Press&Dakotan



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## SDSU Extension Launches Video Series

BROOKINGS - Addressing issues impacting South Dakota's agriculture industry, SDSU Extension launches Contours video episodes on South Dakota Public Broadcasting Sunday, Nov. 8, at noon (CST).

"Contours brings together experts from SDSU Extension, South Dakota State University and our partners throughout the state to provide South Dakota's crop and livestock producers with analysis and insights focused on the various challenges we face in agriculture today," said Barry Dunn, South Dakota Corn Utilization Council Endowed dean of the SDSU College of Agriculture & Biological Sciences, SDSU Extension director. Presented in a discussion format, the Nov. 8 Contours

will feature panelists who will discuss livestock development throughout the state. This discussion will be held in two parts. The second discussion will air Dec. 13 at noon (CST).

Pánelists for the Nov. 8 Contours Video include: Dunn; Paul Kostboth, South Dakota Department of Agriculture Director of Ag Development; Representative Mark Mickelson, South Dakota Legislature, representing District 13, Lincoln and Minnehaha Counties; Bob Thaler, South Dakota State University Professor and SDSU Extension Swine Specialist and Paul Brandt, South Dakota Pork Producers President and farmer from Clear Lake.

Contours is yet another way SDSU Extension fulfills the Land Grant mission of outreach," Dunn said. "iGrow does a fantastic job of serving more than 600,000 users each year. However, we feel that the more traditional form of communication that is a televised panel discussion is important as well.

Dunn reflected on the years when he was ranching near Mission, and the value he found in watching televised panel discussions. "Engaging our agriculture producers in the conversation and connecting them with industry experts is something SDSU Extension does all the time - this is just one more way to reach out and engage," he said. "We don't want to just communicate when there is a disaster. We hope viewers find Contours provides a dynamic approach to the challenges we face in agriculture today."

Following their scheduled airdate, Contours videos will be posted on iGrow.org. To learn more about Contours and future panel discussions, visit iGrow.org.

## Fall Winter Wheat Conditions Excellent

BROOKINGS - Winter wheat is the most popular winter cereal grown in South Dakota, with more than 1 million acres planted each year.

According to the USDA-NASS Crop Progress Report released Oct. 25, 2015 all South Dakota winter wheat fields planted this season to be good to excellent. "It is also reported that the emergence of all winter wheat planted in South Dakota is about 90 percent, which is well above average," explained David Karki, SDSU Extension Agronomy Field Specialist. Typical emergence for this time of year is 66 percent.

#### WINTER WHEAT UPDATE

Field observations to assess the conditions of winter wheat and rye during last week of October 2015 showed winter wheat fields that were planted on oat stubble to have excellent ground cover - with most of the plants to

# **Fall Management To-Do List For Cow/Calf Producers**

BROOKINGS — Once again the brisk fall air is here, which means most cow-calf producers are busy processing and tending to new weaned calves.

"While weaning time usually requires all hands on deck, we can also take advantage of this time to manage the cows before they are sent back out to pasture," said Taylor Grussing, SDSU Extension Cow-Calf Field Specialist.

While cows are corralled, Grussing encouraged cow-calf producers to conduct pregnancy detection and take note of body condition scores.

#### PREGNANCY DIAGNOSIS

With evolution of technology, there are now several methods of pregnancy diagnosis available for producers to choose from

Rectal palpation has been utilized for decades, and still remains as a viable way for an experienced person to physically palpate the fetus and determine the gestation length (age) of the fetus. "This method is quick, requires no extra equipment and is the cheapest cost option for producers," Grussing said.

Another option available is transrectal ultrasonography. With this method an ultrasound machine is connected to a probe that is inserted into the rectum either by hand or using a hands-free probe extender allowing the fetus to be examined visually.

Grussing said the advantages of ultrasound include; earlier determination of pregnancy (as early as 28 days), more accurate age determination, sex of the fetus, presence of multiple fetuses as well as visual inspection of other structures of the reproductive tract.

"For optimal results, pregnancy detec-tion via ultrasound should take place before the fetus is 4 months along," she said.

Transrectal ultrasound requires

special equipment which makes it more expensive than rectal palpation; however, the value of the additional information obtained can help make more precise decisions that may be beneficial to the overall performance of the operation. Blood tests can be utilized to detect pregnancy. Blood tests measure the amount of pregnancy associated glycoproteins (PAGs) being secreted by the placenta, and are secreted from day 28 of gestation until calving.

Blood samples are sent to a lab for analysis which can take a few days; therefore, it may not be the best option for a producer who wants to have the task completed in one day. In addition, if a cow was pregnant but lost the pregnancy, PAGs will remain in the blood for an extended period of time (60 days) so false positives are possible.

"Determining pregnancy status of females is important for producers, not only to help them plan for calving season, but to also analyze overall reproductive efficiency of the herd," Grussing said.

Once herd pregnancy rates are determined, Gussing encouraged producers to consider different management for late calving, young, and thin cows.

