AGNOTES

• April 29, Clay County 4-H Center, Vermillion. 605-677-7149.

The Weed and Pest Boards of Yankton, Union, and Clay counties, along with and Extension staff from those counties, will host these discussions on purple loosestrife, an invasive, noxious weed. The South Dakota Department of Agriculture identified purple loosestrife as a noxious weed. Noxious weeds are typically perennial plants that spread rapidly and are very difficult to control.

These weeds are capable of reducing the value of land, and they can seriously impact the native plant community by altering or affecting agriculture, recreation, and wildlife.

Purple loosestrife has invaded the banks and backwaters of the Missouri River. In an effort to control the weed, the South Dakota Weed and Pest Commission has awarded grant funding to Yankton, Union, and Clay counties. The Weed and Pest supervisors of the three counties bordering the Missouri River have begun aggressive plans to control the spread of purple loosestrife.

Meetings have been planned to inform the landowners with property bordering the river and the general public of present control options and methods to treat the growing problem. The meetings are also held to discuss the control measures the Weed and Pest supervisors can offer to provide the help landowners will need to fight the weed problem.

South Dakota laws requires every landowner to control noxious weeds on their property.

Representatives of the South Dakota Department of Agriculture, the South Cooperative Extension Service, and Weed and Pest boards of counties will present a program to instruct landowners on the identification and control of purple loosestrife. The speakers will discuss integrated pest management techniques including biocontrols that can prevent further infestation.

Call your county Extension office, or the contact numbers list above, to get more information.

Rural Growth Funds Now Available

WASHINGTON— Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Dallas Tonsager recently announced that USDA is accepting applications for business and community development grants to help rural communities create wealth, attract more residents and become economically self-sustaining.

The funding is being provided through USDA Rural Development's Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG) program, which provides grants for technical assistance and planning activities to improve economic conditions in rural cities or towns of 50,000 people or fewer.

"As a longtime rural resident, I am optimistic about President Obama's vision for a stronger, more prosperous rural America," Tonsager said. "These grants can be the foundation for implementing the President's vision of developing initiatives that emphasize expanding exports, linking farm production to local consumption, producing biofuels and renewable energy, capitalizing on broadband, and innovatively using natural resources as wealth-building tools for rural places."

Funding under the RBOG program can be used to pay for economic planning, technical assistance, and training for rural communities, entrepreneurs or economic development officials. Under this round of funding, priority consideration will be given to applications that best demonstrate strong regional or multi-jurisdictional collaboration, referred to as "great regions," leadership capacity, and those that represent varying demographics (including underserved and under-represented communities). The amount of funding available is $2.48 million.

Applications are due June 28, 2010. More information on how to apply for a USDA Rural Business Opportunity Grant is available at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/rbog.htm To be eligible for funding, an applicant must be a public body, non-profit corporation, Indian Tribe or cooperative with members that are primarily rural residents. Applicants must also have significant expertise in the activities proposed and the financial strength to ensure the objectives of the proposed grant can be accomplished.

Turbines Cast Shadow Over Rural Lifestyle

BY JULIE WERNAU
McClatchy News Service

Months have passed since anyone has waved hello to one another in Waterman or Shabbona in rural DeKalb County, Ill. Some people claim they've even stopped going to church to avoid having to talk to former friends.

"It's gone. The country way of living is gone," declares Susan Flex, who lives in Waterman with her husband and their nine children.

The animosity stems from the greenest of energy sources: a wind farm.

The turbines started arriving last summer, at a rate of two a day, their parts trucked in on flatbeds. Today 126 turbines dot the county, with another 19 just over the border in Lee County. They have been making enough electricity since December to power 55,000 homes.

DeKalb County's efforts appear to be in line with President Barack Obama's push for the U.S. to produce 25 percent of its energy needs with renewable resources by 2025. Illinois has added more wind power than all but four states.

Yet the story playing out just an hour and half from Chicago is one of policy-meets-reality. While the idea of creating power from the wind sounds ideal, the massive structures that have gone up have dramatically affected the people who live there, country life and the landscape.

Each turbine stands about 400 feet tall from the tips of their blades to the ground _ roughly the height of the Wrigley Building in Chicago. Infighting over the turbines has pitted families against landowners, farmers against friends, and even family members against one another.

Proponents are landowners and farmers who say they want to reduce the country's dependence on foreign oil. They also point out that the income from leasing land for a turbine is more than what they collect renting to corn and soybean farmers.

The turbines, which are assessed at a million dollars each, represent the largest investment made in the county, said Ruth Anne Tobias, DeKalb County Board chairman. And the expected annual tax revenue is unprecedented: $1.45 million.

Steve Stengel, a spokesman for turbine-owner NextEra Energy Resources, a unit of FPL Group, whose holdings include Florida Power & Light Co., said $50 million in payments is expected to be made to landowners over the 30-year life of the project.

But such windfalls haven't assuaged people who claim the turbines have harmed their health. They say noise from turbines is disrupting sleep, and they blame the strobe-like flashes produced by the whirling blades in sunlight _ "shadow flicker" _ for everything from vertigo to migraine headaches.

