



# More Than It's Cracked Up To Be



METRO GRAPHICS

## Broadband Initiative Seeking Input

PIERRE — The state's Broadband Initiative, led by the Bureau of Information and Telecommunications (BIT), has partnered with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Field Office in South Dakota to survey agriculture producers across the state for the second time to assess the usage of high-speed broadband Internet services in rural areas.

"Based on comments received from the 2012 survey, we learned many respondents were just beginning to subscribe to Internet services," said David Zolnowsky, BIT Commissioner. "This is the primary reason we are again asking for participation in the survey; we want to measure changes in the availability and utilization of high speed Internet services and assess the impact these services have on our agriculture community and rural areas across the state."

Approximately 6,500 surveys were mailed this month to South Dakota agriculture producers encouraging participation in this Internet Usage Survey. The survey requests information from agriculture producers asking if they subscribe to an Internet service, how they utilize the service and how availability, speed and affordability impact their utilization. The results of the survey will guide state policy decisions encouraging providers to expand areas of service or enhance the quality of high speed broadband Internet services in South Dakota.

"High-speed broadband Internet services can expand educational opportunities, improve public safety, enhance health care delivery and bring economic growth to the region. Utilization also improves producers' ability to market livestock, forage and grain, providing a competitive advantage and improving the state's rural economy," stated Zolnowsky.

"South Dakota has a wide variety of tech savvy agriculture producers who are managing small to multi-million dollar operations over their slow data-capable cell phones and it is our goal to fix that and to give them the competitive advantages to grow and continue their operations in the most rural areas of the state," said Lucas Lentsch, Secretary for the South Dakota Department of Agriculture. "We highly encourage farmers and ranchers to complete the survey; we want to hear from them."

The ultimate goal of the Broadband Initiative is to increase the availability of high-speed broadband Internet to all of South Dakota with an emphasis on rural areas. Assessment of the availability and utilization of high speed broadband Internet services within agriculture, the primary economic driver across the state, is extremely important to this project. If producers did not receive the survey or misplaced it, they can request a copy be mailed to them by calling 1-800-338-2557 or they can simply take the survey online by visiting <http://broadband.sd.gov/AgricultureSurvey.aspx>. Survey results will be available online in the spring.

For more information on the Broadband Initiative, visit Twitter @broadbandsd, Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/BroadbandSD?ref=ts&v=wall> or on YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/user/broadbandsd/>.

## Precision Ag Conference Set For SF

BROOKINGS — The Western Corn Belt Precision Ag Conference held March 18-19 in Sioux Falls at the Sioux Falls Convention Center, 1101 N. West Avenue, will feature a wide variety of presenters and exhibits related to the latest in precision agriculture with the focus on increasing crop yields through the use of newly developed Precision Planting Technologies.

The new precision planting technologies from Raven, Kinze, and John Deere will be available for inspection.

Multiple SDSU precision research scientists and SDSU Extension specialists will bring updates for planting, pest control, and drainage for the 2014 growing season.

Darren Hefty and the popular program, Ag Ph.D. will be hosted live from the stage from 2-3 p.m. on March 18. John Deere will be exhibiting their newly unveiled ExactEmerge planting system that is capable of accurately placing seed at speeds almost twice as fast as recommended in the past. Kinze collaborating with Raven industries will be exhibiting their newest multi hybrid planter.

Company experts will be available to discuss the latest in precision planting along with the speed and accuracy of the 4900 model.

There will be representatives from many of the major agronomic suppliers to discuss their latest offerings for 2014. Raven Industries and SDSU will discuss results from their 2013 experience at multi variety planting.

Dr. Ted Crosbie, Chief Scientist, The Climate Corporation will discuss how climate data will be integrated into South Dakota farms in the near future.

Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) credits are available.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first of a two-part series on hatching eggs in a classroom.

BY RITA BRHEL  
P&D Correspondent

It's that time of the year when thoughts turn toward spring and the promise of new life, from the crocus flowers peeking out of the frigid soil to the return of the songbirds.

A favorite spring activity for many elementary school teachers, as well as poultry lovers, is hatching eggs. However, it's more of a delicate procedure than setting a dozen eggs in an incubator and waiting for the chicks to arrive.

While incubator settings are important, probably the most overlooked part of the hatching process is at the very beginning, says Phillip Clauer, senior embryology instructor at Penn State University in University Park, Penn., who consults with both commercial hatcheries as well as school teachers for classroom incubator projects and poultry hobbyists.

"Producing or obtaining quality eggs is important, and clean, fertile eggs are important," he said. "What goes into the birth is what you're going to get out of the bird. What that chick has to live on is what's inside that egg."

What Clauer is referring to is ensuring that the eggs used for the classroom incubator are those from a flock of hens that were taken care of well. Hens with poor nutrition produce eggs whose shells are more likely to be misshapen or thin and therefore easily broken, as well as eggs with less ability to sustain a growing chick for the 21-day incubation period.

