

## NEIGHBORS DIGEST

### Pesticide Permit Requirement Extended

PIERRE — The deadline has been extended seven months for the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to begin issuing permit coverage for pesticide application to waters of the state under the federal Clean Water Act.

The federal Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals determined in 2009 that discharge permits are required for the application of pesticides to water bodies. The court originally set an April 9 deadline to obtain the permits. At the request of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the court recently extended the deadline to Oct. 31 for coverage under the pesticide general permit.

Anyone who applies pesticides in or over water bodies must first obtain a discharge permit, under the federal court ruling. That includes pesticide application activities for mosquito control, weed and algae control in lakes, and even aerial application if there are wetlands on the property. In South Dakota, EPA has delegated the issuance of discharge permits to DENR under the federal Clean Water Act.

"The department worked diligently with the Department of Agriculture and pesticide applicators statewide to develop a permit that would cause as little disruption as possible to the regulated community," said DENR Secretary Steve Pirner. "We applaud the recent court decision allowing an extra seven months before coverage is needed under this general permit."

DENR made a draft of the general permit available Jan. 21 for public review, and accepted comments for 30 days. After considering all the input, the department is prepared to finalize its permit. In light of the recent court decision, the permit will not become effective until Oct. 31. That allows South Dakota's pesticide applicators time to become familiar with the permit before the final compliance date of Oct. 31.

"We want to finalize South Dakota's general permit as soon as possible so our applicators will not be left wondering what the requirements will be this fall," Secretary Pirner said. "The department looks forward to working with applicators to make this permitting a smooth process."

The pesticide general permit is available on the department's website at <http://denr.sd.gov/des/sw/PesticidePermit.aspx>. For more information, contact Jonathan Hill at (605) 773-3351.

### 'Eating Off the Land' Seminar Is April 20

BROOKINGS — Individuals and families seeking ways to stretch their food dollars can get science-based information at a seminar in Renner on April 20.

The South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service will host an "Eating off the Land" seminar from 6-8:30 p.m. at the Renner American Legion Hall, 47410 258th St., Renner. This free event will explain many ways South Dakota families and individuals can save money and find fresh and wholesome foods outside of traditional shopping methods.

Extension educators will explain things like how to purchase meat directly from livestock producers, growing your own produce, and canning and other methods that will let you preserve those home-grown fruits and vegetables.

Pre-registration is required. To save your spot in the class, call the Minnehaha County Extension office at 605-367-7877, or call your county's Extension office and ask about the event.

### Renewable Energy Workshop Set For Norfolk

NORFOLK, Neb. — For farmers, lenders, small businesses and others interested in small-scale renewable energy projects, a one-day conference April 28th at Norfolk will provide information about what technologies are available and how they can be applied.

The conference is intended for farmers, ranchers, small-business owners, economic developers, lenders, equipment vendors, grant writers, and county officials. Attendees will learn about small-scale renewable energy technologies; hear from local resource providers; and gain a step-by-step understanding of the project development process.

The workshop will begin with registration at 8:30 a.m. at the Lifelong Learning Center located on the campus of Northeast Community College, 601 East Benjamin Avenue, Norfolk. The agenda will wrap up at 5:30 p.m. with optional tours of NPPD's operation center or Nucor Detailing, followed by a grant writing workshop at 6:30 p.m.

The conference is co-sponsored by U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development and UNL Extension.

Pre-registration is due by April 22 for an accurate meal count. The \$20 registration fee pays for materials, lunch and snacks. To register, complete a registration form and send it with the fee to the Madison County Extension office 601 East Benjamin Ave, Suite 105, Norfolk, NE 68701. Registration forms can be obtained by calling the Extension office at 370-4040, or e-mailing [madison-county@unl.edu](mailto:madison-county@unl.edu).

Speakers will discuss key steps in the project development process, including resource assessment, the permitting and certification process, and financial considerations. Topics and speakers will include:

- Wind: John Richards, Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD), Columbus, will speak about current technologies, on-site usage and federal and state incentives.
- Solar: Jeremy Anderson, GenPro Energy Solutions, Piedmont, S.D., (invited) will discuss solar photovoltaic and solar thermal applications, as well as when a solar hybrid is a good decision.
- Methane: Frank Thompson, Consultant, formerly with Nebraska Public Power District, Columbus, will cover capturing methane from livestock, food, and other renewable waste materials.
- Geothermal: Steven Zach, Columbus, will address utilizing the ground's heat to heat and cool facilities.
- Bio-energy: Doak Nickerson, Nebraska Forest Service, Chadron, will focus on bio-heat or bio-power applications, such as pelletizing for fuel or burning for power.
- Flex-Fuel Dispensers: Robert White, Renewable Fuels Association will discuss the demand for biofuel being driven by the Renewable Fuels Standard, plus discuss available fueling infrastructure programs, incentives and opportunities for expanding fueling sites.
- Wind/Solar Installation-Robert Byrnes, Nebraska Renewable Energy Systems will go into further detail regarding the process of installing wind and solar systems.
- Financing Renewable Energy Systems: USDA Rural Development and a local lender will discuss analyzing renewable energy projects and discuss available financial incentives and funding programs.

