

Next Year In Ag

BY DR. MIKE ROSMANN

The Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health Conference in Ames in mid-November featured reviews of changes in agriculture during the past 40 years, along with predictions about what the next 40 years will offer. Some of the people whom I most respect for their understanding of agriculture and rural life tendered their assessments.



Dr. Mike ROSMANN

This is the first of two columns about the nearby future of agriculture. No-body can predict more than a few years anymore.

Dr. Kelley Donham, an international leader in the agricultural medicine field who recently retired as director of Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health and is now emeritus professor at the University of Iowa, indicated that farming fatalities are about half as likely as they were 40 years ago, thanks to improvements in injury prevention, farmer health education and machinery design.

Recent reductions in federal funding could slow progress in the field over the next few years, Donham advised. Alternative resources for basic research, such as partnerships with producer and consumer groups and a "research-to-practice" approach are critical in keeping the momentum going toward healthier farming.

Certifying farms as safe environments, annual reviews of farm family health at AgriSafe Clinics, and tying these preventive approaches to reductions in insurance premiums for farm family health insurance, worker compensation costs and farm liability policies are important avenues for continued pursuit, Donham said.

Who are today's most productive farmers? Highly respected rural sociologists and economists, Drs. Mike Duffy and Paul Lasley of Iowa State University, described today's farmers and what the next few years offer for agriculture, based on their annual Iowa Rural Life Poll and surveys of farmland values, and national trends in agriculture.

Already, the top 15 percent of farms produce 85 percent of U.S. food, fiber and other consumable agricultural products. The trend toward fewer farmers producing an ever larger share of agricultural goods will continue and could speed up.

These increasingly large operators will own less of the land they farm, but they will gain an ever larger share of the farm product marketplace, Duffy said. The number of small farms with operators who pursue farming mainly as a lifestyle connection to the land continues to increase but their portion of the total agricultural goods produced continues to decline.

Farmland prices? Duffy said the boom in farmland values over the past few years in Iowa and most of the Midwest is reminiscent of the booms that occurred in the 1920s and during the

latter half of the 1970s and first couple years of the 1980s. Both eras preceded economic depressions in agriculture.

Now we are in another era of farmland price escalation, or possibly at the high point, Duffy suggested. Farmland prices will probably retract 20-30 percent over the next few years, but any economic depression in agriculture will be gentler than those in the last century.

There are many uncertainties, Duffy and Lasley listed uncertainties to include: climate change, lack of a federal Farm Bill, possible changes in crop insurance and environmental regulations.

There also are issues attributable to GMOs, food safety and lack of access to some markets, as well as farmers being blamed for everything that is wrong and farmers sensing loss of control.

Agriculture in the future will depend increasingly on technology, said Dr. Paul Gunderson. He is past director of the National Farm Medicine Center, the current director of the Dakota Center for Technology-Optimized Agriculture and has headed several United Nations commissions on food and labor issues.

Gunderson said 92 percent of central U.S. agricultural producers routinely use one or more precision agriculture technologies. These might include GPS (global positioning systems) that use satellite communications to guide farming, such as continuous recording of crop yields during harvest; the data enable calculating recommended soil nutrients for all parcels next year to optimize production throughout each field.

There are many precision agriculture technology applications. Gunderson mentioned use of unmanned aerial viewers (UAVs), which are drone aircraft that can fly over pastures to assess the locations and health of grazing animals.

The UAVs can sense the body temperatures, digestive activities, and a host of health indicators by flying close enough to the animals to detect and report them to the herd manager. The herd manager can select and treat animals needing assistance; perhaps in the future UAV robots will conduct the treatments of animals needing veterinary interventions.

Geo-tagging is another technology that has arrived. Gunderson recommended that every farmer carry a cell phone on his/her body so that any person can be located through signal triangulation in case of a reported event needing a response or when there is no response to a requested reply.

Farming is changing. Next week I will offer my views about what the immediate future holds. I will address the issues as a farm producer, a behavioral health specialist, researcher and observer of agriculture for many years. I welcome your thoughts.

Dr. Rosmann is a Harlan, Iowa, farmer and psychologist, available at: www.agbehavioralhealth.com.

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Visiting Hours

Dealing With Psoriatic Arthritis

LEANN BASSING, MD
 Yankton Medical Clinic, P.C.

Most people don't realize there is a specific kind of arthritis that can accompany psoriasis skin disease. That is, until commercials of professional golfer Phil Mickelson endorsing a medication to treat his own diagnosis of Psoriatic Arthritis (PsA) started to appear on television. First of all, Psoriasis is a disease that is typically manifested as thickened red scaly plaques on the surfaces of elbows or knees, but also can occur on the scalp or trunk. My physical examination of new patients usually includes a close inspection of these areas, as well as a few areas where psoriasis likes to 'hide,' including the external auditory ear canal, umbilicus (belly button), nails, and superior gluteal cleft (top of the buttocks). If I can find any clues in these areas, it can affect the diagnosis in a significant way!

Psoriatic arthritis (PsA) is an inflammatory joint disease that not only can cause inflammation in joints, but also inflammation of tendons. Another important difference of Psoriatic arthritis from Rheumatoid arthritis, which is the most common type of inflammatory arthritis, is PsA's ability to affect the joints of the low back, or specifically, the sacroiliac joints. These are two long joints where the tailbone meets the pelvis. Typically, patients who have inflammation in these joints, called Sacroiliitis, will experience significant

low back stiffness that is most prominent in the mornings. This is because inflammation is more prevalent after being inactive throughout the night. When PsA was defined as a specific disease entity back in the early 1970's, five subsets were identified based on clinical features. These include number of joints involved (polyarticular = 5 or more joints versus oligoarticular = 4 or fewer joints affected), pattern of joint involvement (distal interphalangeal = small knuckles at the ends of the fingers versus spondylitis = spine is affected), and possible deforming arthritis (mutilans) (1).