#### **OPEN COWS**

Females that are not pregnant (open) should be sorted off from the rest of the herd and either re-bred and entered into a fall-calving herd, placed on feed to add

weight and value before being sold or sold immediately to decrease winter feed costs.

#### **BODY CONDITION SCORE**

A good time to estimate a cow's body condition score (BCS) is as she leaves the chute following pregnancy detection.

A BCS is a visual evaluation of the energy reserves of an animal. This score is based off a 1 to 9 scale, with 1 being emaciated and 9 being obese.

Grussing said BCS should be done several times during the year (calving, breeding, weaning) in order to determine if cows are performing efficiently or if nutritional strategies need to be adjusted.

"In terms of reproductive efficiency, cows perform most efficiently at a BCS of 5 to 5.5. Therefore, if a female is at a BCS less than desirable at weaning time, a nutritional plan should be implemented to get her to the appropriate score by calving time," he said.

Cows are in mid-gestation at pregcheck time, which is also when the maintenance requirements are their lowest; thus, this is the most economical time to add condition, Grussing said.

"In order for a cow to remain in the herd, she needs to contribute revenue to the operation; therefore, becoming pregnant and weaning a healthy, productive calf each to year is necessary," Grussing said. "While there is a cost associated with implementation of these practices, they can also improve management, efficiency and overall profitability of an operation.

## **Soldier**

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grassroots organization." In 2008, he graduated and returned to farming fulltime. His uncle retired, making it possible for Gerlach and

his brother to begin taking over ownership of the farm. Uncle Andy made it easy. We couldn't have done it without him. He was willing to take on risk and stick his neck out for us when the bank couldn't," says Gerlach, explaining that all parties involved began working with lawyers to design a transition plan that was fair for everyone.

"We had a lot of discussions with lawyers and the accountant and hashed everything out so that it was fair for everyone," Gerlach says. Together he and LaRon

built upon their uncle's farming legacy — continuing to implement Andy's no-till farming practices and acceptance of precision agriculture technology.

They also began utilizing variable rate technology. As an agronomist, Gerlach writes

Also in 2008, he and Vicki married. Today they have two children, daughter, Alexis, 5, and a son, Easton, 4.

better way to raise a family than on the farm," he says. "We get to teach our children a good work ethic. They get to see the value in a good day's work."

#### MORE PATRIOTIC THAN EVER

At the same time that he was building his farm and family, Gerlach remained active in the Army National Guard, serving one weekend a month and two weeks a year. Following his college graduation, Gerlach became an officer.

In 2012, he became a Company Commander and was notified that in a year his new unit would be deployed to Afghanistan. It was their job to gather unused equipment from remote operating bases and bring the equipment to a centralized location where it would be destroyed or shipped back to the U.S.

Basically, it was our job to make sure our equipment didn't fall into the wrong hands," Gerlach explained.

Preparing 160 soldiers

livelihood and future 8,000 miles away, you cannot think of 'what ifs

As the countdown to deployment began, Gerlach moved to Sioux Falls so he could focus 100 percent of his energy on the imminent deployment.

"I needed to focus on one thing and that was taking my unit overseas," he says. "As Company Commander everything that happens, good or bad, is my responsibility."

Once he was deployed, Gerlach worked to stay in close communication with his family. He and Vicki chatted via FaceTime almost daily. To make conversations with his young children easy, Vicki had them place items in a basket to help remind them of things they wanted to talk to Daddy about. "That really helped

keep us connected. Although he and his brother also spoke frequently, LaRon kept farm-related discussions positive.

"He never brought any problems to me. He would only visit with me about issues after they were solved." Gerlach adds that while he was gone, family and neighbors pitched in to help with farm work.

"Being overseas, my family

couldn't have done it without

family, friends and neighbors.

neighbors pitched in to help — I have a photo on Facebook of all the neighbors' semis lined up in our field to haul wheat for us."

To thank them, Gerlach sent them each an American flag which flew over the base where they were stationed in Kandahar.

Although the mission was not uneventful, Gerlach's entire unit made it home.

While the unit was collecting equipment from remote bases across Afghanistan, they were responsible for their own security. "At times it was dangerous, but we all made it home and there were no serious injuries.

Looking back on where he was just a little more than a year ago, Gerlach says he wouldn't change a thing.

"I am more patriotic now than ever. I am glad I had the opportunity to do the thing I had signed up to do as a young man — to serve my country," he says. "I also think it's more important than ever that we try and find alternatives to foreign oil that could be heavily impacted by international conflict. As a corn producer, 95 percent of my corn goes to POET. In ad-dition in this global future we need to be very certain of the politics of war as we venture into the very cultural diverse regions of the world."

"I don't think there is any

be in early tillering stage.

"These fields had plants with 2-3 tillers per plant which is considered ideal to survive winter weather conditions in our region," Karki said.

Karki also pointed out that no incidence of diseases or pests were noted. However, fields planted into corn and soybean rotation following soybean harvest were little behind in the crop development. "Wheat fields planted after soybean in Northeast South Dakota had plants in varying growth stages," Karki said.