Teachers are likely to be working with a South Dakota State University or

University of Nebraska Extension educator, but many poultry owners have an interest in hatching eggs themselves rather than letting their chickens raise their own chicks. Clauer says this is usually best, as most chickens today are bred for egg production rather than the ability to set on and hatch eggs, two genetic traits that are inversely related.

"Orpington, Brahma, Cornish — some of these heritage breeds are still very good setters if you find the right strain, but most birds around anymore are hybrids, even the heritage breeds you order from a commercial heritage," Clauer said. "No matter how long you wait, she'll never set on those eggs."

Of the hens inclined to hatch eggs, they only do so in the spring and early summer, and only a few eggs at a time, whereas incubators can effectively hatch any number of eggs, depending on their capacity, and at any time of the year.

### CHOOSING THE RIGHT EGGS

For chicken owners who are collecting hatching eggs, Clauer recommends one male for six to 10 females and to delay picking up eggs destined for the incubator until the flock has been exposed to extra light at least one month. Fertility is checked by breaking open an egg here and there to look at the embryo spot on the yolk: An infertile egg's spot is very small like any other eating egg, while a fertile egg's spot is more noticeable.

"The eggs you break open to check, they're not to hatch, but you can cook them up whether or not they're fertilized. It doesn't matter," Clauer said.

What does matter is that poultry owners ensure that the flock is healthy and the facilities are clean.

"Breeder flock management can make a difference," Clauer said. "If you put an

infected egg in the incubator, that infection will spread to the clean eggs."

In cold weather, poultry owners need to gather eggs early in the day as chilled eggs lower hatchability, he says.

### PREPARING THE EGGS

Even in the cleanest of hen houses, Clauer suggests disposing of floor eggs, whether for hatching or for eating, as these eggs are more likely to be contaminated with the Salmonella bacteria. Even if collected from the nest boxes, the eggs should be clean enough to use for eating eggs.

"If you do not have to wash your eggs, don't wash them," Clauer said. "If you have to wash them, don't incubate them." Washing eggs removes a natural antibacterial barrier meant to protect the developing chick inside from pathogens moving through the porous shell, plus dirty eggs are more likely to overwhelm that barrier and infect the egg, he says.

Putting fresh eggs directly into the incubator reduces hatchability. It's best if eggs are stored for at least two days, but not more than one week, before incubating. A clean Styrofoam or plastic egg carton is ideal, as paper cartons absorb contaminants, and the eggs should be placed large-end up and stored at 55 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit with 70-80 percent humidity. The eggs then need to be pre-warmed in a room at least 70 degrees Fahrenheit for six to 12 hours prior to setting in the incubator.

All equipment — before, during and after incubation — should be cleaned and disinfected before use.

"Cleaning and disinfecting are really important," Clauer said. "What is most important is the cleaning part. If you do not clean, the disinfectant cannot penetrate that area. Use good sanitation every chance you get."

## Beginning-Farmers Program Is OK'd

PIERRE — The South Dakota Value Added Finance Authority (VAFA) approved three Beginning Farmer Bond applications totaling almost \$1.5 million at a meeting on Thursday, Feb. 27, in Brookings.

The Beginning Farmer Bond program through the SDDA is available for eligible beginning farmers or ranchers to purchase agricultural land at lower interest rates.

"To be eligible for the program, an applicant must be at least 18 years old, a resident of South Dakota,

have a net worth under \$400,000 and own less acres than 30 percent of the county median," says Terri LaBrie, finance administrator for SDDA. "The limit on a beginning farmer bond is \$509,600."

Typically, the Beginning Farmer Bond program works through a local lender. However, if retiring farmers are interested in passing on their land to a beginner farmer, the interest off that contract sale is federally tax exempt, providing substantial savings to the seller.

Unfortunately, there are regulations prohibiting this type of transaction with closely related parties such as parents or grandparents.

"The bond program is a great way for a beginning farmer to buy land. However, it's also advantageous for a retiring farmer that would be willing to enter into a contract for deed or an individual investor looking to help finance a beginning farmer," says LaBrie.

The SDDA administers this program through VAFA. The board meets monthly

and reviews the applications and issues the bonds for approved projects. Board members include: Bob Hull, Sisseton; Mark Gross, Sioux Falls; Bill Hansen, Centerville; Chuck Jepson, Ft. Pierre; Jim Doolittle, Belle Fourche; Marcia Hendrickson, Chancellor; and Nathan Jensen, Beresford.

For information on the financial programs offered through SDDA, contact one of the board members or Terri LaBrie at 605-773-4026 or [terri.labrie@state.sd.us](mailto:terri.labrie@state.sd.us).

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