



Pork Quality Assurance Classes Offered

BROOKINGS — Swine producers and employees looking to certify or renew their Pork Quality Assurance Plus (PQA Plus) certifications will have three opportunities in April.

The first one is scheduled for April 19 at 1 p.m. at the SDSU Extension Regional Center in Aberdeen; 13 2nd Ave. SE; 605-626-2870. The second one is scheduled for April 19 at 6 p.m. at the Crossroads Hotel in Huron; 100 4th St SW. The third opportunity is scheduled for April 22 at 2 p.m. at the Parker Community Building in Parker; 299 N Main Ave.

PQA Plus was built as a continuous improvement program that emphasizes good management practices in the handling and use of animal health products, and encourages producers to review their approach to their herd's health problems. PQA Plus is a workable, credible and affordable solution to assure food safety and animal care to help meet the needs of customers including restaurants, food retailers, and consumers. A PQA Plus certification assures consumers they are purchasing the highest quality, safest product possible while caring for animal well-being.

By completing this program, producers demonstrate their commitment to quality assured pork production. The PQA Plus program achieves its goals through producer training by a certified PQA Plus advisor, an objective assessment of on-farm animal well-being, and a PQA Plus survey designed to evaluate the implementation of PQA Plus in the industry.

Producers and employees looking for more information or to sign-up for one of the classes can contact Ashley Gelderman, SDSU Extension Swine Field Specialist at 605-782-3290, ashley.gelderman@sdstate.edu or Robert Thaler, SDSU Extension State Swine Specialist at 605-688-5435 or robert.thaler@sdstate.edu.

Open Class Horse Show In Bloomfield April 20

BLOOMFIELD, Neb. — An Open Class Horse Show will be held at the Harm and Tulleys Event Center on the Knox County Fairgrounds in Bloomfield, Neb. It's set for Saturday, April 20, beginning at 10 a.m.

The show has classes for all ages, and everyone is welcome. The judge is Kelsey Horner from Omaha, Ne. She comes highly recommended from respected horse persons. Her comments and suggestions will improve all levels of riding skills.

Valuable prizes will be given away during the show, prizes include a Deluxe Show Halter with Lead, a Snuggit Turn Out Blanket, and a Contour Pedic Saddle Pad. Every time you enter a class, your chance increases to take one of these valuable prizes home with you. Central Valley Ag of Bloomfield is the sponsor for all of these prizes.

For more information, contact Jolene Greckel at 402 640-0445 or email greckel@gpcom.net

Applications Are Sought For Energy Projects

WASHINGTON — Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced that USDA is seeking applications to provide assistance to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Funding is available from USDA's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) remains focused on carrying out its mission, despite a time of significant budget uncertainty. Today's announcement is one part of the Department's efforts to strengthen the rural economy.

"The Obama Administration continues its commitment to help our nation become more energy independent by partnering with agricultural producers and rural small businesses as they build renewable energy systems and reduce energy usage," said Vilsack. "These investments will not only help our farmers and rural small businesses reduce energy costs, but also provide a new potential revenue source and stabilize their operations' bottom lines."

REAP, authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, (Farm Bill) is designed to help agricultural producers and rural small businesses reduce energy costs and consumption and help meet the Nation's critical energy needs.

USDA is accepting the following applications:

- Renewable energy system and energy efficiency improvement grant applications and combination grant and guaranteed loan applications until April 30, 2013;
- Renewable energy system and energy efficiency improvement guaranteed loan only applications until July 15, 2013;
- Renewable energy system feasibility study grant applications through April 30.

More information on how to apply for funding is available in the March 29, 2013 Federal Register <<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/03/29/2013-07275/notice-of-funding-availability-for-the-rural-energy-for-america-program>>, pages 19183-19190.

Since the passage of the 2008 Farm Bill and through the end of Fiscal Year 2012, REAP has funded nationwide more than 6,800 renewable energy and energy efficiency projects, feasibility studies, energy audits, and renewable energy development assistance projects.

Storm Brought Much-Needed Moisture To S.D.

BROOKINGS — This week's spring storm brought welcome moisture to the entire state, which certainly will be a positive step toward drought relief. SDSU Extension Climate Field Specialist, Laura Edwards reports snow totals of 20 to 25 inches or more from Rapid City towards Pine Ridge.

"Snowfall totals are in the teens around Pierre to Winner and over to about Miller, that central part of the state. Up in Aberdeen there's about 6-inches of snow which fell primarily Wednesday night and Thursday," Edwards said. "The Sioux Falls area received about 8-inches of snow."

Edwards says the moisture equivalent of this storm is projected at approximately 3-

inches in the southeast corner of the state. The 20-to 25-inch snows in the southwest should amount to 2-inches or more of moisture. Lesser amounts of moisture fell to the north.

Edwards says this fantastic moisture will be reflected to some degree in next week's U.S. Drought Monitor map, which will be released Thursday, April 18. Soil temperatures were mostly above freezing except for northeastern parts of the state, which will allow for moisture to enter the soil profile.

While the moisture has been helpful, Edwards reports the storm has been challenging for livestock producers in the midst of calving and lambing. The Aberdeen national

weather service offers a resource on its website called the cold advisory for newborn livestock, view at <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/abr/canl/forecasts.php>.

"They have an indicator there that combines wind chill, temperature and moisture. They put that all together as a watch or warning alert system for newborn livestock," she said.

