



PHOTO: RITA BRHEL

# Nebraska Farmer Group Is The First To Form HSUS State Ag Council

BY RITA BRHEL  
P&D Correspondent

Many farmers and ranchers don't hold a favorable view of animal rights activism. By their very nature, agricultural producers tend to hold fast to tradition, seek autonomy, be conservative-minded, and resist change unless offered by a trusted source, like an Extension agent, ag banker, or another farmer. Animal rights organizations, including The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), are not necessarily in this inner circle. In Nebraska, where Gov. Dave Heinemann's threats toward HSUS still reverberate since the March incident, most producers continue to be wary.

"The vast, vast majority of producers do the right thing for their animals because it's our livelihood," said Kirsten Eggerling, a cow-calf producer near Martell, Neb. "Incidents of abuse are very, very rare."

She believes there is a general misunderstanding of common livestock husbandry practices, adding that "at any point, someone can come here and ask why I do things the way I do on my farm. That's what animal rights activists should be doing."

HSUS is best known for working toward legislation to ban certain agricultural policies such as cow gestation crates, veal crates, laying hen battery cages, and tail docking in dairy cows. These practices, in HSUS's view, are inhumane and needless, said Jocelyn Nickerson, HSUS state director based in Omaha, Neb. Those involved in animal agriculture tend to perceive HSUS activities as unscrupulous, because HSUS is seen as an outside organization meddling in producers' affairs.

In response, HSUS formed the first of its state agricultural councils in Nebraska earlier this year. The purpose of the Nebraska Agricultural Council of the HSUS is to promote the use of humane livestock production practices by opening markets to those producers who operate within animal care and environmental stewardship standards according to the HSUS as well as to help producers who want to transition to more humane practices, Nickerson said.

Council members are selected based on their active utilization of "recognized humane production practices in raising their livestock and are interested in working together to provide consumers with the healthy foods they want and deserve," she said.

The five-member Nebraska council consists of:

- Kevin Fulton of Litchfield, Neb., whose

2,800-acre farm includes beef cattle, sheep, meat goats, poultry, pigs, horses, wheat, hay, eco-ag tours, and an internship program for farmers transitioning to organic production.

- Jim Knopik of Fullerton, Neb., owns North Star Neighbors, a cooperative among neighbors that produces and markets organically raised poultry, beef, and other meat animals.
- Doug Dittman of Raymond, Neb., owns Branched Oak Farm, an organic dairy and cheese plant.
- Martin Kleinschmit of Hartington, Neb., whose 385 acres often serve as a demonstration farm, is a well-known organic farming specialist with the Lyons, Neb.-based Center for Rural Affairs, Northeast Nebraska Resource Conservation and Development Council out of Plainview,

Reviewing the qualifications of the council members, nearly all of the members are farming organically. And Nickerson agreed that the agricultural practices in question occur in industrialized systems.

"We all have a responsibility to care for the animals in our lives and on our farms and ranches. The HSUS believes that most producers want to treat their animals with respect, and we are reaching out to work with those producers, helping them to sustain their operations," she said. "We are working with producers to find economic solutions to animal welfare."

But it should not be about organic versus conventional practices, said Pete McClymont, chairman of We Support Ag, a collaboration of five Nebraska organizations — Nebraska Cattlemen, Nebraska Farm Bureau, Nebraska Poultry Industries, Nebraska Pork Producers, and Nebraska State Dairy Association — working in defense of Nebraska producers against what they refer to as extreme animal rights activism by raising awareness of the advantages of modern livestock production systems. Rather, HSUS's agenda is about pushing their morals onto farmers and ranchers rather than allowing change to happen naturally through consumer choice, McClymont said.

Nickerson counters that this view is not true.

"First, The Humane Society of the United States is not an animal rights organization. We are an animal welfare organization," she said. "Our goal is to ensure that all animals are respected. Humans hold all of the power when it comes to animals. The HSUS wants to ensure that that power is used responsibly."

Nickerson added that it is board policy that the HSUS promotes livestock producers who they recognize as good stewards of their animals and the land.

