quite easily since both organizations serve the same clientele."

There will be no reduction in employee numbers, the names of both organizations and their respective functions will be unchanged, and Judd will oversee both operations.

The purpose of the MFSA, which was founded in 1949, is to increase or grow out new seed (foundation seed) varieties that have been developed by universities, then turn that seed over to the MCIA,

founded in 1938, which in turn grows that seed for certified seed to be sold to farmers for planting.

Both organizations operate on a non-profit basis and are funded by growers who are members of each or both organizations.

Judd says that the combined operations will mean better and new services for the association members and other customers, and the ability to respond more quickly to crop production trends.

For instance, oat production acreage in Michigan has been declining the past decade while demands for MCIA quality control services to growers who are producing special crops have increased, Judd relates.

"We have talked with our membership, Michigan State University agronomists and officials at the Michigan Department of Agriculture, which gives us our power to certify seed, and everyone appears to think the merger is a good idea," Judd says. "We are looking at this as an exciting opportunity to provide better leadership and better and more efficient membership services." ■

MFB applauds Supreme Court's "common sense" decision on Endangered Species Act

Common sense has been restored to the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) thanks to the Supreme Court's unanimous decision that farmers and ranchers have legal standing to challenge actions under the Act, the American Farm Bureau Federation said today. The Court decision overturned a 1995 opinion that said farmers and ranchers do not fall under the "zone of interest" of the ESA, and had no legal standing to challenge overzealous implementation of the Act.

"This is a very significant win for farmers and ranchers across the United States," said American Farm Bureau Federation President Dean Kleckner. "It reinforces their right to protect their interests from being trampled under the ESA."

The American Farm Bureau Federation, along with the Oregon, California, Texas and Idaho Farm Bureaus, argued in a friend of the court brief that farmers and ranchers are regulated and economically impacted by the ESA. And because their property houses so many listed species, farmers and ranchers are reasonable candidates to monitor the government's compliance with the Act.

Associate Justice Antonin Scalia agreed. "The lower court erred in concluding that (farmers and ranchers) lacked standing under the zone-of-interest test to bring their claims under the ESA's citizen-suit provision," Scalia said in *Bennett v. Spear*.

The agricultural community had much at stake on the Court's decision.

"If the Court hadn't reached this decision, farmers and ranchers would have had no protection from overzealous regulations under the Endangered Species Act," Kleckner said. "This restores the necessary checks and balances over government regulations under the ESA."

"This decision sends a clear message to government agencies that they must respect the property rights of farmers and ranchers when they implement Endangered Species Act provisions."

The Court recognized that environmental laws may impose limits on the scope of governmental regulation, and it provides property owners with judicial avenues of relief from overregulation.

"This levels the playing field once again with respect to accountability under the ESA," Kleckner said. ■

Cloned gene may benefit cattle feeders

Companies that manufacture lactic acid for food and industrial uses would like to find a way to make greater amounts of the acid while cutting production costs. But cattle feedlot managers would like to find a way to reduce the lactic acid that's naturally produced in cattle's stomachs, because it means big headaches for them—and big stomachaches for the cattle.

Lactic acid is produced naturally by the bacterium *Streptococcus bovis* with help from an enzyme called lactate dehydrogenase. The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientists have isolated the gene that's responsible for production of the crucial enzyme.

Armed with that information, the scientists could someday genetically manipulate *S. bovis* to produce less lactic acid in cattle.

When cattle switch from a high-forage diet to a grain-rich finishing ration, millions of *S. bovis* in the cattle's rumen—a stomach compartment—gob-

ble up more glucose from the grain than they need and, in turn, spew out an abundance of lactic acid. The animals can develop lactic acidosis—a giant stomachache.

Sometimes life-threatening, lactic acidosis inhibits animals' weight gain and can lead to liver abscesses and other abnormalities. The result: Losses of up to \$100 million annually for the U.S. cattle feeding industry.

At the other end of the spectrum, commercial manufacturers of lactic acid also could benefit from manipulation of the lactate hydrogenase gene.

To produce more lactic acid where it's wanted—for the manufacture of industrial products such as biodegradable plastic—the ARS scientists hope to transform microbial species other than *S. bovis* to make more lactic acid. They've already genetically engineered multiple working copies of the lactate dehydrogenase gene into the bacterium *Escherichia coli*. ■

Oliver 1555, fourth in Series — It isn't too late!!!

Michigan FFA Collector Tractors have a limited supply and can only be purchased at Michigan Quality Stores. Quality Stores, in partnership with ERTL Toy Company, have made available the Oliver 1555 for 1996.

This model was produced from 1969 to 1975. They were powered by a 232 cubic inch, six cylinder diesel gas engine, guaranteed by Oliver to produce 53 horsepower at 2200 rpm's. The 1555 collector tractor is available in the row crop axle with dual narrow front wheels.

The Oliver Collector Tractor comes with special FFA designations and a certificate of authenticity. It retails for \$34.99 and is available from your Quality or County Post Store.

Earlier collector tractors in this series include the Farmall 350, Masey-Harris 44 Special, and the Ford 8N. The Oliver 1555 is the 4th in the collector series.

In a successful campaign to raise funds to support the FFA, Quality Stores and ERTL Toy Company agreed to manufacture a limited edi-

tion series of FFA tractors for five years with all the profits going to benefit the Michigan FFA Association. The funds raised help support and develop young leaders for the future through leadership conferences, state FFA conventions, and helping to ensure that FFA activities continue to be available.

Quality Stores is among the largest financial sponsors of the Michigan FFA with donations totaling over \$62,000. ■



FB calls for increase in ag research dollars

Farm Bureau has told the Senate Agriculture Committee it strongly supports funding for agricultural research programs so farmers can maintain their competitive advantage in world markets and respond to the growing needs of consumers.

Ron Warfield, president of the Illinois Farm Bureau and a member of the American Farm Bureau Federation board of directors, testified at a hearing concerning reauthorization of agricultural research programs. Warfield also serves on the USDA National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education and Economics Advisory Board.

The Illinois farm leader told the committee that because of reduced government spending on agricultural programs, the American farmer is forced to place greater reliance on the markets rather than government programs. He said farmers support this change, but that they need the support of an active, innovative ag research program if they are to remain competitive in the global market.

"We believe agriculture has already sustained many billions of dollars in cuts to farm programs," Warfield said. "This has been done with the under-

standing that a significant portion of those funds would be reinvested in programs that could give us a better chance to be competitive in an increasingly competitive global agricultural economy."

Warfield added that research is also vital to farmers as both the world population and consumers' concerns about environmental, food safety and nutritional issues continue to grow.

Warfield stressed Farm Bureau's concern with improving agriculture Extension programs, saying that while many of the traditional functions of Extension are being addressed by the private sector, new demands in agriculture dictate that outreach programs are still useful. He added that the benefits of research and Extension activities "will accrue not just to agricultural producers, but also to the general public."

"Americans spend a lower percentage of their disposable income for food than all other countries," Warfield said. "This does not happen by accident. It is a testament to the effectiveness of the research and technology transfer system in the U.S. and the ability of producers to apply the results of that research to benefit all Americans." ■

United Kingdom clears food safety of NK[®] brand Bt corn hybrids

Two United Kingdom (UK) agricultural advisory committees have confirmed the safety of processed food products made from NK brand Bt corn hybrids.

Endorsement by the UK is the first step in the European Union (EU) 90/220 procedure to obtain approval for grain produced from NK Bt hybrids. Novartis Seeds' Field Crops division applied for food safety clearance in the UK as part of this process.

The Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP) concluded that the products processed from the NK Bt corn were safe for use in food, and that food made from the grain of NK Bt corn was no different in composition than conventional corn

grain products. The ACNFP noted that normal processing procedures would destroy any material from the insect resistance gene present in the corn grain.

The Food Advisory Committee (FAC) concluded that special labeling should not be required for products made from grain produced from NK Bt corn hybrids.

Novartis Seeds, Inc. is an affiliate of Novartis Seeds AG located in Switzerland. Novartis Corporation is the parent company for all U.S. Novartis operations, including Novartis Seeds, Inc. Novartis Seeds AG is a leading worldwide research organization that develops genetics and value-added products and procedures, and sells corn, soybean, alfalfa, sunflowers, sorghum, sugar beet, wheat, vegetable and flower seeds. ■

Evaluate alfalfa survival based on plant health, yield potential

Heaving, ice layering, cold temperatures and saturated soil all make alfalfa survival difficult in the upper Midwest. Because the crop faces so many challenges during the winter and spring, Herb Damsteegt, Novartis Seeds agronomist for Wisconsin, advises producers to evaluate alfalfa fields each year.

