

## Commentary 4-H, Career Exploration: Starting Them Young

BY RITA BRHEL  
P&D Correspondent

My oldest daughter has finished her first year in 4-H, as of the 4-H Achievement event last weekend. I am taking this opportunity to explore what projects she wants to add on next year and plan to get her and her sister enrolled for 2016 before the busy holiday season begins in a couple weeks.



Rita BRHEL

My daughters are fourth-generation 4-H members in my side of the family. While some families are geared more toward athletics or dance, my family has a definite forte in 4-H. It fits well with our family value of education. I'm a lifelong learner, and while I may have been born with a natural curiosity, I'm certain that it was because of my family's year-round involvement in 4-H, with its myriad project and activity choices, that I developed an absolute love of learning and a variety of interests.

Because I was one of those kids who would say "yes" to everything, from band and choir to basketball, Girl Scouts and foreign language club, my mom decided early on that there had to be some strategy to guiding me toward an eventual career. 4-H was it. It was a program where I could have a lot of fun learning about all different kinds of career areas, and 4-H is where I found a hidden talent for writing.

Many of the 4-H exhibits at the county fair include essays, and the end-of-the-year 4-H portfolio features an essay to wrap up the year's happenings, but what really developed my researching skills for an involved article were essay contests. My first, which I competed in for four years starting at age 10 until I placed at the national level, was the American Beekeeping Federation's 4-H essay contest. I am not a beekeeper, and I didn't have an interest in becoming a beekeeper at the time, but the essay contest not only developed my writing skills at an early age but also set me up for a lifetime of appreciation for the pollinator - which is probably reflected in the number of articles I write about involving bees, from Colony Collapse Disorder and zombes to combining pollinator habitat and livestock-grazing pastures.

My mom did a lot of planning with my 4-H experience. She was the one who learned about the essay contests, and the one who encouraged me to explore projects through the written word. I remember her setting up a job-shadowing experience at a local veterinary clinic that culminated in me actually giving hands-on help during the castration process of one of our farm cats. I then wrote up an essay about the experience as a fair exhibit. I remember learning to write speeches and presentations, turning almost every fair exhibit into an essay, and writing up club news for the local newspapers. Through my mom's guidance and 4-H opportunities, I was set up early with a knowledge of just what I wanted to do with my life, professionally, and that gave me a lot of self-esteem early on, too.

Identifying a natural talent, giving it opportunity to grow into a skills set and providing a path to developing confidence in that ability - such a great combination to set a child up for life feeling confident about themselves. We all need at least one area in our lives where we feel good about ourselves. At the conclusion of one 4-H year and the beginning of the next, with my middle daughter also about to embark on her 4-H career, I am finding myself in my mom's shoes: helping my daughters explore their natural talents and interests through a youth development program that is exceptional in what it does. Even as young as 9 years old, I see my oldest daughter's natural talent for writing. And I see that my 8-year-old daughter does not have that interest in writing but is rather amazing in art. So I begin in finding projects and activities that both develop these talents but also allows them to work on areas in need of improvement, so as to become more well-rounded individuals. I am thankful to 4-H that we have access to a very affordable, family-centered program in order to do that.

# Outlook: El Niño Offers A Warm 2015-16 Winter Weather Forecast

BROOKINGS — Based on the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration Climate Prediction Center's outlook released this week, a strong El Niño continues to affect the U.S. as warmer than average temperatures are forecast for South Dakota and the northern states this coming winter season (December 2015 through February 2016).

"The current observations in the Pacific Ocean rank the current El Niño as the second or third strongest since 1950, and this is projected to have impacts on our wintertime climate in the U.S. El Niño is expected to reach its peak intensity in the next two to three months," said Laura Edwards, SDSU Extension Climate Field Specialist.

Across northeastern South Dakota in December, Edwards said there is a 50 percent likelihood of above average temperatures, with 33 percent chance of near average and 17 percent chance of below average temperatures. "The rest of the state is favored to have warmer than average temperatures, with slightly less likelihood in the month ahead," she said.

The precipitation forecast for December is leaning towards drier than average for the northern tier counties. The remainder of the state has equal chances of above, below or near average precipitation for the month.

Looking further ahead — through February — there continues to be an increased chance of warmer than average temperatures across all of the northern states, from coast to coast.

"This is consistent with a strong El Niño climate pattern that we have seen in the past, and many of the long-range computer climate models are forecasting that the

same will hold true in winter of 2015-16," said Dennis Todey, South Dakota State Climatologist & SDSU Extension Climate Specialist.

The precipitation forecast for the three months ahead sets South Dakota in between an area that is favored to be drier to our north and west, and wetter to our south

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LAURA EDWARDS

in Nebraska. "The last two winters with similar El Niño conditions were in 1982-83 and 1997-98. In both of those years, South Dakota wintertime precipitation was near to slightly below average," he said.