"Unfortunately, the perception that is being perpetuated in some agricultural circles is simply based on lies and false statements," she said, specifically those of a public relations campaign that claimed that HSUS is a front for an anti-ag extreme animal rights group and only spends 1 percent of its budget on local humane shelters. Rather, "the agreement with UEP [United Egg Producers] on laying hens is an example of how we strive to find solutions with producers," Nickerson added. "We worked with producers in Ohio and Michigan and continue to work with family farmers and ranchers in Nebraska and Colorado, where our first agricultural councils were started."

**"As a cattle rancher and an active member of the Humane Society of the United States, I can tell you that we have much common ground when it comes to the concerns of farm animals. It's a positive step to work together to address the future of agriculture and find solutions to animal welfare challenges."**

KEVIN FULTON

Neb., Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and others.

- Jon Joachim of Unadilla, Neb., strives to raise beef cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, fruits, and vegetables in a sustainable manner.

The council's creation was born out of talks with the Nebraska Farmers Union (NFU) as an alternative to HSUS's pursuance of livestock-focused animal protection ballot initiatives that have historically been quite successful — HSUS has won 30 out of the 44 they've proposed since 1990. Many producers in Nebraska regarded NFU's unprecedented alliance with HSUS as controversial.

But, "this alternative approach allows both our organizations to focus on working together in a positive manner to the benefit of both food growers and food consumers. We hope this is a long-term partnership that works to the advantage of Nebraska livestock producers and all Nebraskans," said John Hansen of the Lincoln, Neb.-based NFU.

"As a cattle rancher and an active member of the Humane Society of the United States, I can tell you that we have much common ground when it comes to the concerns of farm animals," said Fulton, who chairs the Nebraska Agricultural Council of the HSUS. "It's a positive step to work together to address the future of agriculture and find solutions to animal welfare challenges."



## Sheep Shearing School Dec. 5-7 In Brookings

BROOKINGS — A sheep shearing school is set for Dec. 5-7 at South Dakota State University in Brookings.

The training will take place at the SDSU Sheep Unit, located on Medary Avenue, one and a half miles north of the U.S. Highway 14 Bypass in Brookings.

South Dakota Extension Sheep Specialist Jeff Held will be one of the instructors, along with professional sheep shearers Curt Olson of Montana, Wade Kopren of South Dakota and Brian Laultt of North Dakota.

Instructors will cover topics including professional shearing pattern, equipment maintenance and repair, and wool handling and preparation.

The deadline to register for this school is Nov. 28. Class size is limited to 12 students, experienced and non-experienced. The instructional fee is \$150 per person and it includes a course handbook and DVD. New educational materials developed by the American Wool Council-Sheep Shearing Task Force will be used in the shearer training. Information about the school, including a registration form, is available at this link: <http://www.sdstate.edu/ars/species/sheep/extension/sheep-shearing-school.cfm>.

The training program is sponsored by a partnership between SDSU Extension and the South Dakota Sheep Growers Association. You may also register by sending your contact information and payment to South Dakota Sheep Shearing Program, Box 2170, Brookings, SD 57007. Contact Jeff Held for more information at 605-690-7033 or e-mail him at [Jeffrey.Held@sdstate.edu](mailto:Jeffrey.Held@sdstate.edu).

## Extension: Selecting Corn Hybrids For 2013

BROOKINGS — It is that time of year for South Dakota farmers to place orders for corn seed. Nathan Mueller, SDSU Extension Agronomist says two questions many growers should ask are: 1) How many hours do I spend selecting corn hybrids? 2) Who and what influence my decision?

"Regardless of how you answered these questions, selecting hybrids each year is one of the most important routine decisions producers make that drives profitability," Mueller said. "In 2011, the average corn price received in South Dakota was \$6.05 per bushel — only to be higher in 2012."

He adds that in both the 2011 and 2012 SDSU trials, the average difference between the lowest and highest yielding hybrid was 49 bushels per acre.

"These values highlight the potential maximum impact hybrid selection can have on profitability," he said. "Selecting a group of proven top-performing hybrids to plant on your farm will also help you minimize the chance that a particular environmental factor, disease, or insect may preferentially impact all of them. Your time and effort in making an informed decision on selecting hybrids will make good on its return."

To aid growers in this important buying decision, Mueller compiled a list of considerations:

- Availability and seed cost;
- Yield potential, yield stability, and maturity;
- Yield limiting factors (diseases, insects, etc.);
- Your management practices;
- Available traits and technologies;
- Company yield data;
- Third-party hybrid performance trial results.