Field evaluation is a two-step process. Producers should first determine the field's overall plant health, then estimate its yield potential. To assess plant health, Damsteegt advises growers to dig up plants from several locations in a field, split the crowns and look for healthy, white plant tissue. If there are less than five viable plants per square foot, he advises producers to replant the field.

To complete the evaluation, Damsteegt recommends growers use stem density as a guide to yield. Growers should count the number of stems in a square foot in several locations. Yield is rarely limited when stem counts exceed 55 stems per

square foot, but when densities drop below 39, yields are often significantly reduced.

If producers decide to replace a field, Damsteegt says they can plow and re-seed stands less than one year old with little impact from autotoxicity. However, since decaying alfalfa plants kill new seedlings, growers should rotate older stands to an alternative crop.

Alfalfa winterkill results from a combination of environmental and management conditions. While heaving and ice suffocation in early spring cause the majority of alfalfa stand loss, variety selection, management and age all play a key role in a stand's ability to survive. The crowns on some alfalfa varieties grow lower in the soil, making them less susceptible to heaving damage. As a result, producers in northern regions should select winter-hardy alfalfa varieties. Harvest management also impacts alfalfa survival as a poorly timed fall cutting can reduce the plant's winter food reserves. ■

United Farm Workers may sue growers

The United Farm Workers are threatening to sue three northern California strawberry growers to "win new protections against exposure to a suspected cancer-causing pesticide banned on dozens of other crops," according to a story in the *San Francisco Examiner*.

The United Farm Workers filed a notice of intent to sue Gargiulo Inc., Scurich Brothers and Garrett Farms under an anti-toxics law if the Santa Cruz County district attorney or the attorney general doesn't do so within 60 days.

The UFW, backed by the AFL-CIO and a coalition of

12 environmental groups, is charging that growers don't provide field warnings of exposure to captan, a fungicide, under provisions of the state's Proposition 65, the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Substances Act. The state law says businesses must warn if they expose people to cancer-causing chemicals at unsafe levels. Residents must give district attorneys and the attorney general 60 days to file before they sue. In addition, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney sent a letter to Carol Browner, administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, asking for a longer waiting period before workers are allowed to enter a captan-treated field. ■

Tri-State Dairy Nutrition Conference

May 20 and 21, 1997 • Grand Wayne Center • Fort Wayne, Indiana

Sponsored by: Ohio State University - Michigan State University - Purdue University

A free pre-conference dairy management symposium will be sponsored by PROTIVA, a unit of the Monsanto Company, at the Hilton Hotel prior to the Tri-State Dairy Nutrition Conference. A welcome reception will be held in the p.m. of May 19, with a program running from 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 on the morning of May 20. For more information about the symposium, contact PROTIVA Northeast Regional Office at 1-800-455-5965.

Objectives of conference:

Disseminate current information on the feeding of dairy cattle primarily to individuals who provide nutritional advice to dairy farmers.

Location:

Grand Wayne Center
120 West Jefferson Boulevard
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46802
Phone: (219) 426-4100 • FAX: (219) 420-9080

Registration Fee:

\$100 per person. Deadline: May 2, 1997.

Information:

For more information about the conference, contact: Dr. Herbert Buchlotz, (517) 355-8437, Michigan State University; Dr. Maurice Eastridge, (614) 688-3059 or Ms. Cheryl Hall, (614) 688-3143, The Ohio State University; or Dr. Timothy Johnson, (219) 481-6316, Purdue University. ■

Honeybee may be headed for a comeback

All is not lost in the battle to save the honeybee, the champion crop pollinator that is under siege from two varieties of mites in 49 states. Two methods of controlling the mites are showing some success and the federal government is working on a third.

Ken Saylor, in northeast Tennessee, avoided the catastrophe that has struck many of his fellow beekeepers. He began treating his hives in 1992 with menthol pellets. The bees inhale the fumes and the tracheal mites are killed.

Nearby, Joe Stephens, of Afton, uses Apistan strips to treat his bees for Varroa mites. Bees rub against the strips, killing mites clinging to the bees. Stephens said his bees have had an excellent year so far.

Each treatment costs about \$12 a year per colony, which is about 20,000 to 30,000 bees. When a hive is producing honey, that swells to about 100,000 bees.

There is fear that mites will build up resistance to the menthol and the Apistan. The Environmental Protection Agency is looking at formic acid, an anti-mite treatment approved for use in Canada. Formic acid is an irritant found in ants, spiders and nettles. It cannot be used when the hive is producing honey, usually from May to June. There are concerns that formic acid could contaminate the honey.

Kim Kaplan, a spokeswoman for the federal Agricultural Research Service in Greenbelt, Md., says the mites are in every state except Hawaii. Last year, Maine lost 80 percent of its wild honeybees. Losses in New York and the Midwest were about 60 percent.

Honeybees are not the only crop pollinators, but they are the best, according to Troy Fore, executive director of the American Beekeeping Federation in Jessup, Ga. Although bumblebees, butterflies and hummingbirds also pollinate, honeybees are the most available and manageable. ■

WeedCast predictions save farmers money

Corn farmers in the Morris area of west central Minnesota see a glimpse of the future whenever they click on their computer's mouse or leaf through their local newspaper for weed forecasts.

For example: from late April until early July 1996, the *Morris Sun* weekly paper carried charts showing height predictions for 11 common weeds. The last forecast for weed seedling emergence made by using weather data from the Morris area was posted on the Internet on July 1. It showed from 90- to 100-percent sprouting of pigweed and lambsquarters for farms in the area. The information helped area farmers plan their weed control strategies.

"We're working to expand the forecasts nationwide," says Frank Forcella. He is the ARS agronomist who developed the weed forecasting computer model, called WeedCast, that generates the predictions.

"Right now, we just share the model's results on the Internet or in the local newspaper. We're working on putting the model itself on the net so farmers everywhere can type in their local weather data and get predictions for their farms."

Download the WeedCast software from the World Wide Web at <http://www.infolink.morris.mn.us/~lwink/products/weedcast.htm>.

"We're also considering adapting the model to user-friendly software that would be dis-

tributed by us or a private company," Forcella adds.

The forecasts can be used with other farm management aids, such as the WeedSim model developed by the University of Minnesota in conjunction with ARS. That model advises farmers if and when to use herbicides and mechanical weed control based on predicted weed dormancy, emergence, and speed of growth.

In tests at Morris, Forcella and his colleagues have grown corn and soybeans with fewer herbicides because predictions reassured them that the weed numbers wouldn't harm yields. Their profits were \$20 an acre more than where standard weed control practices were used. Occasionally, there were slightly more weeds, but never enough to affect yields in the current or following year.

When combined with information on yield losses from weeds and delayed planting, WeedCast predictions help determine the best compromise date for seedbed cultivation to substantially destroy weeds, instead of using herbicide before planting.

Forcella has worked closely in development and implementation of these models with weed scientists and agricultural economists at the University of Minnesota, in cooperation with their counterparts in most of the Corn Belt states. Minnesota's Agricultural Utilization Research Institute also helped fund this research.

Frank Forcella is at the USDA-ARS North Central Soil Conservation Research Laboratory, Morris, MN 56267, phone (320) 589-3411, fax (320) 589-3787, e-mail fforcella@mail.mrsars.usda.gov. ■

U.S., EU still 'far apart' on meat inspection agreement

The United States and European Union are expected to continue meetings in an attempt to come to agreement on meat inspection "equivalency" standards, which will allow U.S. meat and meat products to continue to be shipped to the EU, according to Agriculture Department officials.

"There's not much reason for optimism at the moment. We're still far apart," said Paul Drazek, USDA's top trade negotiator.

EU nations plan to implement new inspection guidelines that they say are better than U.S. standards. The U.S. disagrees, saying its meat inspection rules are just as safe as the EU's.

"There are a number of different things...that they continue to insist we comply with that would make it economically impossible for us to export (to the EU), which may be the objective," Drazek said. ■

Pork checkoff use questioned

Questions recently arose concerning the National Pork Producers Council's alleged use of producer checkoff dollars to fund research to monitor activities of activist groups, a charge NPPC denies. The Agriculture Department said producer funds were not used in the study in question, but that it continues to investigate other reports on activists by a Washington-based firm—paid for with \$51,300 in checkoff monies—to determine whether they were proper.

