

Agronomy Workshop

Put Wednesday, November 28, 2007 on your calendar for the [Wells Fargo – Riverland FBM Agronomy Workshop](#). This will be at Digger's in Kasson from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m.

I know you will find that this is one of the best workshops of its kind. Check out the enclosed brochure. Our co-sponsor, Wells Fargo, even buys your lunch. You also receive the Riverland FBM variety plot results and an updated copy of our latest Resource Book.

Highlights this year will be in-depth discussions of land rent, input costs, and a twist on drainage that I think you will want to hear. Paul Baessler and Wally Thomas from Wells Fargo

will be giving us their ideas on how to manage the rising costs of doing business. The afternoon is devoted to crop consultant Lynn Lagerstedt from Adams, who is always interesting and informative.

I would like to see more of you at this meeting. Last year there were almost 100 people there, but only a handful of people from near the border (or across it). I know this is a busy time, but this is an outstanding program by any measure.

**WELLS
FARGO**

New Technologies in Drainage

(from Ron Van Nurden, Owatonna FBM)

Leonard Binstock is the executive director of the Agricultural Drainage Management Coalition, a national organization focused on ag drainage. Leonard points out that technology is bringing new wrinkles to something as simple and time-worn as tile drainage.

The main idea is that tile can be used to control the amount of water in the soil. We don't need to have water being drained out of the soil in the winter. The drainage industry has now come up with some structures that allow the farmer to control water out of the soil profile much like the irrigation industry controls the water that flows onto dry land. By strategically placing gates in the tile lines we can prevent water drainage in winter and allow it in the spring. When the field work is done, the gates are closed and the soil retains water during the dry summertime. When fall comes, the soil is drained before harvest. These gates can be remotely controlled by sensors and computers if the farmer so chooses.

The obvious advantage to this system is to keep optimum amounts of moisture in the soil for crop growth. It also limits the amounts of ni-

trates and other soil nutrients that might be carried away from the plants by the soil water. This keeps more valuable nutrients in the soil and reduces pollution.



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Leonard also tells about another structure designed to manage nitrogen and other nutrient runoff. This structure involves a trench filled with wood chips that filters the water. The wood chips capture the nutrients and can store them for several years before the wood chips need to be replaced. Research shows that this system cuts down on nutrients in tile runoff.

If you are going to do some tiling in the future, you might want to find out more about these systems. As farm land becomes increasingly expensive, methods to make it increasingly productive become more attractive.

Leonard Binstock is one of our featured speakers at the [Wells Fargo – Riverland Farm Business Management Agronomy Workshop](#) that will be at Digger's in Kasson on Wednesday, November 28. Put it on your calendar.

Land Rent

I put together a spreadsheet I call “*A Thoughtful Farmer’s Guide to Land Rental Rates*”. It is designed to help you think about what is happening in your neighborhood and might help you answer the question regarding how much you should pay for land rent.

I would enjoy working through all of these with you when you have the time. Go to www.riverland.edu/mgt/Wpike/documents/excel/ThoughtfulFarmersGuide.xls for the active spreadsheet.

Hay Prices

Hay is likely to get even more expensive than it is now. Jim Kastanek from TABS in Albany, Minnesota tracks the hay auctions in his intensely dairy area. The hay prices seem to be in the \$1.10 to \$1.20 per point of Relative Feed Value per ton.

You can go to www.midamericanauctioninc.com to track the latest results of that hay auction.

Tax Treatment of Crop Insurance Proceeds

(taken from Ron Van Nurden’s newsletter)

We have done quite a bit of tax planning already. It would be nice to get that crop in so we could concentrate, but that is the way things work. Here is something to think about in the meantime.

All farmers (maybe even more so dairy farmers in particular) will need to think about their income tax situation this year and try to do some real thinking ahead for next year.

In addition, there is a bit of a change in the works. As you probably remember, crop insurance proceeds may be taxed in either the year you receive the payment or they may be deferred until the following year when you would have sold the crop.

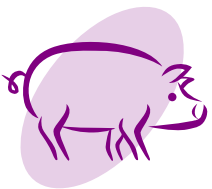
Gary Hachfeld and C. Robert Holcomb, extension educators specializing in farm income tax, state that this may not be true when it comes to our newer revenue assurance products. The IRS code states that if you have a physical loss of the crop you can defer to the next year, but if it is a policy based on total revenue and not crop yield loss, you cannot defer. Hachfeld and Holcomb say, “The key point of this discussion is that insurance payments that are based upon total revenue or a combination of yield and price do not qualify for income deferral even if the normal marketing cycle would place that income in the following tax year.”

Some of us will have RA claims. We need to keep this straight in our minds and in our planning.

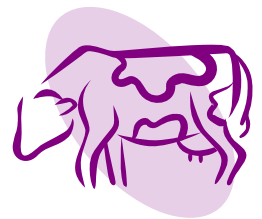
Aflatoxins in the Feed

This has been an unusual fall. Wet and warm conditions are good for the molds that grow and form aflatoxins. If you are feeding hogs or cattle, then you should be aware of what could be happening. Drought stressed crops are the most likely to be affected by aflatoxins.

