

Dairy Producers Tax Seminars Offered

PIERRE — The South Dakota Department of Revenue in cooperation with the South Dakota Department of Agriculture is hosting a series of free seminars to help understand the sales tax requirements and how they apply to the dairy industry.

The presentations will provide the dairy industry with helpful information on state sales and use taxes; licensing requirements; how taxes apply to the dairy industry including taxes on farm machinery, replacement parts, and repairs; audit processes and records retention.

The two-hour tax seminars will be conducted by Department of Revenue Business Education Coordinator Jo Riley and Audit Manager Doug Nelson. Time will be allowed for questions and answers.

Seminars are scheduled for the following dates and locations:

- May 18 — Watertown at the Ramkota Events Center, 1901 9th Avenue S.W.;
- May 19 — Brookings at the Days Inn, 2500 6th Street;
- May 20 — Sioux Falls at the Best Western Ramkota Hotel, 3200 W. Maple.

The free seminars run from 10 a.m. to noon and are open to the public.

Interested individuals can register by calling the South Dakota Department of Revenue at 1-800-TAX (829)-9188 or on-line at <http://www.state.sd.us/drr2/business/bustax.htm> in the Business Tax Division "Tax Education" section.

Application Period On For Organic Producers

HURON — The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced an additional funding opportunity for organic producers and those transitioning to organic production to implement conservation practices on their agricultural operations. Applications are accepted continuously, with the cutoff date for this application period set for May 20.

"Organic growers continue to express interest in program support to implement conservation practices," said NRCS Chief Dave White. "This additional opportunity will allow more producers to get assistance in protecting the natural resources on their land and creating conditions that help foster organic production."

Fiscal year (FY) 2011 marks the third year of USDA's Organic Initiative, and up to \$50 million is available nationally for producers to plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns in ways that are consistent with organic production. For example, organic producers may use the funding to plant cover crops, establish integrated pest management plans, or implement nutrient management systems consistent with organic certification standards.

Eligible producers include those certified through USDA's National Organic Program, those transitioning to certified organic production, and those who meet organic standards but are exempt from certification because their gross annual organic sales are less than \$5,000. In the previous two fiscal years, South Dakota NRCS obligated more than \$1.9 million through the Organic Initiative to help producers implement conservation practices.

Organic Initiative funding is provided through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), a voluntary conservation program administered by USDA's NRCS that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. The program provides up to \$20,000 per year per person or legal entity, with a maximum total of \$80,000 over six years.

Producers interested in applying for the 2011 Organic Initiative funding must submit applications through their local NRCS Service Center.

\$50 Million Available For Organic Farmers

LYONS, Neb. — Farmers and ranchers transitioning to organic as well as established organic producers have another opportunity to apply for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Organic Initiative funding to assist their organic efforts. The deadline for this application period is May 20, 2011.

The USDA recently announced that they will, for the third consecutive year, invest \$50 million in funding for the EQIP Organic Initiative, which provides a 75 percent share of the cost of implementing organic conservation measures to those who qualify — 90 percent for beginning, limited-resource and socially-disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

In 2010 NRCS obligated \$24 million nationally to assist organic farmers and ranchers with organic transition. Over \$500,000 of that total went to South Dakota producers, and this year even greater funding is available to plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns in ways that assist with transitioning agricultural land and production to organic certification.

"We commend NRCS and USDA leadership for listening to the concerns of organic farmers and applaud their new initiative," commented Traci Bruckner, Center for Rural Affairs. "It's unfortunate though that farmers have a very small window to sign up for the program and it's during the busiest time for farmers — the middle of planting season."

According to Bruckner, farmers and ranchers can receive compensation for six core conservation practices (conservation crop rotation, cover cropping, integrated pest management, nutrient management, rotational grazing, and forage harvest management) under the program. These are available on a nationwide basis. Farmers who want to apply for these funds should visit their local District County Natural Resource Conservation Service office. And the Center for Rural Affairs is gearing up to help producers as much as possible during this application period.

"We created an EQIP Organic Initiative fact sheet available at — <http://www.cfra.org/node/2509> — and we operate a Farm Bill Helpline where producers can call (402) 687-2100, ask for the Farm Bill Helpline and speak to a real person who can help producers receive assistance in accessing new programs like the EQIP organic initiative.

"The Center for Rural Affairs has a long history of assisting family farmers and ranchers to access new conservation programs," added Bruckner.

The Farm Bill Helpline can also assist farmers and ranchers with the Conservation Stewardship Program, the Cooperative Conservation Partnerships Initiative, the Value Added Agricultural Market Development Program and a host of Beginning Farmer and Rancher programs.