He explained that depending upon the availability of moisture in the fields the same field had plants which were recently germinated whereas some portion of the same fields had plants that were at 2-3 leaf stage. "This further underlines the importance of a seed bed with good soil moisture as key to the strong establishment of field crops," he said.

À field planted to winter rye after soybean had plants at 2-3 leaf stage. Given the warmer days in the forecast, Karki said winter rve and wheat fields are expected to grow further into developmental stage before the onset of winter weather in the region.

### Travel Offered To Range Beef Symposium

BROOKINGS — SDSU Extension will provide free transportation to The Range Beef Cow Symposium, to be held Nov. 17-19 at The Ranch, an event center on Larimer County Fairgrounds in Loveland, Colorado.

"Producers attending the Range Beef Cow Symposium in November will hear leading experts and producers discussing markets, cattle reproduction, animal health and current issues," said Julie Walker, Associate Professor & SDSU Extension Beef Specialist.

Complete symposium details (schedule, registration, and hotels) can be found on the website for the Range Cow Beef Symposium XXIV: www.rangebeefcow.com.

#### SYMPOSIUM HIGHLIGHTS

Duane Lenz, General Manager of Cattle-Fax will address the group on international aspects of the beef industry. Lenz has been a Market Analyst at Cattle-Fax since 1989 and works primarily with feedlots.

Brian Bledsoe, KKTV Chief Meteorologist, will address impact of long-term weather patterns on grazing.

Cliff Lamb, Professor of Reproductive Physiology at University of Florida, will share synchronization research results that works with AI or natural services.

#### **TRANSPORTATION DETAILS**

SDSU Extension has chartered a bus to provide free transportation to the Range Beef Cow Symposium (RBCS).

The bus will provide transportation from Rapid City to Loveland and will shuttle riders from their motel to the RBCS meeting each day.

The bus departs Monday, Nov. 16, 2015 from the Rapid City Regional Extension Center (711 N Creek Drive); note, the new location on the first floor of the First Interstate Bank building near Menards.

The bus departs promptly at noon (MST), so be there by 11:30 to load. The bus will return to Rapid City when RBCS adjourns at noon on Thursday, Nov. 19.

If you plan to ride the bus please make lodging reservations at the Best Western Crossroads (5532 Hwy 34; Loveland, Colo.). To book, call 970-667-7810.

To reserve a seat on the bus, contact Janna Kincheloe at 605-394-2236 or janna.kincheloe@sdstate.edu.

prescriptions for seed and fertilizer placement. Scouting and input recommendations also fall on his plate.

"It works out well because my brother is a diesel mechanic, so he manages all the equipment," Gerlach explains.

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#### and his farm for deployment became his fulltime job.

He and his brother hired an agronomist and employee to take over Gerlach's farm responsibilities. "We made good plans.

When you have your life,

My brother and our employee were pushed for time to get 900 acres of winter wheat out of the field and a bunch of

Biofuel Switchgrass as a biofuel

crop is likely to get its start on former CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) acreage, or other marginal land not suitable for corn production.

"As you can guess, switchgrass probably most closely competes with pasture," Jacobs said.

Another significant challenge is that growing switchgrass requires a considerable time obligation. This is not a crop to put in an annual rotation schedule. It takes years to develop a stand of switchgrass with the optimal biomass for biofuel use.

numerous societal and environmental benefits, these are difficult to quantify and are just not as dominant in the farm management equation as profit potential, explained

Chat Hart, crops market specialist at Iowa State. "When dealing with the producers in the countryside, they deal with hard dollars and cents," he said. "If switchgrass is going to be grown on some of the land out there, it's got to not only be able to compete but also have some sort of profitability.'

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Iowa State University are developing a management tool for producers who are interested in growing switchgrass as a biofuel crop.

Although switchgrass does start producing its first year of growth, there are costs to transitioning the land use. Activities – such as mowing brush, disking, growing an herbicide-tolerant the previous year, growing a winter cover crop, drilling switchgrass seed, applying fertilizer, testing the soil and applying herbicide — all add

up. "Weed control is a big need the first couple years of transitioning to switchgrass,' he said

Significant returns on switchgrass begin in the third year of growth, growing steadily through the tenth

year, Hart said. The first year of production tops off at 1.5 to 2.5 tons per acre, compared with the second year of production at 3 to 4 tons per acre. Full production capacity is at 4 to 6 tons per acre.

The current price is \$80 per ton.

Despite the challenges of developing a new industry for switchgrass for biofuel production, there is great potential for this industry, Jacobs said. There is plenty on the world fuels scene driving the need for more efficient ethanol production, primarily oil prices, the renewable fuels standard and predictions for global fuel use by an exponential population growth coupled with more developed countries.

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#### "Switchgrass is a 10-year commitment," Jacobs said. Many producers, not surprisingly, balk at this. Even though switchgrass has