Estimates of how many people with psoriasis are also affected by PsA vary greatly depending on the study method. The frequency of PsA in patients with previously diagnosed psoriasis varies from 1% to 39%, with the wide range existing mainly due to differences in diagnostic criteria (1). Most people are between the ages of 30-55 years old at the time they are diagnosed, and men are as equally affected as women. While most patients have psoriasis before the arthritis shows up, interestingly up to 30% will have the inflammatory joint disease before any skin symptoms, half of those not developing skin disease for more than a year after the arthritis findings. As you can imagine, this can make an accurate diagnosis a bit more difficult. A few unique features of PsA that can help with making the diagnosis include occasional findings of a diffusely

swollen digit, or 'sausage-shaped digit,' called dactylitis (this is due to inflammation that runs along the length of a tendon lining the finger or toe), or inflammatory eye disease, especially anterior uveitis, in which the patient may experience a red painful eye and an ophthalmologist can actually identify inflammatory cells within the eye itself. X-rays of the hands, feet, or sacroiliac joints can also reveal some distinct bony features of PsA, unique from other forms of arthritis. There is no single blood test that can make the diagnosis, however.

Thankfully, we do have relatively good medications to treat PsA. These include non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), disease modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs), or biologic medications (anti-TNF drugs such as the etanercept Phil Mickelson tells us helps his PsA...disclaimer: these medications won't necessarily improve your golf game!).

If you or someone you know has joint pain, especially joint swelling combined with psoriatic skin disease, make an appointment with a Rheumatologist. An accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment may be closer than you think.

1. Firestein, GS. Et al. Kelley's Textbook of Rheumatology, 8th Ed. Saunders, 2009.
2. Canti, F. et al. Psoriatic arthritis: a systematic review. International Journal of Rheumatic Disease (2010) 13: 300-317.

Thanksgiving Reading



SUBMITTED PHOTO

On November 18, Lincoln Elementary celebrated American Education week by holding a PTA-sponsored Read In. The Lincoln Student Council Members, along with advisors, Lesley Hale and Sheryl Rehurek, and librarian, Kathleen Bergeson, presented a Reader's Theatre on the book Thank You, Sarah: The Woman Who Saved Thanksgiving by Laurie Halse Anderson. Students in attendance could select a new book for their personal libraries, as well as a snack. All were encouraged read with their families and complete a Thanksgiving word find.

SCHOLASTICS

ADISA FORMO

Adisa Formo, daughter of Bob and Pat Formo of Yankton, graduated from Joseph's College of Cosmetology & Barbering in Norfolk, Neb., on Nov. 18, 2013. Formo graduated from

Yankton High School in 2012 and became Shellac certified from Joseph's College. Her accomplishments include six months of perfect attendance and participating in Total Look and Makeup & Updo competitions.

MILITARY

DAMIAN CLARK

Navy Seaman Recruit Damian Clark, son of Carl K. and Roxie L. Clark of Yankton, recently completed U.S. Navy basic training at Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Ill.

During the eight-week program, Clark completed a variety of training which included classroom study and practical instruction on naval customs, first aid, fire-fighting, water safety and survival, and shipboard and aircraft safety. An emphasis was also placed on physical fitness.

The capstone event of boot camp is "Battle Stations." This exercise gives recruits the skills and confidence they need to succeed in the fleet. "Battle Stations" is designed to galvanize the basic warrior attributes of sacrifice, dedication, teamwork and endurance in each recruit through the practical application of basic Navy skills and the core values of Honor, Courage and Commitment. Its distinctly "Navy" flavor was designed to take into account what it means to be a Sailor.

Clark is a 2010 graduate of Yankton High School of Yankton.

Organ Concert Dec. 14

Concert organist John Friesen will present his own arrangement of Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Suite" at Trinity Lutheran Church at 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 14. The concert will be in the former sanctuary and is a friend and fundraising event for Trinity's "pipe organ transplant" effort.

Even though the organ

console is presently in Trinity's balcony in the rear of the space, Mr. Friesen's intricate footwork will be projected onto a screen in the front of the audience.

In keeping with the casual tone of the evening, hot cider and cookies will be served during the performance. A free-will offering will be taken.

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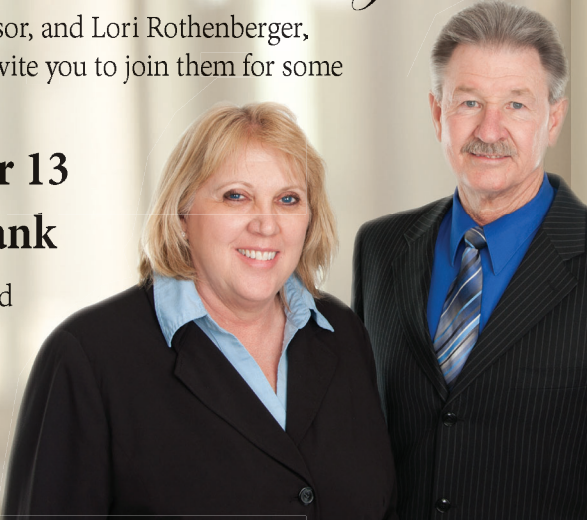
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Season's Greetings

Jim Chesley, Financial Advisor, and Lori Rothenberger, Administrative Assistant, invite you to join them for some holiday cheer:

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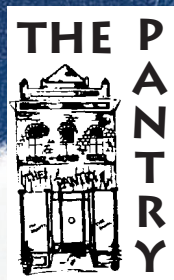
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Best Wishes for Christmas & the New Year!

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