Checkoff funds may only be used to fund promotion, research and consumer information projects.

NPPC said the reports in question were "part of a program NPPC has utilized since May 1996 to strategically monitor environmental, animal rights, industry structure and food safety issues. ... They are issues that are likely to have an impact on the way pork producers do business in the future." ■

Lean, mean fighting machine needs fat

Wanted: High-energy beef sticks to sustain U.S. military troops during times of high physical stress.

A low-fat diet is normally recommended for healthy eating. But when military personnel are in combat or other situations where physical demands are enormous, they need the extra nutritional energy that a high-fat snack can provide. An ideal snack for this purpose would have 40 percent fat, 30 percent carbohydrates, 25 percent protein and 5 percent moisture. The only problem: The high temperatures needed to make such a product would melt the fat out of it.

Scientists with USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) have discovered that adding fiber from the insides of peas helps meat retain almost all of its fat during heating without affecting flavor.

Fat isn't always stable in foods. It naturally breaks down over time, and cooking or refrigeration can speed up the process. When fat degrades in low-fat foods, flavor fades. The ARS scientists will evaluate pea fiber's potential as an ingredient in low-fat meat products, where any loss of fat during cooking can be detrimental.

The ARS researchers have tested the fat-holding potential of several plant-based binders including soy fiber, rice and sunflower meal. Of all the additives, only pea fiber retained essentially all of the fat. Pea fiber also improved cooking yields of ground beef. Next, the scientists will help the military find the right combination of pea fiber, starch and fat for maximum nutrition in their meat sticks. They'll also take a look at how well the formula holds up under extrusion machines needed to make the snacks. ■

USMEF takes stock in Taiwan tragedy

The U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) took stock as the full impact of a foot and mouth disease (FMD) outbreak in Taiwan began to emerge. According to USMEF President and CEO Philip M. Seng, the FMD outbreak in Taiwan is a tragic reminder for all countries about the importance of animal health in international trade.

Seng explained that the Council for Agriculture in Taiwan suspended all exports of pork and breeding pigs from that country on Thursday, March 20. The pork industry in Taiwan generates \$3.24 billion in annual revenues and exports approximately 30 percent of its annual pork production. As of Friday, March 21, the outbreak had spread to 20 farms, infecting 3,000 hogs in 210 of Taiwan's 23 counties.

"The FMD outbreak in Taiwan makes us all appreciate how important it is for the meat and livestock industries in the United States to uphold the highest standards in animal health and food safety," said Seng. "We are very fortunate to be able to speak out with confidence about the safety of U.S. red meat products in international markets. Animal health is a vital part of that food safety message."

While Taiwan has never been on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's list of FMD-free countries, the United States has been certified FMD-free since 1931. The last outbreak of FMD in the United States was eradicated in 1929. As a precautionary measure, the United States does not permit the importation of animals or animal by-products from countries known to have FMD.

The United States and Taiwan have been rivals in the lucrative Japanese pork market for much of the past decade. In calendar year 1996, Japan imported 653,164 metric tons of pork. Taiwan's share of this pork import market was 41% compared to 22% for the United States. Other countries that export pork to Japan are noted in the table, at right.

According to Seng, the United States in recent years has been chipping away at Taiwan's share of the Japanese market, by promoting the superior quality of U.S. fresh chilled pork in Japanese supermarkets. Seng pointed out that the U.S. share of Japan's pork import market in 1994 was 15%, before climbing to 19% in 1995, and then reaching a record high of 22% in 1996.

Japan imported 42% of its total pork consumption in 1996. This compares to 34% and 40% in 1994 and 1995, respectively. As such, Taiwanese pork accounted for 17% of all pork consumed in Japan last year.

"The U.S. industry is in an excellent position to fill a significant portion of the void left by Taiwan," said Seng. "The emphasis of our American pork campaign in Japan over the past several years has been on the retail sector where quality and appearance are so important. Without Taiwan in the market, our export growth in this sector should increase substantially."

In CY96, 30% of Taiwan's pork sales to Japan were fresh chilled, amounting to 79,636 metric tons. By comparison, 55% of U.S. pork sales to Japan were fresh chilled at

Taiwan begins pork campaign

Taiwan has weekend reopened hog trading at 19 of the nation's 22 wholesale sites following a mass slaughter of animals suspected of being infected with foot and mouth disease. To highlight the occasion, government officials handed out free box lunches of pig's trotter and noodles. It was so popular they ran out before all who wanted the lunches could be served.

"Starting today, don't be afraid, let's eat pork together," said Taichung Taiwan's acting mayor Lin Hsueh-cheng, who ate the lunch with a smile.

To further appease the public, shoppers can ask pork vendors to produce a certificate showing that the pork they are buying is not from a diseased animal.

The Taiwanese foot and mouth outbreak started with nine breeding herds infected as of March 20 and quickly spread to more than 1,000 of the country's 25,000 hog farms by late last week. Government officials said more than 880,000 hogs will be destroyed to contain the disease. The outbreak has forced the cancellation of several contracts for feed grains. ■

Japanese Pork Imports by origin (metric tons)

| Country | CY1995 | % of Import Market | CY1996 | % of Import Market |
|---------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Taiwan | 266,856 | 46% | 266,225 | 41% |
| United States | 108,565 | 19% | 141,790 | 22% |
| Denmark | 134,194 | 23% | 118,705 | 18% |
| Canada | 31,378 | 5% | 39,212 | 6% |
| Korea | 13,821 | 2% | 34,862 | 5% |
| Others | 25,814 | 5% | 52,370 | 8% |
| Total | 580,628 | 100% | 653,164 | 100% |

Source: Japan Ministry of Finance Compiled By: Meat Export Federation

77,231 metric tons. The U.S. industry's competition for frozen pork sales in Japan will now come principally from Denmark, with growing interest in pork from Canada and the Republic of Korea.

"Before the FMD outbreak in Taiwan, our export goal for sales of U.S. pork and pork variety meats to Japan in 1997 was 224,000 metric tons, which is a 22% increase over last

year," said Seng. "It's too early to predict how the market will respond and how Japanese consumers will react—250,000 to 300,000 metric tons is a lot of pork; price will be an important factor."

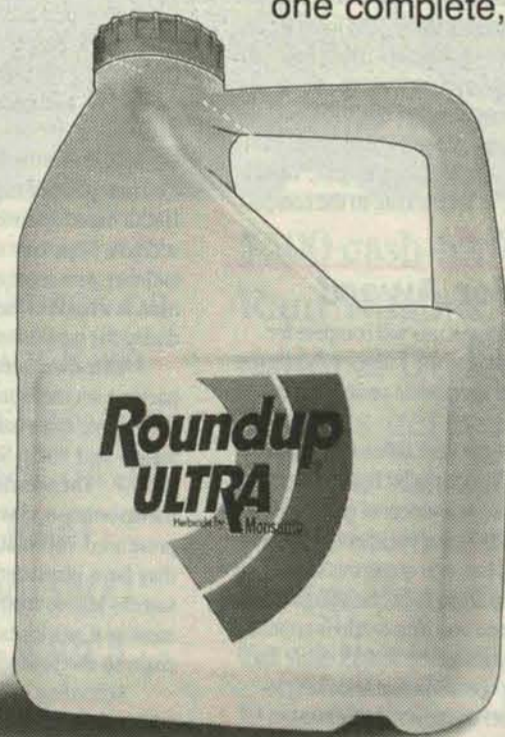
The U.S. Meat Export Federation is a national trade association responsible for developing international markets for the U.S. red meat industry. For its beef and pork export

programs, the USMEF contracts with the national Cattlemen's Beef Association and the National Pork Producers Council. USMEF also receives funding and support from the USDA, exporting companies, and a number of corn, sorghum and soybean groups. Headquartered in Denver, USMEF has more than a dozen marketing offices in foreign countries, including offices in Taiwan and Japan. ■

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Conservation buffer initiative launched

The USDA is launching a multi-year effort known as the National Conservation Buffer Initiative in hopes of encouraging all landowners to find out more about buffer strip establishment and the incentives available through the 1996 Farm Bill.

The initiative's immediate efforts are focused on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract holders whose land may not qualify for the March sign-up but who may find buffer strip establishment opens the door for participation in the continuous CRP option.

Buffer incentives

USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Chief Paul Johnson notes that in addition to the continuous CRP, incentives are available for buffer strip establishment through the Wildlife Incentives Program (WHIP), the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and state and local programs.