Edwards notes the weather is expected to remain unsettled across the state for the coming week with another moisture system moving in for the weekend through next Wednesday.

Find more weather details at iGrow.org.

Music To Your Ears

Songbirds Provide Pest Control For Crops



Songbirds like these are not only pleasant to look at and to listen to, but they also help control insect pests that could pose a threat to crops or livestock.

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

Many farmers enjoy watching a robin or meadowlark or red-wing blackbird flit by when they're working the fields. Songbirds are likely more appreciated than any other wildlife, not only for adding a bit of color and music, but also because they don't pose a danger to the crops or livestock.

It turns out, research is showing that birds may not be as benign as thought — rather, they may be quite beneficial.

James Brandle, an ecologist with the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, Neb., has been coordinating several studies related to bird species biodiversity in Nebraska's agricultural landscape and has found some surprising links between environmental conservation and farm economics.

One study surveyed both the on-farm bird habitat as well as that of the property surrounding the farm. Alfalfa- or pasture-based farms tended to have more grassland bird species, whereas farms with a high diversity in vegetative types — pasture, alfalfa, crops, field borders, windbreaks, and so on — have more shrubland birds. It was also found that organic farms have double the bird biodiversity of conventional farms.

Another research project measured how much impact that environmental health has on a farm's economic well-being. Specific markers measured were crop yields, market opportunities, soil conservation, water conservation, and pasture or crop quality — all of which correlate with more bird biodiversity. One reason may be because of what an additional study found when wild birds were examined for the potential to be used as a biocontrol agent in insect pest control in crops.

The project determined to

find out how far different species of birds, from the brown thrasher and gray catbird to the blue jay and others, will fly out of woody areas into crops to forage for insects. What Brandle found is that, even with shy birds, none of the species seemed to be limited on how far they would forage.

"The kingbird, in particular, really has promise as a predator of crop pests," Brandle said.

This new focus on bird conservation in terms of how it impacts the money side of agriculture is being called economic ornithology, according to Julie Jedlicka, a researcher with the University of California at Berkeley, Calif. Outside of the Midwest, studies have been conducted on vineyards, coffee, fruit and vegetable, and other food crops, finding the pest control impact as high as \$120 an acre for some of these crops, if the right bird species can be matched with the target insect pest. Brandle said that most Nebraska bird species aren't picky about the insect pests they are foraging for, so farmers only need to focus on increasing their songbird numbers on the farm and going out into the field.

So, how can producers encourage more songbirds to visit their crops?

Anecdotal information collected from farmers in various states, through a number of research studies, suggest:

- Reduce pesticide use.
 - Reduce tillage.
 - Increase vegetative diversity on the farm.
 - Provide bird houses, feeders, and water sources on the farm.
 - Provide perch sites around and in the fields for foraging birds.
 - Provide habitat in field borders.
- "The more diversity you have in that habitat, the healthier it will be," Brandle said.

Be On Guard For Milk Fever In Beef Cows

BROOKINGS — Minerals are critical to the health and performance of grazing livestock. Deficiencies and excesses of minerals in an animal's diet can cause weight loss, decreased reproductive performance, and a variety of nutritional disorders, says Kalyn Waters, SDSU Extension Cow/Calving Field Specialist. She points to milk fever as a metabolic issue that can occur as a result of mineral imbalances this time of year.

"It is important to understand various factors that contribute to the potential for these disorders and also to understand associated symptoms and treatments to minimize losses," Waters said.

Milk fever is generally associated with high-producing dairy cattle; however, it can also occur in beef cattle Waters explains.

"Milk fever is a result of hypocalcaemia (low calcium). Most forage

contains enough calcium to meet the minimal requirements of livestock, which is around 40 grams per day. However, a dramatic increase in calcium requirements occurs with the onset of lactation in the dam, and requirements are typically unable to be met simply by increasing Calcium intake," she said.

Colostrum which contains 2.0 to 2.3grams per liter of calcium is partly to blame explains Waters.

"Colostrum drains reserves in the cow's blood stream; which explains why milk fever is typically seen in mature cows as they have a much greater rate of colostrum production."

Hypocalcaemia results in a decrease in smooth muscle function, decreasing rumen and gastrointestinal tract function and ultimately resulting in a decrease in dry matter intake. In addition, decreases in uter-

ine motility and immunity raise the risk of uterine infections and decreased fertility.

Normal levels of calcium in the blood will be between 8.5 and 11 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL); however, levels drop dramatically in a cow experiencing milk fever, resulting in clinical symptoms which can include; lack of muscle coordination and twitching; dry muzzle, depression, altered rectal temperature, and laying down but still up right; and in the most severe stage - bloat, laying out flat, weak pulse, flaccid muscles, risk of death. This decrease of calcium in the blood supply directly im-

pacts the animal's ability to regulate muscle contractions and relaxation, which is the most identifiable clinical signs of milk fever.

For more information visit iGrow.org or contact Waters at the SDSU Extension Regional Center in Winner, 605-842-1267 or kalyn.waters@sdstate.edu; or contact SDSU Extension Research Associate, Janna Kincheloe at the West River Ag. Center, 605-394-2236 or janna.kincheloe@sdstate.edu; or contact any SDSU Extension Cow/Calving Field Specialist and Beef Extension Specialist. SDSU Extension staff contact information can be found at iGrow.org.

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