Todey added that it is possible that South Dakota could experience storm events which bring rain or snow to our state this winter.

"Particularly if we get a surge of moisture from the south or southwest," he said. "But it is also possible that many areas could have an open winter, with little to no snowcover for much of the season."

The implications of an open winter are both good and bad, Edwards explained. "Less snow cover could make winter wheat more susceptible to frost and freeze damage," she said. "The same situation could be positive for cattle and livestock operations who prefer drier conditions."

Currently, the risk of major spring flooding is low.

This is due to the fact that soils are not saturated and there is some capacity to take in rain and snowmelt this winter. Also, drier than average conditions are favored upstream along the Missouri and James Rivers, and some western tributaries as well.

Edwards and Todey explained that this dry pattern in the northern Rockies and the surrounding area is also consistent with El Niño impacts in the U.S.

## Grazing Residue: Having Your Cake And Eating It, Too

BROOKINGS — Integrating crop and livestock enterprises provides a competitive advantage to farmers and ranchers, said Warren Rusche, SDSU Extension Cow-Calf Field Specialist.

"Residue grazing is an example of how integrating crops and livestock results in a 'win-win,'" Rusche said. "Corn stalk grazing represents an opportunity to cut feed costs for ranchers, or serve as a source of supplemental income for crop farmers, without hurting yields next year."

He added that the increased acres of corn results in greater quantities of residue available for feed. "Because the land cost is charged to the crop enterprise, crop residues are much less costly than either summer pasture or harvested feeds," he said.

Rusche explained that crop residue grazing works extremely well for cows in mid-gestation. "Because cows will select the higher quality husks, leaves and any whole ears left in the field they should not require additional energy or protein supplementation as long as they are not forced to consume poor-quality portions of the plant, such as the stalk," he said.

Even cattle with greater nutrient requirements, such as growing calves or replacement heifers, Rusche said will perform well grazing stalks when provided supplemental protein. What about the effects of grazing corn stalks on next year's crop?

One of the barriers to greater use of corn stalk grazing is the belief in some circles that grazing stalks will reduce yield the next year resulting in less net income.

The University of Nebraska recently published the results of a 10-year study on the effects of grazing corn stalks in the fall on soybean yields the following year in a no-till system. In those studies, soybeans planted after corn stalks which were grazed in the fall yielded about 3 bushels more compared to ungrazed corn stalks. "The same pattern was shown in a one-year comparison at the SDSU Southeast Research Farm, although those differences were not statistically significant," Rusche said.

Another common concern is that grazing stalks will remove too much residue and greatly affect soil organic matter. "The long-term yield results from

Nebraska would suggest that this has not been a significant problem in that system, but it is possible to estimate the quantity removed compared to the amount of residue produced," he said.

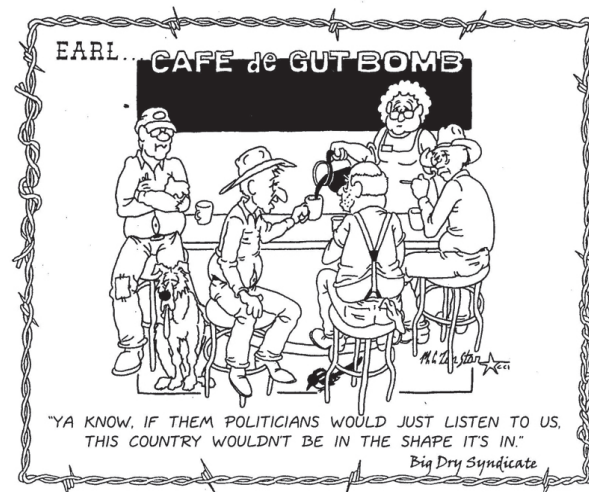
For every bushel of corn, there is approximately 45 pounds of residue. The husks and leaves represent about 16 pounds of that total. If a 1,400-pound cow consumes 2.5 percent of bodyweight per day, in 30 days she would eat about 1,050 pounds of husks and leaves.

However, not all of that organic matter leaves the field.

Forty to 50 percent of the husks and leaves are indigestible, meaning that of the 1,050 pounds consumed, about 400 pounds return to the field as manure for a net removal of 650 pounds.

A field that yields 150 bushels per acre will produce 6,750 pounds of total residue. In that case, the 650 pounds removed represents only about 10 percent of the total.

"Keep in mind that if the field is not grazed or tilled, the husks and leaves are more likely to be blown into the ditch or fenceline," he said.