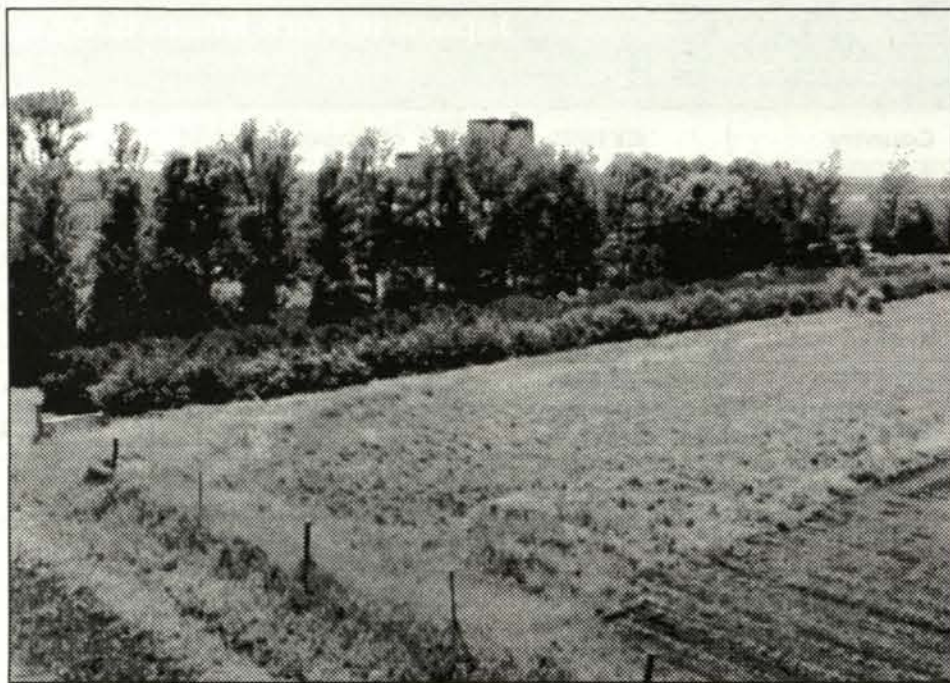
Buffers described

USDA defines a conservation buffer as an area or strip of land maintained in permanent vegetation (grass or trees) to help control pollutants and manage other environmental problems. Buffer strips can be used along streams, on field edges, or within a field.

"Buffers are most effective if they are planned as part of a comprehensive conservation system which could include conservation tillage as well as nutrient management and integrated pest management practices," says Johnson.

A CRP option

During a recent news conference on the final CRP rules, Ag Secretary Dan Glickman pointed to buffer strips as a way to improve the possibility of re-enrolling eligible acres in CRP and, for acres that



The National Conservation Buffer Initiative promises to help landowners gain education about buffer strips.

don't meet the new eligibility requirements, an opportunity to participate in the continuous CRP sign-up.

"If you plan to put some or all of your contract acres back into crop production, please consider leaving small, strategic portions of your current CRP acres in grassed waterways, filter strips, contoured buffer strips, riparian (streamside) buffers, field windbreaks, shelterbelts, or similar practices. Acres devoted to these practices are eligible for enrollment under the continuous sign-up por-

tion of CRP," writes Glickman. He adds, "They can be accepted automatically if the offers do not exceed established rental rates and other eligibility criteria are met."

Continuous CRP sign-up practices can be approved quickly and do not require submission of a competitive offer in the 15th sign-up.

Other practices considered as buffers or closely associated (which may or may not be eligible for the continuous CRP but may qualify for other programs) include hedgerow plantings, herbaceous wind barri-

ers, cross wind trap strips, alley cropping systems and streambank protection areas.

Benefits listed

Benefits of buffers include:

- trapping sediment, fertilizers, bacterial and viral pathogens, chemicals, and heavy metals before they reach water
- enhancing infiltration in the buffer area
- trapping snow to add moisture to the soil
- reducing blowing soil in areas with strong winds
- protecting livestock and wildlife from harsh weather
- serving as a primary food source for wildlife
- providing habitat and connecting corridors of habitat for wildlife
- protecting buildings from wind damage
- reducing noise and odor
- stabilizing streams and reducing water temperature
- serving as a turn row, and supplying forage or trees for managed harvest.

NRCS started the buffer initiative and is working with other public agencies as well as private sector corporations and organizations to promote the adoption of several million acres of buffers nationwide.

Landowners should contact their local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office for technical information and options on buffers.

Those wishing to help market the use of buffers should contact Max Schnepf for more information, phone (202)720-2889 or FAX (202)720-8520.

What is the continuous CRP?

The continuous CRP provides incentive payments for people who enroll their environmentally sensitive land or put their land into the highest environmental use possible by using it to grow filter strips, riparian buffers, field wind breaks, etc. It is an ongoing enrollment option and is not dependent on any periodic CRP sign-up. ■

Company "puts the go in grow"

A St. Johns-based company, Agro-Culture Liquid Fertilizers, hopes to revolutionize the fertilizer industry with its alternative to conventional fertilizers—a liquid fertilizer aimed at being efficient and reducing the amount of fertilizer applications.

Agro-Culture's pro-germinator fertilizers are applied at planting alongside the seed, right where the plant needs it. The liquid fertilizer combines primary nutrients with micronutrients. An advantage of the liquid fertilizers, particularly in no-till, is that we can put the fertilizer down by the seed and they are more concentrated than conventional fertilizers, therefore reducing the number of fillups, according to Agro-Culture Research Manager Jerry Wilhm.

The High NRG-N fertilizer is 27 percent nitrogen and contains additional nutrients. "We supplement it with additional chlorophyll-building nutrients such as sulphur, zinc, iron and magnesium,

which we find enhances performance," Wilhm said.

The North Central Research Station is Agro-Culture's discovery zone for their products. Located near St. Johns, the 40-acre farm provides the foundation for Agro-Culture's research.

"Our research farm is where we are doing scientific replicated experiments to develop our new products, as well as to refine rates of our existing products," said Wilhm.

The Sure-K liquid potassium fertilizer can be mixed with other fertilizers to supplement the grower's needs, explained Wilhm. The foliar fertilizers were designed to treat nutrient deficiencies that appear after planting.

Agro-Culture was established in 1963 by Douglas Cook and has since grown to serve more than 20 states and 200 customers. Their slogan, "Liquid puts the go in grow," is an attribute to the company's recent expansion. ■

Newton wins 1997 Beef Ambassador Award

Bill Newton, son of Beverly and Dean Newton, Hemlock, Mich., recently received the 1997 Michigan Beef Ambassador Award. Sponsored by the Michigan Beef Industry Commission, Michigan State University Extension and The American National CattleWomen Inc., the Beef Ambassador Program is a competition for youth ages 15 to 19. The purpose of the program is to develop knowledgeable spokespersons for the beef industry. Participants are educated on the positive attributes of beef in order to promote its nutritional value, the economic value, product safety, environmental stewardship and versatility.

Contestants must first win at the state level to have an opportunity to advance to the National Beef Ambassador Contest. Participants are required to present an illustrated talk on the attributes of beef and prepare a beef recipe. The 1997 National Beef Ambassador Contest will be held in Rochester,

Minn., in October. Contestants will compete for \$2,500 in cash awards, and the winner will have the opportunity to travel nationwide promoting the beef industry.

The 1997 Michigan Beef Ambassador, Bill Newton, is an eighth-grader at St. Peter Lutheran School and is involved in a variety of extracurricular activities. He is currently vice president of the Westsider's 4-H Club and has won numerous awards for animal showmanship. In addition, he also participates on athletic teams and likes outdoor activities. Newton enjoys his involvement in agriculture and their family farming operation and is looking towards a future in beef or swine management.

For information regarding the Michigan Beef Ambassador Contest, contact the Michigan Beef Industry Commission at 2145 University Park, Suite 300, Okemos 48864. ■

Management changes for Michigan and Kentucky Livestock Exchange

Michigan Livestock Exchange (MLE) announces with great pleasure and excitement that Don Frey has accepted managerial duties of Kentucky Livestock Exchange (KLE) effective May 1, 1997. Frey will be the general manager of markets for KLE and will be based out of the Bourbon Stockyards in Louisville, KY.

Frey has 31 years of valuable knowledge in cattle marketing, which will help tie the two marketing companies together. Frey began working for MLE in 1988 at a branch in Northern Indiana. Currently, he is the manager of both

the Coldwater and Archbold markets. Before coming to MLE, he worked for the Producers Livestock Marketing Association in Fort Wayne, Ind. Don and his wife, Connie, will be relocating to the Kentucky area.