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# Some Livestock Producers Are Shuffling Off To

# Beefalo

## Hybrid Livestock Showing Its Worth In Age Of High Feed Prices

BY LISA HARE  
P&D Correspondent

For Richard Childers of R&C Beefalo Farms in Arcadia, Mo., there's no going back.

"I'm done with black cows," Childers said.

What began as something of a test run in 2002 has become a farming enterprise that Childers says has been nothing but good.

"My father always wanted to raise buffalo, but they're so hard to handle and they aren't very profitable because they require so much feed to sustain their body mass," he said.

Finally, after years of breeding Angus and Hereford cows, Childers began considering Beefalo.

The history of the breed — officially recognized as 3/8 bison and 5/8 bovine — dates back as early as the late 1880s. But those initial attempts yielded unsatisfactory fertility rates. It wasn't until the late 1950s that a Montana rancher successfully bred fertile bovine-buffalo cross stock.

"I began to research Beefalo to see if they were going to make money," Childers said of his early investigation into the breed.

To understand the appeal of raising Beefalo, it is first necessary to understand inherent characteristics of the bison.

Unlike well-tended beef cattle, bison herds have survived for hundreds of years without the benefit of care from herdsmen and veterinarians. Their ability to survive drought, famine and other natural threats has produced a breed that is genetically sound and physically vigorous compared to many traditional beef breeds.

The bison ancestor of modern Beefalo is a hardy, healthy product of natural selection of the fittest animal to survive. A very efficient grazer, bison are willing to eat almost anything and will readily clean up the tougher forages, including many weed varieties that domestic cattle avoid.

Also, by natural selection, easy calving cows survived and the rest perished.

To obtain adequate forage, bison were constantly on the move. Their calves had to be on their feet quickly, learn to nurse promptly and have sufficient stamina to keep up with the moving herd at a very young age.

"My calves are lighter at birth, but are always 50 pounds heavier than my neighbor's



PHOTO OUTLINE:

Though Beefalo animals closely resemble bovines in appearance, the breed can offer a healthier meat to consumers, and for producers, a healthier profit margin.

bovine calves at six months," Childers said.

The American bison ranged over much of the North American continent — from the hot, dry Southwest to the bitterly cold plains of the northern United States and Canada. Unlike the bovine species, bison have sweat glands to help them stay cool in the heat of summer, and they have extremely dense hair growth, with 2-5 times as many hair follicles per square inch of hide as do domestic cattle.

But the Beefalo animal inherits some equally important traits from its bovine ancestors as well.

With the bison, one of the biggest drawbacks is the "all hump and no rump." The best steaks and roasts — the expensive cuts — come from the hindquarter of the beef. The bison carcass contains a very high percentage of its mass in the front quarters, which contain the chuck cuts and meat suitable for ground beef — the cheap meat.

The Beefalo animal inherits its physical structure from its bovine ancestry, thereby significantly enhancing its carcass value over the bison.

So the Beefalo animal is bred and selected to take advantage of the best traits of both its bovine and bison ancestors. The result is an easy-calving cow that gives birth to a smaller, but more vigorous calf that grows rapidly, matures early and produces high-quality meat on a forage-based diet.

And with the record-high grain prices of late, some beef producers are looking harder at longer foraging.

According to the USDA's long-term agricultural projections, while feed prices should decline from current levels, grain prices will remain high and encourage beef producers to keep cattle in pasture-based stocker programs for longer periods and to heavier weights.

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One might argue that Beefalo may be a better breed to achieve this.

"My cows eat anything, they clean up the pasture," Childers said, adding that Beefalo graze "like goats."

Beefalo offspring supplement mother's milk by grazing/browsing sooner than typical beef cattle. This results in faster weight gain, which results in greater profits for producers.

The breed's natural foraging ability enables it to convert roughage into greater weight gain per day.

Another factor one might consider when figuring production

costs for Beefalo is the longer life span of the breed — a trait common to bison. Many Beefalo cows are still cost-effectively producing calves beyond 15 years of age.

Also, the breed's strong natural foraging instinct, resistance to disease and ability to adapt to both hot and cold climates enable Beefalo breeders to minimize herdsmen responsibilities.

For consumers, Beefalo offers a healthier selection of beef.

Though Childers shies away from sale barns and markets all his Beefalo through direct-marketing sources, he has no trouble selling the meat.

"I have customers that have been buying from me every year since I butchered my first steers," he said.

USDA-approved laboratories have determined that Beefalo beef rivals fish and skinned chicken in cholesterol content.

Today, both beef producers and consumers can enjoy the best of both bison and bovine in the form of Beefalo. For consumers, it can offer a healthier selection of beef. For producers, it can offer a healthier profit margin.

For more information on Beefalo visit: [www.american-beefalo.org](http://www.american-beefalo.org).

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