## Grain Marketing Workshop In Hartington

HARTINGTON, Neb. — A Post-Harvest Grain Marketing Workshop will be offered Monday, Nov. 30, from 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. at Nissen Wines near Hartington, to assist grain producers and their business partners in creating a written post-harvest marketing plan that is right for them.

Nebraska Extension Educators will present location and commodity specific marketing information. Topics include developing a written marketing plan, and understanding basis and carrying charges. The workshop will feature the Marketing in a New Era simulator and Decide NOW grain marketing smartphone App.

The workshop is funded by the Nebraska Soybean Board, Nebraska Corn Board, North Central Extension Risk Management Education Center, USDA and Nebraska Extension Innovation Funding. The lunch is sponsored by the Bank of Hartington.

There is no fee to attend. To register, contact the Nebraska Extension Office at 402-254-6821 before 4 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 25. Pre-registration is required so that adequate materials and lunch can be provided. It is helpful if both the producer and business partners can attend together. Everyone is welcome.

For more information or assistance, contact Jim Jansen, Nebraska Extension Educator, 402-254-6821, e-mail jjansen4@unl.edu.

## SD Soil Health Coalition Meeting Slated

PIERRE — The first meeting of the new South Dakota Soil Health Coalition (SDSHC) is set for Monday, Nov. 30, at 4:30 p.m. in Amphitheatre 2 in the Ramkota Hotel and Convention Center, Pierre. No pre-registration is required for this public event. Membership forms will be available at the door.

Supported by many organizations and entities, the new farmer/rancher-led coalition is focusing on bettering the health of South Dakota soils. This first meeting will include reports on events and projects of the first few months of the Coalition being organized, as well as, previews of upcoming activities.

"Through improved soil health, benefits can be seen for production agriculture, but more importantly, there are benefits for society as a whole," says Doug Sieck, Chair, SD Soil Health Coalition, Selby. "Regardless of your occupation, we all have a stake in keeping our resources healthy and productive. We invite everyone to attend, learn, and offer their suggestions for the future for improving the health of our precious soils."

By design, the SDSHC event is scheduled in conjunction with the South Dakota Ag Horizons Conference and the South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts Convention (SDACD), all being held at the Ramkota in Pierre. For Ag Horizons and SDACD event information, visit the "events tab" at [www.sdconservation.org](http://www.sdconservation.org).

For information about the new Soil Health Coalition, visit [www.sdssoilhealth.org](http://www.sdssoilhealth.org) or email: [sdssoilhealth@gmail.com](mailto:sdssoilhealth@gmail.com).

## Farm Estate Planning Workshop Dec. 2

HARTINGTON, Neb. — A free workshop on business succession and estate planning for farm and ranch owners, families, dairy producers and beginners will be held in Hartington, Dec. 2, at the Knights of Columbus Hall from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Lunch will be provided.

Register prior to attending by calling the Cedar County Extension office 402-254-6821 by Dec. 1.

The workshop is about farm and ranch business succession, family estate planning and beginning farmer programs. It is intended to be useful for established farm and ranch owners, for their successors, and for beginners.

Topics include: the stages of succession planning, contribution & compensation, balancing the interests of on-farm and off-farm heirs; the importance of communication, setting goals, analyzing cash flow, and balancing intergenerational expectations and needs; beginning farmer loan and tax credit programs; the use of trusts, wills, life estate deeds and business entities (such as the limited liability company) in family estate and business succession planning; buy-sell agreements, asset protection, taxation (federal transfer taxes, Nebraska inheritance tax, basis adjustment) and essential estate documents.

This workshop is made possible by the Nebraska Network for Beginning Farmers & Ranchers, the Farm and Ranch Project of Legal Aid of Nebraska, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture's Next Gen, University of Nebraska Extension Office Cedar County and a meal will be sponsored by the Nebraska State Dairy Association.

## SDCA Convention & Trade Show Dec. 8-10

PIERRE — Register now for the 67th annual South Dakota Cattlemen's Association (SDCA) Convention and Trade Show scheduled for Dec. 8-10 at the Ramkota in Pierre.

This year's lineup of educational and entertaining speakers will share insights on everything from creating value-added feeder calves to advocating for agriculture and market and climate

outlooks. According to Jodie Anderson, executive director for the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association, "Investing a small amount of time this winter in Pierre may pay big dividends for your family farm and ranch. Our speakers will share how the industry is addressing the latest trends and issues and our trade show vendors will showcase technology

and tools to make your work easier. In addition, there will be plenty of fun and networking opportunities with your friends and neighbors, and we will set SDCA's course for 2016."

Full details, including registration and hotel information, are available on SDCA's website at [www.sd cattlemen.org](http://www.sd cattlemen.org) or call the office at 605-945-2333.



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