Dan Ruth of Archbold, Ohio will be taking over managerial responsibilities at the Archbold and Coldwater markets. Ruth has been with MLE for the past eight years at the Archbold branch. Previous to working for MLE, Ruth was employed with the Luginbill Brothers at the same location. Additionally, Joel Rosenberger, of

Japanese companies pledge to use HACCP-based system to improve meat safety in Japan

Japanese companies pledged last week at a binational food safety symposium in Tokyo to take new steps to improve the safety of food products in Japan. The symposium was organized by the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) with USDA and U.S. industry support.

More than 200 industry leaders from Japan and the United States took part in the event. Much of the discussion revolved around the seven principles of "HACCP" and the important role that these principles play in food safety. HACCP is an acronym for Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points and is the guiding influence in the U.S. meat safety and inspection system.

Almost three-quarters (72 percent) of the Japanese companies that attended the symposium said they now planned to pursue the implementation of HACCP-based systems to improve product safety. In addition, 52 percent of the companies in attendance said they were more confident in the safety of U.S. meat as a result of the information they received during the symposium.

"Our members from the production and packing sectors spoke in great detail about what their companies are doing to produce safe meat," said Philip Seng, president and CEO, USMEF. "Then leading companies from Japan's transportation, distribution and retail sectors presented information about specific programs they have instituted to protect Japanese consumers and to further ensure the safety of U.S. meat as it works its way down the food safety chain to the Japanese consumer."

According to Seng, the E. coli O157:H7 outbreak last year in Japan has focused industry attention in Japan on food safety and the need to restore consumer confidence in the safety of imported meat. Although the cause of the E. coli O157:H7 outbreak was never identified, Seng noted that Japanese consumers have become more concerned about the safety of many imported food items, including meat. He added that none of the cases of E. coli O157:H7 poisoning were attributed to imported meat.

"Food safety will be a defining issue for the

U.S. red meat industry well into the next century," said Seng. "As an industry, we need to come together and work with our trading partners around the world to identify food safety risks and deal with them before they have a chance to become real problems."

The companies in Japan that are handling U.S. meat are becoming more committed to food safety, observed Seng. "I was very encouraged to see that many of Japan's largest importers, retailers and food processing companies were represented by their top-level executives at the food safety symposium last week."

One of USMEF's primary goals in 1997, explained Seng, is to build on the progress that USMEF has made with the Japanese trade and to reach out to consumers with a strong, credible food safety message. "With support from the Japanese trade—particularly retailers, distributors and food manufacturing companies—the U.S. industry will have the foundation it needs to be most effective in targeting its food safety messages at Japanese consumers."

Key presenters at the food safety symposium were Dr. Kunio Morita of Japan's Ministry of Health and Welfare, John Reddington of USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, Dr. Phillip Tarr of the University of Washington, Merlyn Carlson of the Nebraska Beef Council, Duncan Highmark of Purina Mills, Stan Miller of Excel Corporation and Dr. Drussell Cross of the International Meat and Poultry HACCP Alliance. The program also included Japanese industry spokesmen from the retail, distribution and transportation sectors.

The U.S. Meat Export Federation is a national trade association responsible for developing international markets for the U.S. red meat industry. For its beef and pork export programs, USMEF contracts with the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the National Pork Producers Council. USMEF also receives funding and support from USDA, exporting companies and a number of corn, sorghum and soybean groups. Headquartered in Denver, USMEF has more than a dozen marketing offices in foreign countries. ■

Wooster, Ohio, has rejoined the MLE family and will be assisting with cattle buying in the Archbold, Ohio area.

MLE would like to congratulate Don, Dan and Joel on their new positions. These promotions are a great move for the company and those individuals as well.

Michigan Livestock Exchange, East Lansing,

Mich., is a farmer-owned cooperative representing more than 60,000 members in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky, and is the largest livestock marketing cooperative in the United States. The cooperative operates livestock markets throughout the Midwest region and in 1996 marketed in excess of \$700 million of livestock on behalf of its members. ■

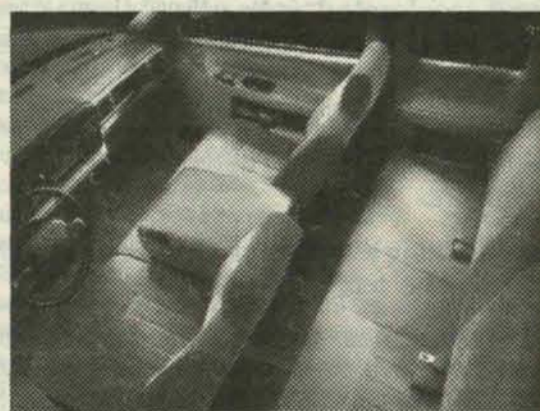


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America's Truck Stop



The New Dodge

Sustain agriculture through raspberry canes

Farmers are not the only people who can sustain agriculture. We all share in the responsibility of establishing and promoting responsible farming, from the foods we buy at the grocery store to the gardens we plant in our yards. The W.K. Kellogg-funded Thumb Innovative Communities Group looks to sustain agriculture in many different ways. One project looks to sustain agriculture at its very heart: to provide people with the necessary plants and information. For a limited time, the group will offer Heritage raspberry canes at a discounted price through the Indiana Berry and Plant Company.

In addition to receiving the canes at a reduced price when purchasing through the Thumb Innovative Communities, individuals can network ideas with other growers, cooperate to purchase additional items at a reduced price, and eventually market their products together and form a Thumb Area small Fruit Growers Cooperative. Individuals will be asked to complete a survey after the first year outlining their successes and/or concerns with the project.

Heritage raspberries are the most common, and the easiest, variety of raspberries grown in Michigan. Heritage should be raised as a fall-bearing crop to receive the best production, with spring planting in April taking place as soon as the soil can be worked. Heritage raspberries prefer well-drained, sandy loam or loam soils, with a soil pH

between 6.0 to 6.8 and a high soil organic content. To maintain healthy and high-yielding Heritage raspberries, simply cut the canes in late winter or early spring with a lawnmower. The crop will ripen sometime between late August and early September. Other aspects to consider include which direction the slope (if any) the plant will be placed (south-facing slopes will speed the fruiting process), and "frost pockets" (where cold air can collect in low areas, thereby damaging the canes.)

Canes will cost 80 cents each. Orders may be placed until April 18, 1997, by calling the MSU Extension-Project Office at (517)269-6099. A 50 percent down payment is required when placing the order. Growers will be notified as to when they may pick up their canes at the Huron County Expo Center, where information on how to plant and care for your raspberry canes will be distributed. Canes will arrive for planting around April 25, 1997. MSU Extension liability ceases when canes are picked up.

The Thumb Innovative Communities goals include enhancing the community by developing or initiating a project that is environmentally sound, socially acceptable and economically feasible. Areas of interest for the Specialty/Niche Group include those that do not fit under the realm of dairy and livestock or crops. The group continues to explore aquaculture, food processing and other potential projects. ■

New products help Michigan beef producers enhance marketing

When it comes to convenient, versatile fresh meat products, nothing beats ground beef. Representing about 40 percent of all beef sold by volume, ground beef is by far the largest single meat product marketed today. In fact, as hamburgers and cheeseburgers alone, ground beef represents 75 percent of all away-from-home beef eating occasions.

But many other beef products aren't as readily associated with convenience, according to Kathleen Hawkins, executive director for the Michigan Beef Industry Commission. That's changing thanks to new beef product development efforts being funded in part by Michigan's beef and dairy producers through their \$1-per-head checkoff investments on animals they market.

These new efforts are part of a program that encourages the development of new product ideas and innovative ways of marketing beef, says Hawkins. Many of the efforts involve enhancing the value of beef cuts that traditionally bring lower prices at the meat case, such as the chuck and round, turning them into products that would have unique consumer appeal.

Roasts, for example, have sometimes been assigned an "old fashioned" label by consumers. A new rotisserie beef product is being developed that will compete with rotisserie chicken in supermarkets and restaurants, giving the beef roast a new,

more contemporary image, says Hawkins.

"Many consumers love the taste of roast, but don't want to be bothered with the cooking and preparation needed," according to Hawkins. "With this product, a supermarket shopper could take home a pre-cooked roast, open a bag of pre-made salad, microwave some potatoes and have a quick meal for the family in no time."