A group of 36 people who live near the turbines has sued DeKalb County and 75 landowners who leased land for the turbines. They claim the county illegally granted zoning variances and want the turbines taken down. NextEra is seeking to dismiss the suit based on "vague allegations of hypothetical harms."

Ken Andersen, a county board member who voted to allow the turbines to be built, says he is trying to understand the people voicing concerns. One man, he said, called at 6 a.m. and told him a turbine that sounded like a 747 jet engine was keeping him awake. Andersen said he got out of bed and drove over to listen for himself.

"I went to this man's yard," Andersen said. "I made more noise walking across the crunchy snow." The turbines, he said, "were making their whoosh, whoosh, whoosh noise."

There is debate over whether there are links between the turbines and health problems. In December, an expert panel, which included doctors, hired by the American Wind Energy Association and the Canadian Wind Energy Association, national trade associations for the industry, concluded there is "no evidence that the audible or sub-audible sounds emitted by wind turbines have any direct adverse physiological effects."

But Dr. Nina Pierpont, a board-certified pediatrician in Malone, N.Y., who has spent the past four years studying so-called Wind Turbine Syndrome, insists not enough studies have been conducted to rule out any connection between turbine noise and flicker shadow with health complaints.

Pierpont said low-frequency sounds from turbines can throw off a person's sense of balance and cause unconscious reactions similar to car sickness. Sleep can also be disrupted. She said the feeling is similar to when people awake in fear, with a jolt and a racing heart.

Ben Michels' friends say he may have the worst of it. Five turbines stand in a line behind his home, the nearest 1,430 feet away; the county restricts turbines from being any closer than that.

"I never had problems sleeping," said Michels, a Vietnam War veteran. "I went to the (Department of Veterans Affairs) and they put me on sleeping pills. They had to continually upgrade them because they weren't working."

Michels, who has raised goats for 20 years and averaged one death per year, said nine have died since December. Autopsies didn't reveal anything physically wrong with them. But he said veterinarians told him the goats may have suffered from stress.

"Common sense tells me, it's got to have something to do with the turbines," Michels said.

Farmer's Share of Retail Food Dollar

Did you know that farmers and ranchers receive only 20 cents of every food dollar that consumers spend on food at home and away from home?

According to USDA, off farm costs including marketing, processing, wholesaling, distribution and retailing account for 80 cents of every food dollar spent in the United States.

Item	Retail	Farmer
Bacon, 1 Pound	$2.79	$0.48
Top Sirloin Steak, 1 Pound	$5.49	$0.82
Bread, 1 Pound	$2.99	$0.10
Fresh Carrots, 2 Pounds	$1.98	$0.84
Beer, 6-Pack Cans	$4.99	$0.11
Cereal, 18 Ounce Box	$3.99	$0.07
Cheddar Cheese, 1 Pound	$3.99	$1.59
Eggs, 1 Dozen	$1.99	$1.03
Flour, 5 Pounds	$2.19	$0.50
Boneless Ham, Price per Pound	$4.99	$0.48
Lettuce, 1 Head (2 Pounds)	$1.99	$0.33
Milk, 1 Gallon, Fat Free	$2.50	$1.32
Potato Chips, Lay's Classic, 13.5oz	$3.49	$0.10
Fresh Potatoes, Russet, 10 Pounds	$1.50	$0.35
Soda, Two Liter Bottle	$0.99	$0.06

Farmer's share derived from USDA, NASS "Agricultural Prices," 2010.
Retail based on Safeway (SE) brand except where noted.

Farmers Union
www.NFU.org
February 2, 2010

Dairies Grow Bigger, Offer More Comfort To Cows

BROOKINGS— In 14 years, the number of cows housed in dairies using tie-stall barns has decreased by 50 percent across the U.S.

South Dakota Cooperative Extension Dairy Specialist Alvaro Garcia said that many people have concerns about how modern dairy practices impact the cows' well being.

"Some people perceive the practices of a modern dairy to be negative to the cow's welfare and a step back when compared to how things were done in the past," Garcia said. "But that is just not the case. Dairies with less than 60 cows used to be the predominant farm in the industry, and almost all of them used tie-stall barns."

The tie-stall barn kept cows tied by chains in their cubicles. Producers would bring a milk bucket to them so they could be milked in the stall. In that system, a dairy cow would occupy roughly 35 square feet.

The first dairy housing with free stalls was used in 1960 by Adolph Olen of Snohomish County, Wash. The Washington State University Extension Service later developed new free-stall barns plans. With that system in place, dairy farmers expectations were to increase their herd size from 59 to 70 cows. Garcia said that after just one year in the new free-stall system, milk production increased by almost 1,000 pounds per cow.

"The increase was explained by the additional cow comfort which also caused reductions in udder problems and in turn veterinary bills," Garcia said. Those improvements have continued.