"Your seed dealer or crop advisor should be able to help you gather most of this information including yield data from third-party hybrid performance trials to help identify top performing hybrids that match your soils, climate, pest problems, and management," he said. "If you are concerned that you will miss out on the earliest pay discounts by waiting for third-party trials results to be released, seed companies often will let you pay for a seed order without specifying the hybrid until later. Check with your seed company on this policy."

SDSU Corn Hybrid Performance Trials on iGrow.org South Dakota State University (SDSU) conducts corn hybrid performance trials each year. Results are available online at <http://igrow.org/agronomy/corn/corn-variety-trial-results/>.

# Registration Deadline For Community Supported Ag Mini-School Nov. 30

BROOKINGS — SDSU Extension, The Good Earth Farm and Dakota Rural Action's Farmer Network are hosting a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Mini-School Dec. 4 in Sioux Falls at the Ramkota Hotel, 3200 W. Maple.

This is a post-conference workshop following the Sioux Falls Organic Agriculture Conference. Community supported agriculture (CSA) is a local food marketing approach in which individual consumers invest in a local farmer. By making a financial commitment, people become "members" and receive a share of the farm's produce over the growing season. Together the farm and community share the ups and downs, risks and rewards of farming and growing.

CSA Mini-school agenda: 11:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m. — Lunch for CSA Program; 12:30-12:45 p.m. — Welcome and Introduction to CSA's; 12:45-1:45 p.m. — CSA Marketing, Chris Zdorovtsov, SDSU Extension Com-

munity Development Field Specialist; 1:45-2 p.m. — Break; 2:30-3 p.m. — CSA Survival Guide, Nancy Kirstein, The Good Earth; 3:30 p.m. — Wrap up

Presenter, Chris Zdorovtsov, is an SDSU Extension Community Development Field Specialist. Zdorovtsov works to assist communities in starting farmer's market

and has a background in establishing and enhancing school and community gardens. Prior to her work with Extension she worked for the Chef's Garden in Ohio, where she trialed specialty vegetables and herbs for high-end-restaurants.

The Good Earth is a Natural Farm located just south of Lennox, South Dakota. Jeff and Nancy

Kirstein are the second family to own this farm since 1879. It consists of 26 acres of pastures, creek, and farmland, birds, and frogs.

"The members purchase a share in our farm via a CSA program and we get to work trying to maximize their return by growing as much healthy, delicious food as we can," Kirstein said.

Registration options for this

event include: the CSA Mini-School only; which includes lunch, at \$10 a person; day two of the Sioux Falls Organic Agriculture Conference with CSA mini-school registration for \$25 per person; or individuals can pre-register for the entire Organic Conference and CSA Mini-school, for \$40 a person. The pre-registration deadline is Nov. 30. Registration at the door is \$60 per

person. Return registration form payment to the Sioux Falls Regional Extension Center, Attn: Chris Zdorovtsov, 2001 E. 8th St., Sioux Falls, SD 57103. For full details on the Sioux Falls Organic Agriculture Conference, which is Dec 3-4, visit: <http://sdstate.edu/ps/extension/ipm/organicagcon.cfm>; or contact Larry Wagner at 782-3290 or [Larry.Wagner@sdstate.edu](mailto:Larry.Wagner@sdstate.edu).

## AG EQUIPMENT AUCTION

**WED., NOV. 28**  
Bidding starts to close at 10 a.m. CST

**PARTIAL LISTING: COMBINES:** (2) '10 JD 9770 STS RWA, '10 JD 9770 STS, '09 JD 9770 STS, '09 JD 9770 STS RWA **APP EQUIP:** '10 JD 4930 self-propelled sprayer, '09 & '06 Top Air TA1200 sprayer, '07 & '06 Bestway Field-Pro IV sprayer, '04 & '03 Hardi 1100 Navigator sprayer, Schaben 8500 sprayer **TRACTORS:** '05 JD 4720 MFWD, JD 6400 4WD w/loader & bucket **HEADER:** '94 CIH 1020 flex **PLUS:** tillage, grain handling, livestock equip and more. 10% buyer's premium applies. **866.608.9283 | www.purplewave.com**

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