Another new beef product in development will demonstrate that beef is not just for dinner or lunch anymore. A new product tentatively called Beefeatas™ is targeting the enormous appetizer market, at the same time adding value to cuts from the chuck and round.

Beefeatas are finger foods that are breaded and deep fried, making them ideal for restaurant appetizers. The product is currently being promoted to foodservice chains through product demonstrations.

"Today's consumer is fascinated with innovative products that stand out from traditional foods," according to Hawkins. "The beef industry must be creative in its thinking, production and marketing to offer these kinds of products. Thanks to the investments of beef and dairy producers in new product development, we're helping make new items possible and creating ways of cost-effectively meeting the demands of consumers." ■

Environmentally friendly program available to producers

Clean Sweep pesticide collection sites at your disposal

Are those half-empty pesticide containers stacking up? A program coordinated by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and seven counties is offering producers agricultural chemical disposal facilities.

What started as a one-day pesticide disposal program coordinated by the Michigan Department of Agriculture developed into the establishment of permanent disposal sites in Berrien, Ionia, Isabella, Kalamazoo, Lapeer, Oakland and Ottawa counties.

Each county disposal site will accept outdated pesticides by appointment only. Before you call, know the pesticide's trade and common name, the expiration date and the estimated weight and volume. Contact the county MSU Extension office in your area for more information.

Nine safe transport tips for waste agricultural chemicals

1. Unusable fungicides, herbicides and insecticides are acceptable at the collection facility.
2. Keep products in original, sealed and labeled containers.
3. Do not mix the contents of unknown or unlabeled containers.
4. If portions of an agricultural pesticide are placed in a new container, duplicate the existing label and place it on the new container.
5. Ensure that containers are not leaking prior to transporting to the collection facility.
 - inspect steel drums for excessive rust, pinholes or deficient seams.
 - over-pack all leaking containers in a clear, plastic bag or a rigid, leak-proof container.
 - if a container is at all questionable, over-pack it for safety.
6. Do not transport containers with open tops.
7. Secure all containers in the vehicle to ensure that they cannot slide, tip or spill contents during transport.
8. Place chemicals in transport vehicle away from passengers.
9. To over pack a large container, like a 30- to 55-gallon drum, call the collection facility for assistance.

Source: Ottawa County Pesticide Collection Facility

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John Gruchot, Planning Department
Room 104 County Court House
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St. Joseph, MI 49085
616-983-7111/ext 8350 fax: 616-982-8611

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Don Lehman, Solid Waste Coordinator
100 Library Street
Ionia, MI 48846-1691
616-527-5357 fax: 616-527-5312

Isabella County
Dawn George, Director
Resource Recovery Isabella County
4208 E. River Road
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858
517-773-9631 fax: 517-773-0835

Kalamazoo County
Tom Dewhirst, Coordinator
Household Hazardous Waste Program
Environmental Health Division
1301 Lamont Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49001
616-383-8741 fax: 616-383-8747

Lapeer County
Renee Wrublewski,
Lapeer County Recycling Coordinator
255 Clay Street
Lapeer, MI 48446
810-667-0452 fax: 810-667-0369

Oakland County
Mike Czuprenski, Operations Director
SOCCRA
3910 Webster Road
Royal Oak, MI 48072-2761
810-288-5150 fax: 810-435-0310

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Northern IN
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Discussion Topic

Bovine tuberculosis infects four-county deer herd

May 1997

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


What does this mean for agriculture?

When a hunter bagged a buck on Alpena County hunt club land during the 1994 season, little did he know what his trophy would mean for Michigan's wildlife, agriculture and public health.

While gutting the deer that November, the hunter noticed several pea-sized yellow nodules in its lungs and on its rib cage. Concerned about this strange finding, he notified the Department of Natural Resources. The cause of the odd lesions, they found, was bovine tuberculosis (TB) — rare among free-ranging wildlife.

While no one knows for sure where it came from, an isolated case of a TB-infected deer was found in the area in 1975. Prior to the '94 finding, only eight cases of bovine TB had ever been reported in all the United States and Canada.

The northeastern Michigan TB problem did not stop at that one buck. A disease surveillance effort was immediately put in place and, the next year, 48 deer tested positive for bovine tuberculosis. By the end of last year's hunting season, another two dozen positives were found. While extensive testing of all livestock within a five-mile radius hasn't uncovered any positive livestock, a 1996 carnivore collection turned up a coyote carrying TB. The affected area includes Alcona, Alpena, Montmorency and Oscoda counties, and now Presque Isle, where one positive deer was turned in.

This bovine tuberculosis problem in northeastern Michigan white-tailed deer could have far-reaching implications for the state's domestic livestock, and even public health.

Bovine TB in the wild

The *Mycobacterium bovis* TB strain is mainly spread through repeated and prolonged direct exposure to bacteria coughed up or exhaled by infected animals. Most often, the disease is spread by aerosolized droplets or when closely confined livestock consume feed or water contaminated by an infected animal. As this disease progresses, affected animals may develop lesions in the lungs, lymph nodes and internal organs.

According to Dr. Stephen Schmitt, DNR veterinarian at Rose Lake Wildlife Disease Laboratory, most mammals are susceptible to the disease. "Bo-

vine tuberculosis has the widest host range of any of the TBs," he said. "So most mammals, including man, are susceptible."

Since the TB was found in a white-tailed deer in 1994, Schmitt and others have been busy tracking the disease. "We've been doing surveys trying to find out exactly where it is and at what prevalence rate," he said.

Coyotes, red foxes, badger, opossum, raccoon and bobcats are among the wildlife tested, "mainly because these animals might feed on a TB-infected carcass or bait pile and become infected themselves." So far, research has shown the coyote that tested positive in 1996, is a "spillover" host, one that simply carries the disease but does not transmit it. Therefore, white-tailed deer remain the focus of testing. "We will continue monitoring these other animals," Schmitt said, "but the deer — that's where action needs to be taken."

According to Schmitt, the respiratory route is the main way TB is transmitted. This requires close, even nose-to-nose, contact among animals. "There's not a lot of close contact between deer and cattle," he said. "The most likely would be a round bale out in the field. A deer feeds on at night and a cow during the day. There's not a great deal of risk there. Let's say there's some bacteria there in the hay and it's taken in orally. You need about 3,000 times more bacteria to become infected through the oral route than the respiratory route."

Effects on the livestock industry

At issue for the agriculture industry is maintaining statewide TB-free status. Michigan earned this Bovine Tuberculosis Accredited-Free status in 1979.

"Many other states recognize the TB-free status, which is granted by USDA, and therefore they will let cattle from Michigan come into their state without individual testing of those animals," said Dr. Michael Chaddock, Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) state veterinarian.

"The other thing I'm sure the industry will want to look at is if we lose our TB-free status, should there be requirements to move cattle from one point to another within Michigan?" Chaddock asked. "There would also probably be some serious studying of our exhibition requirements. If animals are going to go to exhibition at a fair, especially where the public is involved in being close to those animals, should they be TB tested to go to those events?"

"Other countries looking to import cattle from the United States certainly look at those states that are free of TB," Chaddock said. "So there would certainly be an impact on our export market. And I'd say there probably already has been an impact on it, because some countries are saying 'I don't care what

species you have TB in, if you've got TB in Michigan, why should we get cattle from your state?'"

"With the current federal law, with us not finding tuberculosis in our livestock, we will not lose our status," Chaddock said. "If, however, if we find tuberculosis in our livestock, then we are at risk of losing the free status."

Chaddock is quick to point out that while TB-free status is not threatened with current legislation, questions are beginning to surface from foreign countries that purchase U.S. livestock. "There are discussions out there that if you have bovine tuberculosis in your state — in any species — then, should your state still remain a free state?"

Public health

Besides putting interstate or international shipping of livestock in peril, human health could be at risk if the disease continues to spread.

"Currently, of course, the risk is very low as far as spreading from the deer to the livestock," Chaddock said. "It's also very low spreading from the deer to human beings. But it is a possibility."

It's important to remember that there is no threat of contracting TB from properly cooked meat or pasteurized milk. It is also very unlikely that a person field-dressing or eating adequately cooked venison from a deer infected with TB could become infected.

How TB infects animals

So why is bovine tuberculosis infecting the white-tailed deer herd? DNR's Schmitt says the deer are no more or less susceptible than cattle, but usually only get the disease when a nearby domestic livestock herd spreads it — not the case this time.