UNL Researchers Try To Find Source Of Bee Problems

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Researchers from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln are trying to find out whether pesticides are behind the mysterious disease that has been decimating U.S. bee colonies for several years.

The entomologists at UNL are part of a multistate U.S. Department of Agriculture effort to find out why bees are dying more often.

Since it was recognized in 2006, colony collapse disorder has killed a number of bee colonies every year.

The UNL team is examining how certain pesticides and combinations of the chemicals affect the health of honey bees. Other researchers are looking at other theories.

Professor Marion Ellis says the UNL research shows that some of the pesticides used to control varroa mites might be harmful to bees.

Michigan Farmer's Stand Against Ag Pollution Is Like A 'War'

A CAFO Warrior

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second of two stories from the 2011 Nebraska Environmental Action Coalition meeting held in Lincoln, Neb., April 30.

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

LINCOLN, Neb. — There's nothing extraordinary looking about Lynn Henning. She is of medium height and weight, with thick, gray hair flowing down her shoulders.

And there's nothing extraordinary about most of Henning's life. She's raised two children while her husband worked a factory job, supplementing the couple's income from their 300-acre farm near Clayton, Mich. When her children were older, she got a job at the local Sierra Club chapter.

But then, 10 years ago, a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) moved in next door and began discharging its manure-laden wastewater into the local drinking water supply.

That's when Henning became extraordinary. "The war began," she said in her keynote address at the 2011 annual meeting of the Nebraska Environmental Action Coalition on April 30 in Lincoln.

She began by filing complaints to state officials, with no response. So, she went to the federal level. Once she got some attention, she went further — taking water samples and documenting points of interest through both ground and aerial photography: showing wastewater being discharged on rainy days and snowpack, dead animals piled in the woods out of sight, undocumented lagoons, and more. She began taking up members of the media and state officials by airplane to check out CAFOs in their areas. She is making online maps of CAFOs not only in Michigan but other states so the public knows their locations. And she started training people across the country on how to document and report on the CAFOs in their areas.

"Documentation is the surest way to action," Henning said. "Some people say lawsuits are better, but we didn't have the money."

She also put up with threats to herself and her family, including gunfire directed at the same room in which her young child slept and being run off the road by manure trucks working for the CAFOs she was monitoring.

"I was told literally to turn my head away and shut up," she said. "It was particularly hard because I'm a farmer. I worked hard and paid for my land. We were there first. I'm not going to let someone chase me off and take it away."

But it was worth it, she added, when her neighbors were diagnosed with hydrogen sulfide poisoning from drinking contaminated water, and when she saw cars covered in brown water after driving through a pivot's irrigation spray. There were other people coming down with nonspecific symptoms, from a nagging cough and sinus issues to nausea; Henning spoke with a doctor who said pollution from CAFOs could sicken people with weaker immunities and children.

"It's a matter of morals and respect and the integrity of the community," Henning said.

And then, a surprise on Earth Day in April 2010: Henning received one of six of what is known as the "Nobel Prize for environmentalism" — the



PHOTO: RITA BRHEL

Lynn Henning of Michigan, a winner of the Goldman Prize for environmentalism, was one of the featured speakers at the 2011 annual meeting of the Nebraska Environmental Action Coalition in Lincoln last month.

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LYNN HENNING

Goldman Prize for North America. Only one person on each continent is selected for this award, which honors grassroots environmental heroes from not only North America but also Africa, Asia, Europe, Islands and Island Nations, and South and Central America. Projects vary from protecting endangered ecosystems and species to combating destructive development efforts to promoting sustainability to influencing environmental policies to striving for environmental justice — but are often done at great personal risk. Individuals are recog-

nized with a bronze sculpture, a 10-day tour of San Francisco and Washington, D.C., with ceremonies and meetings with political and environmental leaders, and a check for \$150,000. Learn more at www.goldmanprize.org.

"You think you're not making a difference, but you are," she said. "It may be baby steps, but we're making changes; we're getting there. This prize tells me we're getting the word out."

Henning continues her fight to force CAFOs to follow regulations, and the tide has begun to change: More people are willing to help her, and importantly, most of the people volunteering to document are not necessarily the stereotypical environmental activist but fellow landowners and farmers — which she appreciates, as many people are busy working and raising families. It's easy to not even have this issue on their radar.

"I have a friend who lives on a farm with his wife, and he's blind, and he'll call me up and say, 'Lynn, a truck just passed by our house heading east fast, and it's full of manure,'" Henning laughed. "You're all heroes just by caring for your community."