"According to a 2007 Animal Health Monitoring & Surveillance report, in 1996 nearly 70 percent of all dairies, and 44 percent of all cows, were still housed in tie-stall systems," said Garcia. "Free-stall systems in large modern dairy production units have been a huge improvement for the cows. Now, only 22 percent of cows are kept in tie-stalls."

Garcia said that aside from the exercise aspects, free-stall systems allow socialization, a very important aspect for a species of herd habits such as the dairy cow. The current trends verified in the dairy industry, Garcia said, seem to indicate more free-stall system use will be the norm.

"Modern dairy facilities allow cows to walk as they please, with no chains tied to their necks, and the total allotted space per cow between individual cubicle, and cross and feeding alleys is roughly 72 square feet," Garcia said. "That's a doubling of the surface area per cow, and nearly completely free socialization among them."

Such socialization was impossible in the old systems, Garcia added. For more information on improved productivity from free-stall dairy operations, call Garcia at 605-688-5488.

MARKET INSIDER

Weather To Determine Pricing Into May

BY BRIAN HOOPS
Yankton

CORN

The month of March, was a bearish month for corn as corn lost 44 cents from the previous month's close. In the prospective plantings report, the USDA estimated U.S. producers would increase 2010 corn by 2.298 million from last year to 88.798 million acres. This will be the second largest seeded acres estimate in history, trailing only the year 1946. With the lower input values of corn, the profitability of corn will encourage additional acres of corn to be seeded this spring, providing a wet spring would prevent additional plantings. Like the month of March, April will have commercial and seasonal traders buying weakness for a potential summer weather rally as the record large demand base will have end users very nervous about weather and this year's growing season. U.S. producers will begin to seeding corn acres by mid-April and weather will become very important to pricing by May. If the month of April is wet and hampers producers planting efforts, look for December corn to rally in an effort to entice producers to plant corn later, rather than switch acres to soybeans.

Currently, the U.S. is experiencing a pattern of hot and dry weather, however this weather pattern is forecast to change to a cool and wet pattern the last week of April.

SOYBEANS

The month of March was bearish for soybeans as futures closed 20 cents lower in March compared to February.

In the prospective plantings report, the USDA estimated U.S. producers will need to plant 598,000 more acres in 2010. Producers do not appear willing to increase seedings more than this as profitability of soybeans vs. corn favors corn at this time. The quarterly stocks report and world ending stocks ensure the world has an adequate supply of soybeans and the market is not signaling to producers to increase seeded acres in 2010. In the month of April, the soybean market has one simple job, to rebound and compete again with corn this spring so it does not lose any acres. In the acreage report, the USDA estimated the 2010 soybean acres at 78.098 million.

This acreage forecast is the largest in history. In April, soybeans should find support from an effort to return to profitability to encourage farmers to not switch from corn to soybeans. Also, a planting season that is slowed by heavy rains, will encourage farmers to switch plantings of corn over to soybeans, therefore look for soybeans to maintain their premium to corn to ensure adequate supplies of soybean stocks.

WHEAT

It was a lower month for wheat prices in March as Chicago wheat closed the month 68 3/4 cents lower than the previous month. April is the month that the United States winter wheat crop is now in the key yield development timeframe. Wheat has broken dormancy and will grow into the winter wheat harvest which starts in June.

April and May are the months where winter wheat yields will be made or lost. As in any key yield development timeframe, if April brings little moisture, prices will soar. If there is plenty of rain, prices will fall. Our winter crop is about 70 percent of our total U.S. production, and goes mainly to the export market. Improved quality because of ample rainfall means better export business after harvest ends. Crop ratings are above average for early April with Kansas at 70 percent good to excellent and Oklahoma at 66 percent good to excellent. Kansas and Oklahoma are our two largest winter wheat states. Texas has a rating of 60 percent good to excellent. Our spring wheat crop is currently being seeded and producers will finish in May. Spring wheat represents about one third of our U.S. production, and mainly goes to U.S. millers for domestic use. As recently as 1996-97, U.S. producers seeded approximately 19 million acres of spring wheat. For 2010, the USDA is forecasting U.S. producers to seed 13.906 million acres this spring, up 4.8 percent from one year ago. The large world ending stocks will be a limiting factor for wheat prices this spring as any loss of yield is made up for by the huge carryout levels.

Food Security Symposium Held

TOKYO, JAPAN – The U.S. Grains Council (USGC), working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), brought together U.S. and Japanese leaders in government, agribusiness, economics and biotechnology for the first-ever Global Food Security Symposium. The U.S. Grains Council, which is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to creating markets for U.S. corn, barley, sorghum and their co-products, sponsored the Global Food Security Symposium in partnership with the FAS.

The event, which is part of the "Partners in Agriculture" celebration, showcased how successful public and private partnerships worldwide can leverage technology and strategic policy to achieve food production goals for a fast-growing world population. These events commemorate the exponential growth of the agricultural trade relationship between the United States and Japan. In addition, the events celebrate the strong, historical ties that will continue to foster successful trade for agricultural products in the years to come.

"Whoever undertakes to set himself up as a judge of Truth and Knowledge is shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods."

ALBERT EINSTEIN