Where it came from is yet to be determined, but to figure out why it spread is a slightly easier task. "We feel that it's somewhat due to the high deer numbers, but more important is the concentration of deer at these feeding sites — baiting somewhat, but more importantly, the winter feeding," he said. "This concentrates them nose-to-nose, and we're kind of treating these wild deer like livestock. We're creating, in some situations, kind of a feedlot situation out there, and that's what's allowing TB to be transmitted from one animal to another. If we could let the animals go back to being truly wild, stop the feeding, then our transmission rate would drop and we could slowly start to work our way out of the problem."

"With cattle, the only thing found to be effective is to quarantine and depopulate," Schmitt continued. "So, with the deer, we've got to work on the feeding of the animals, which concentrates them, and then also the deer numbers."

Stopping the spread

Kevin Kirk, Michigan Farm Bureau commodity specialist, is a member of the TB Core Committee working to solve the tuberculosis dilemma. He, along with representatives from MDA, DNR, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH), MSU Extension, hunt clubs and others, have formed subcommittees to study the situation. They will recommend solutions to the directors of the three state agencies — MDA, DNR and MDCH — by Aug. 1 for consideration and implementation.

"The only way you eradicate a disease is to eradicate the host," Kirk said. "And that means you eliminate all hosts — and that means zero population of a deer herd."

"To eliminate a disease in domestic animals on a farm, we move in and eliminate all those animals," he continued. "Deer don't stand in one township or stand on one piece of acreage and say, 'Come take me, I know I'm a problem.' They move — they move 10 or 15 miles in a day. That's the challenge."

Kirk believes all citizens should be concerned, but not alarmed, about the TB situation. "We have a disease that is a human disease problem and we have to take this thing seriously. We have to protect our food chain," he said. "We all have a responsibility."

One solution to stop the spread of bovine tuberculosis is to curb winter feeding of deer, according to Kirk, who cites this Michigan Farm Bureau policy:

We support legislation to eliminate winter feeding from Dec. 1 through April 1.

Short term, farmers in the affected four-county area can move round bales away from areas where deer may try to feed on the hay. Kirk also suggests that farmers utilize electric fences to keep the deer out of feedbunks and other possible sources of cross-contamination. "And then let's hope that Mother Nature, through its severe winters, will help eliminate a few of the weaker ones," he concluded. ■

Discussion Questions

1. How can we assure the public that contracting TB from their food is not a concern?
2. Should intensive surveillance or testing of wildlife, livestock and at-risk humans continue? Why or why not?
3. Bison in Yellowstone National Park have brucellosis, and the disease is threatening domestic livestock. How does this wildlife/domestic livestock problem compare to Michigan's TB situation?
4. If you were a member of the core committee, what recommendations would you make to solve the TB problem?

MSU, DHIA cite the outstanding dairy industry leaders for 1996

Dairy farm families from Ottawa and Missaukee counties were among those honored March 19 at the Michigan Dairy Herd Improvement Association (DHIA) annual meeting.

The Michigan State University Department of Animal Science Dairy Farmer of the Year Award was presented to Wayne Haverdink, who, with his son, Kirk, manages a 120-cow, 500-dairy operation near Jenison.

The DHIA Progressive Dairyman of the Year Award went to Frank and Lyle Vanderwal of Lake City.

The four top DHIA production awards were given to Donald and Pam Vandermeer, of Lake Odessa; John Buth, Coopersville; and Larry Webster, Elsie.

The Vanderwal brothers manage a herd of 125 Holstein cows that last year had a rolling herd average of 28,640 pounds, an increase of 8,447 pounds of milk per cow per year and a corresponding per cow dollar increase of \$1,562 in the past five years.

Haverdink was also cited for his contribution to the dairy industry through the Independent Cooperative Milk Producers Association, where he has been president for the past 12 years and a member of the board of directors for 21 years.

"Most notable have been his efforts to promote unity within Michigan's milk industry by working with the cooperatives and milk handlers, milk processors and all Michigan dairy producers," said Maynard Hogberg, MSU department of Animal Science chairperson, in making the presentation.

Haverdink is also active in his community church, Michigan Farm Bureau, the Ottawa County DHIA, the executive board of the united Dairy Industry of Michigan and numerous other organizations.

The Vandermeers began assembling their herd in 1989 with the goal of being one of the state's highest producing herds in five years. Last year they won the high dollar value, highest milk average and highest individual producing cow awards.

This year they received the highest dollar value and highest milk average awards. They manage 65 cows with a rolling herd average of 31,647 pounds of milk (in 1996 it was 30,600), 1,042 pounds of butterfat and 997 pounds of protein. The per cow dollar value is \$4,200.

The Vandermeers also received the DHIA Gold Club award for having the highest five-year rolling herd average — 28,719 pounds of milk per cow per year — in the state.

Buth won the highest individual cow dollar value award for a 31-month-old that in the past year produced 40,532 pounds of milk, 2,690 pounds of butterfat and 1,247 pounds of protein, and a dollar value of \$6,619.

Webster won the highest individual producing cow award for a 49-month-old cow that in the past year produced 43,716 pounds of milk, 1,455 pounds of butterfat and 1,317 pounds of protein, and a dollar value of \$5,701. ■

100 bushels of oats possible, MSU trials show

Growers considering a longer crop rotation might want to plant oats this spring. Oats can produce upwards of 100 bushels per acre and, with prices around \$2 per bushel, provide a fair return on investment.

The best performer in Michigan State University field trials last year was Prairie, which produced 115 bushels per acre, followed by Ida (114.3 bu.), Newdak (113 bu.), Mi-88-0-30 (111 bu.) and Ogle (111.8 bu.).

In MSU's field trials the past three years, Ida and Ogle averaged 115 bushels per acre and Mi-88-0-30 averaged 120 bushels per acre.

"White-seeded oat varieties are the most popular because they can be sold as feed for recreation-

al horses and race horses," says Larry Copeland, MSU Extension agronomist.

Oat planting in Michigan usually takes place in late March or April, depending on how quickly soils warm and dry. Oats grow best on fertile, well-drained soils.

Copeland says soil testing for needed phosphorus and potassium levels, lime and minor nutrient requirements is essential to good yields. About 40 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre should be applied prior to seeding and final tillage.

More information on the merits of growing oats can be obtained from Copeland by calling him at 517-353-9545. Check with the local elevator for oat seed sources or call the Michigan Crop Improvement Association at 517-355-7438. ■

MCA leadership changes hands

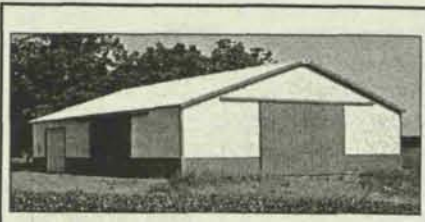
The Michigan Cattlemen's Association (MCA) experienced a change in leadership Jan. 9.

The three retiring board members who opted not to run for another term are: Larry Cotton of Howell who served as MCA president from 1992-1993, Pat Harrison of Coldwater, and Bill Hinga of Climax who, with his wife, Linda, will be recognized as MCA Member of the Year at the Summer Round-Up in June. Their devotion and dedication to the MCA Board is very appreciated.

These three seats were filled with new board members including Kevin Gould of Muir who is the Area of Expertise Livestock Agent for Central Michigan, Patti Jarvis who owns a feedlot in Concord with her father, brothers and husband, and Mike Karweik, a purebred breeder and owner of a meat trader and brokerage operation from Hopkins. In addition, seven board members were re-elected to the

30-member board. These are Jim Baker of St. Louis, Phil Hutchison of Onondaga, Chuck Markley of Byron, Tim Ruggles of Kingston, Rich Schapman of Romeo, Walt Stafford of Richland, and Dave Stoneman of Breckenridge.