App Helps Diagnose Soybean Diseases

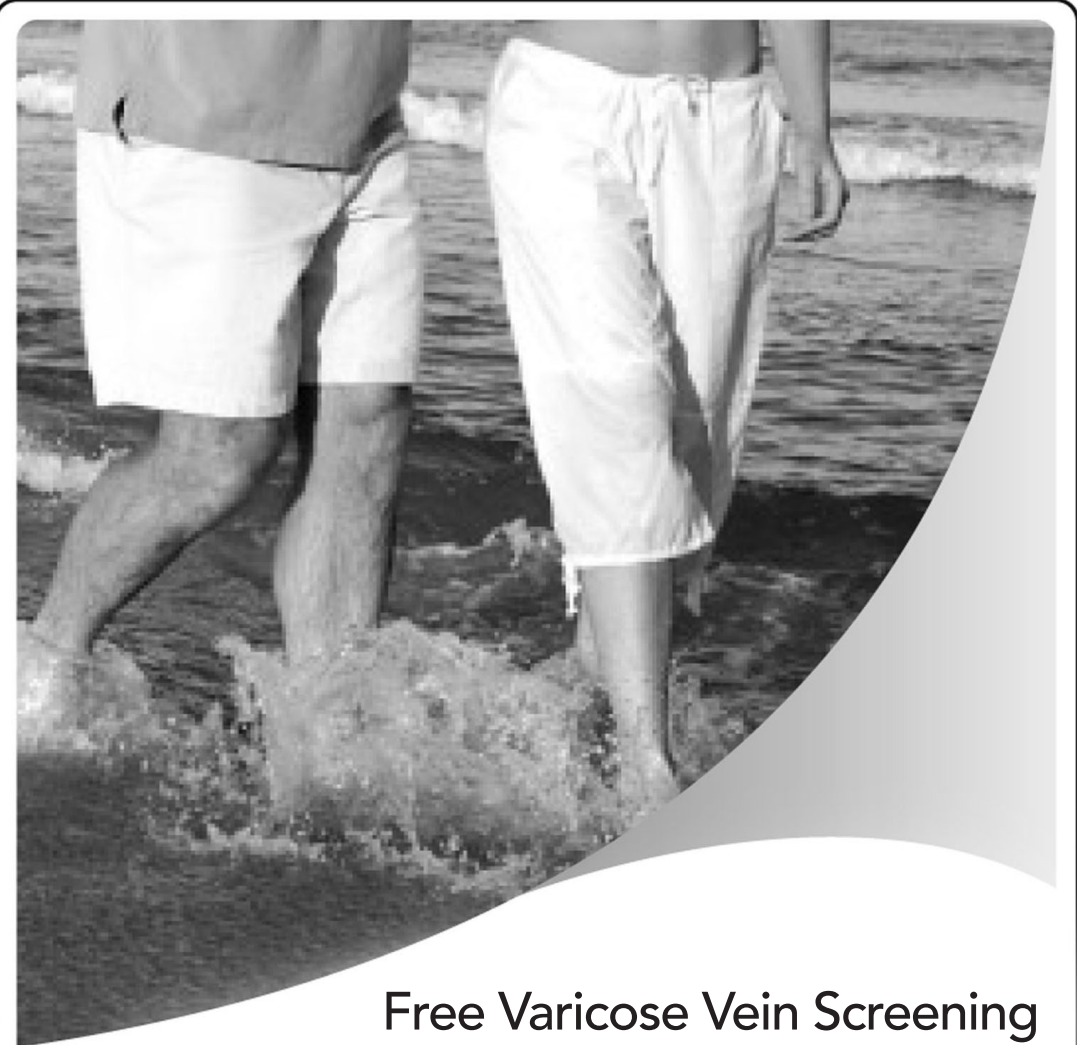
BROOKINGS — A mobile application for that makes it easy for producers in South Dakota and nearby states to diagnose soybean diseases is available as a free download through the Apple Store.

The Soybean Diseases app, developed by South Dakota State University Extension Plant Pathologist Larry Osborne and SDSU AgBio Communications, provides growers and crop managers with easy-to-use and handy diagnostic information for a number of major or potentially problematic soybean diseases. It is intended to provide a starting point for management decisions.

It's compatible with iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad. Learn more about the application at this link:

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/soybean-diseases-of-sd/id432509354?mt=8>

Osborne said the application puts information from the South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service at the fingertips of growers, who remain ultimately responsible for management decisions. Support from South Dakota soybean growers helped make the application possible, Osborne said.



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