The instructors at Faribault, an area more affected by drought than most of us, have been watching this closely. They point out that it is far better to be doing tests in advance, rather than harm animals to find out that you have aflatoxins. By the time you notice symptoms, your herd may be sick to the point that they cannot recover. Ensiling does not destroy aflatoxins. Milk from dairy cows consuming aflatoxins may contain aflatoxins. The FDA allows only very low levels of aflatoxins in milk for sale to consumers.



If you have any doubts as to the safety of your feed, you should consider getting it tested. Although I have not had students use the service so far, the Minnesota Dairy Initiatives program is said to be offering up to \$100 to pay for feed testing due to the flood and wet weather. While their name says Dairy, the word is that they will pay for the test for beef cattle as well. If you are interested in testing your feeds, give me a call and we will follow up on this situation.



For more information, the Faribault instructors recommend <http://agnewsarchive.tamu.edu/drought/drghtpak98/drght30.html> because Texas deals with this more often than we do here in Minnesota.

Aflatoxins and Dairy Cattle

From Texas A & M University (<http://agnewsarchive.tamu.edu/drought/drghtpak98/drght30.html>)

Whenever crops are under stress the potential for aflatoxins increases. Aflatoxins are poisonous by-products of the growth of some species of the mold fungus *Aspergillus*. Some of this year's crops may be contaminated with aflatoxins as a result of the drought stress.

When lactating animals are fed aflatoxin contaminated feed, they excrete aflatoxin metabolites into the milk. The aflatoxins are capable of causing aflatoxicosis in consumers of milk. This is why government regulations specify that milk must be free of aflatoxin. However, action is not taken until the aflatoxin level exceeds 0.5 ppb in market milk, the level below which there is no hazard for the consuming public.

Contaminated grains and grain by-products are the most common sources of aflatoxins. Corn silage may also be a source of aflatoxins, because the ensiling process does not destroy the toxins already present in silage.

Symptoms Feed refusal, reduced growth rate, decreased milk production and decreased feed efficiency are the predominant signs of chronic aflatoxin poisoning. In addition, listlessness, weight loss, rough hair coat and mild diarrhea may occur. Anemia along with bruises and subcutaneous hemorrhage are symptoms of aflatoxicosis. The disease may also impair reproductive efficiency, including abnormal estrous cycles (too short or too long) and abortions. Other symptoms include impaired immune response, increased susceptibility to other diseases and rectal prolapse. In dairy cattle, aflatoxin metabolites appear in the milk before any of the above signs develop.

Diagnosis By the time overt symptoms are noticed, the prognosis is poor.

Prevention Aflatoxicosis can only be prevented by feeding rations free of aflatoxin. Preventing aflatoxin contamination requires an on-going and thorough sampling and testing program.

1. Purchase feed from reputable persons and companies experienced in aflatoxin prevention and who have a proven record of properly monitoring their feed products.
2. Don't buy poor quality feed or feed ingredients. A good deal on feed prices can be the most expensive buy a dairy farmer ever makes if it proves to contain aflatoxin.
3. Store feed at proper moisture levels.

4. Develop a systematic inspection and clean-up program to keep bins, delivery trucks and other equipment free of adhering or caked feed ingredients.
5. Minimize dust accumulation in milling and mixing areas. Keep all feed equipment free of caked feed.
6. Check feed storage bins for leaks.
7. Implement effective rodent and insect control programs in grain storage areas.
8. Grains contaminated with aflatoxins have been successfully treated with ammonia but it is expensive and dangerous to do.

Feeder Cattle Budgets

Are we going to make any money on feeder cattle in the next year? North Dakota State University has published some new budgets to help you decide.

Go to www.ndfarmmanagement.com and look under the reports section. There are budgets for 120 day back-grounders and for finishing out 550 to 650 pound calves.

Should we cut that hay now?

By Paul Peterson and Craig Sheaffer, U of M Agronomy

It looks like many fields have another good stand of alfalfa on them and we may need the hay. (How we are going to get it cut and dried could be a problem.)

Where you have a foot or more of growth in October of a modern, winter hardy, multi-disease resistant alfalfa variety on a good alfalfa soil with adequate potassium; consider harvesting at least your older alfalfa stands. Alfalfa stands typically begin to lose yield potential after their third year anyway, so where high quality forage is a priority, concerns about damaging stands more than 3 years old should generally not weigh heavily in the decision of whether or not to cut in the fall.

Note: Fields that are very wet going into the winter have a higher risk of winter injury if a fall cutting is taken. If you are conservative and/or in an area where snow tends to blow off fields with short stubble, you may wish to leave strips of uncut alfalfa to help catch snow.

Avoid cutting in the fall critical period of mid to late September. Better to target mid-October, near the time when a killing frost is likely and thus continued growth unlikely.



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