1996 President Quentin Harwood of Ionia passed his gavel to incoming President Gary Voogt of Marne. MSU Extension agent Maury Kaercher of Kalamazoo was named President Elect, feedlot operator Rick Schapman of Romeo as Vice President, and Kurt Hrabal of Breckenridge as Secretary Treasurer. Also, Tim Ruggles of Kingston, MCA's 1993 Young Cattleman of the Year and 1995 MCA representative at the National Cattlemen's Association's Young Cattlemen's Conference was named Director at Large and former MCA president Chuck Markley of Byron as the Mega-Conference Representative. ■



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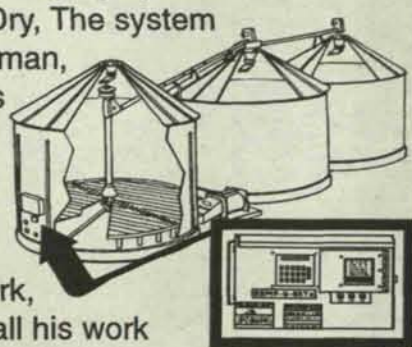
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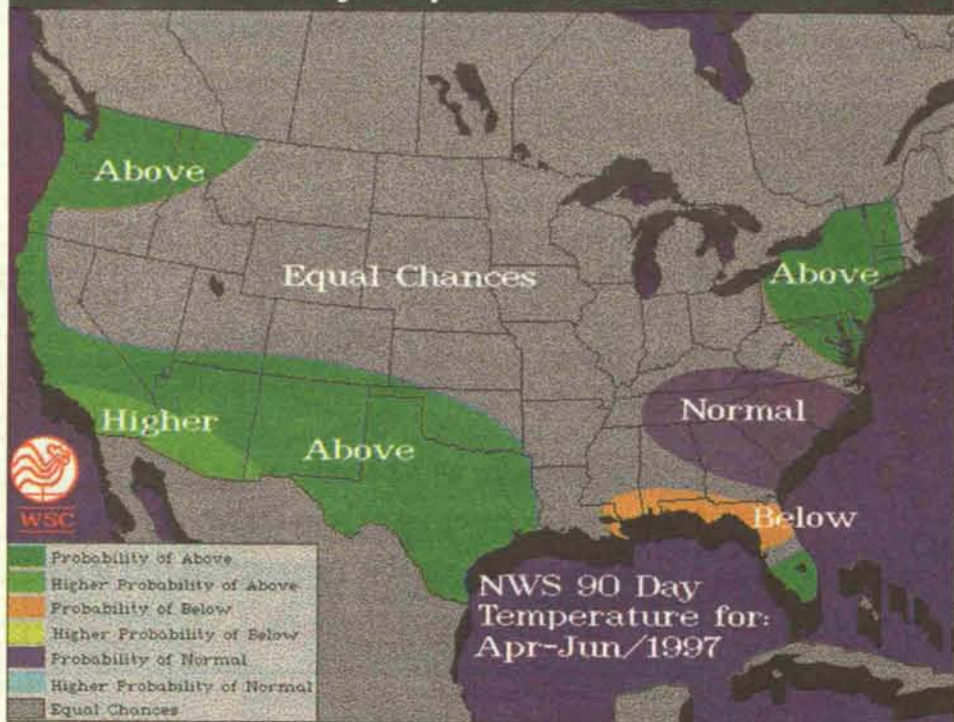
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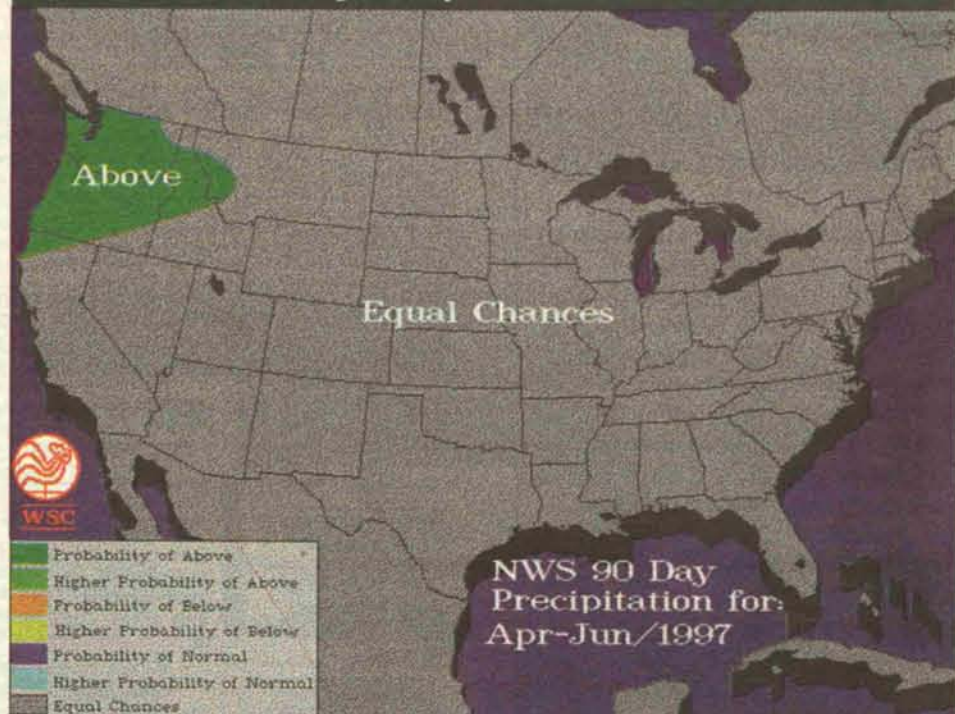
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90-day Temperature Outlook



90-day Precipitation Outlook



Weather Outlook



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

Springlike weather finally moved into Michigan by late March and early April, melting snow cover in all but northern areas of the state and leading to early greenup of some overwintering crops. The milder temperatures were the result of a large upper air ridge and southwesterly flow across much of central U.S. An active jet stream pattern is likely to continue across the U.S. during the next few weeks, leading to wide swings in temperature. Precipitation for the same period is likely to remain at above normal levels.

It is important to remember that while severe thunderstorms and tornadoes are most common in Michigan during the late spring and early summer seasons, the most violent storms occur in March and April, when temperature contrasts are greatest.

NOAA long lead outlooks for the upcoming 1997 growing season are somewhat similar to those issued at the same time last year. For the May-July late spring/early summer period, the outlook calls for an elevated risk of below normal temperatures in northwestern sections of the state and for above normal temperatures in the extreme southeastern Lower Peninsula. Odds elsewhere for temperature and statewide for precipitation during the same period are rated as equal for below-, near-, and above-normal scenarios.

Following a forecast of near equal odds for all three categories for temperatures and precipitation for the June-August period, the outlooks call for increased odds of below-normal temperatures across much of the midwest region including Michigan during the late summer and fall. Should this outlook verify, it would likely favor field crops in growing areas to our south and west, where cool and wet summers are strongly correlated with above average crop yields. In Michigan, however, the relationship is not as clear, as cooler than normal weather during the growing seasons can increase the risk of crops not reaching physiological maturity prior to first killing freeze of the fall, especially if the crops were planted late.

CRP interest "better than expected"

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman told a House appropriations subcommittee that there has been more interest in the revamped Conservation Reserve Program than the department expected.

"CRP interest is higher than we thought it would be," said Glickman, who said that more than 13.5 million acres had been offered for enrollment in the program so far.

Sign-up for the program closed March 28. Glickman said the Agriculture Department would make a final decision on CRP acres "no later than late May, early June."



Michigan Weather Summary

| 3/1/97-3/31/97 | Temperature | | Precipitation | |
|----------------|-------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Obs. mean | Dev. from normal | Actual (inch) | Normal (inch) |
| Houghton | 22.5 | 1.2 | 1.58 | 1.94 |
| Marquette | 20.5 | 2.6 | 3.45 | 1.94 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|------|-----|------|------|--------------|------|-----|------|------|
| Escanaba | 23.7 | 2.8 | 1.71 | 1.93 | Bad Axe | 31.2 | 0.4 | 2.13 | 2.04 |
| Sault Ste. Marie | 21.3 | 2.7 | 2.48 | 1.93 | Saginaw | 33.2 | 0.6 | 2.98 | 2.04 |
| Lake City | 27.4 | 0.1 | 1.49 | 1.83 | Grand Rapids | 33.8 | 0.2 | 1.23 | 2.48 |
| Pellston | 24.0 | 0.9 | 1.89 | 1.83 | South Bend | 38.5 | 2.4 | 2.20 | 2.48 |
| Traverse City | 29.7 | 0.2 | 2.21 | 1.83 | Coldwater | 35.8 | 0.4 | 4.85 | 2.26 |
| Alpena | 24.7 | 3.1 | 2.60 | 1.87 | Lansing | 33.4 | 0.5 | 2.02 | 2.26 |
| Houghton Lake | 26.0 | 2.8 | 1.73 | 1.87 | Detroit | 36.7 | 1.7 | 3.10 | 2.32 |
| Muskegon | 32.8 | 0.1 | 0.88 | 2.25 | Flint | 33.3 | 0.5 | 2.38 | 2.32 |
| Vestaburg | 32.3 | 0.3 | 2.22 | 2.16 | Toledo | 39.9 | 4.2 | 2.05 | 2.32 |

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