

ANRE Spring Newsletter

Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension

February/March 2016



University of Wisconsin-Extension

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The 2015 growing season provided a few challenges. El Niño was the buzz. Crops were planted in a timely fashion, then in mid-June we got rain, which delayed forage harvest. Then dryer weather and great growing conditions, overall soybean yields were near records. Corn was set back from wet conditions early, but overall there were respectable yields a result of an extended growing season into October. The overall challenge is low commodity prices.

What did we learn during the 2015 growing season?

1. High yields can contribute to low commodity prices.
2. Marketing crops is a twelve month a year job.
3. When planting begins have a market for your crop.
4. A crop plan or market plan may change during the season.

So, what weather conditions can we expect during the 2016 growing season? Will it be El Niño or La Nina? I wish I had a crystal ball to help everyone. Each growing season will have quirks.

So, how should I plan for the 2016 growing season? I would focus on the normal. The weather extremes can occur during any growing season. A good example is the excessive rainfall this December.

So, for 2016 growing season plan on a normal year, but consider the following points:

1. Develop a crop budget to determine your cost of production. You cannot sell a crop unless you know your cost of production, even if it is fed to livestock on your farm. Once you have a cost of production then start marketing the crop. Remember this includes forage crops.
2. Select seed hybrids and varieties that match your management goals along with your soils and environment. Don't select seed based on what might happen. Select seed based on yield information and your management. If you had a problem in 2015, consider selecting a hybrid or variety that has a resistance to a disease or insect or alter your management to reduce the risk of repeating the problem.
3. Apply fertilizer (commercial products or livestock manure) required by the growing crop from your current soil test information, crops require nutrients to grow and yield. Don't expect yields if nutrients are not supplied. Over application of fertilizer doesn't guarantee increased yields. Believe it or not over application can reduce yields. Remember, environment "Mother Nature" will impact yields to a greater degree than additional fertilizer.
4. Scout fields during the growing season and when margins are tight apply a pest control or additional fertilizer only when required to prevent an economical loss in crop yield.

Remember to manage what can be managed on your farm. You cannot manage the weather.

I hope that 2016 is a normal weather year, but every year has uncertainty. If you have questions related to crop planning or crop budgets please call the Pierce County UW-Extension office at 715-273-6781 or email amy.vandebrake@ces.uwex.edu

Amy VanDeBrake,
Pierce County Agricultural Educator

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Herbicide Resistance and Weed Management Meeting

Monday, February 29, 2016

Resistant weed populations have been a concern in Wisconsin and across the Midwest. While each farm has their own unique weed biology, common waterhemp (*Amaranthus rudis* Sauer) is an increasing threat to current agricultural production systems here in Pierce County. Pierce County is one of two counties in the state of Wisconsin with confirmed Glyphosate resistances waterhemp. On Monday, February 29th, 2016, come hear Dr. Mark Renz, UW-Extension Weed Specialist and Dan Smith, UW-Extension Outreach specialist for the Nutrient and Pest Management Program, as they will be presenting on weed biology and herbicide resistance, strategies, open discussion on troublesome weeds in no till systems and strategies for terminating cover crops in diverse cropping systems. This meeting will take place in the Seyforth Building located on the Pierce County Fairgrounds, 364 North Maple St, Ellsworth, WI 54011 starting at 12:30 p.m. There will be free educational resources available related to herbicide resistance and terminating cover crops. For more information please contact the Pierce County UW-Extension office at 715-273-6781.



Speakers include:

Dr. Mark Renz, UW– Extension Weed Specialist

Dan Smith, UW– Extension Outreach Specialist for the Nutrient and Pest Management Program

Horse Creek Watershed Meeting

Friday, March 11, 2016

On Friday, March 11th, 2016 Gabe Brown will be speaking at the Horse Creek Watershed Meeting located at Carlson Farm, 134 220th St., Star Prairie, WI. Gabe Brown is a No Till and cover crop pioneer focused on maximum outputs from minimal inputs in a Northern Climate. The Brown family holistically integrates their grazing and no-till cropping

system, which includes a wide variety of cash crops along with multi-species cover crops and all natural, grass-fed beef, poultry and sheep. This diversity and integration has regenerated the natural resources on the family ranch without the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides or fungicides. Join the horse creek watershed council for this special opportunity

to learn how he gets more from less while regenerating natural resources. Local farmer response panel to follow. This program starts at 10:00 a.m. with FREE LUNCH to follow. Plan to arrive early as space is limited. You must register with Julia Olmstead by email; Julia.olmstead@ces.uwex.edu.

Pesticide Applicator Training

Tuesday, March 15th

It is not too late for those of you who are interested in becoming certified as a private pesticide applicator. On Tuesday, March 15th, 2016 Pierce and St. Croix County UW-Extension Offices will be offering our third and final Pesticide Applicator Training. The training will be held at the Dairy Learning Center, UWRF Mann Valley Farm in River Falls, WI. The Class will start promptly at 10:00 a.m. Private Pesticide Applicator Training is designed for those individuals engaged in agriculture and who are planning to purchase restricted use pesticides. Individuals can be certified in three categories: General Farming, Fruit Crops, and Greenhouse & Nursery. If you are interested in attending this training, materials should be picked up at least a week before to prepare for the written exam. Individuals are asked to pre-register and pick up materials at their local UW-Extension Office. Cost is \$35 per person. For more information about Private PAT go to www.ipcm.wisc.edu/pat or if you have additional questions please contract the Pierce County UW-Extension Office at 715-273-6781.

Poultry For Beginners

Tuesday, March 22nd, 2016

The Pierce and St. Croix County UW-Extension Offices are hosting a poultry for beginners and biosecurity workshop. Our poultry producers within Pierce and St. Croix Counties have nearly doubled since 2014 to 260 registered poultry premises. With a growing industry and marketability, poultry production numbers are expected to continue growing through 2016. Dr. Ron Kean, poultry specialist and animal science faculty member at UW-Madison will be on hand to share his expertise on starting your own small poultry flock. If you have thought about adding chickens-either broilers or layers to your farm operation, plan to attend this

evening class to learn more before you start a flock of your own. There will also be an update on Avian Influenza in Wisconsin and the Upper Midwest. With viral diseases on the forefront for many backyard producers the importance of biosecurity and disease prevention will remain prevalent. Ron will provide strategies and other biosecurity methods. This event educational opportunity will take place on **Tuesday, March 22nd, from 6:00 p.m.– 8:00 p.m. at the Ag Service & Education Center in Baldwin.** There is a \$5.00 registration fee. To register for this event call 715-531-1930 or email amy.vandebrake@ces.uwex.edu

UW-Extension Cattle Feeders Workshop

Wednesday, March 9th, 2016

The University of Wisconsin-Extension will be hosting a Cattle Feeders Workshop on the evening of **Wednesday, March 9th, at the Ag Service & Education Center located at 1960 8th Ave, Baldwin.** Cattle feeders have witnessed record high feeder and finished cattle prices grow, and now decline in recent months. Continued volatility in the grain markets may present opportunities for grain growers to look at feeding cattle as an alternative way to market their crop. Registration begins at 6:15 pm, with the program at 6:30 pm. There is a fee is \$5.00/person. Please pre-register by contacting the St. Croix County Extension Office at 715-531-1930.

This year's program is scheduled to cover:

- **Dr. Brenda Boetel**, UW-Extension Livestock and Grain Marketing Specialist, will present a market outlook on feed and cattle prices for 2016.
- **Bill Halfman**, UW-Extension Monroe County will present an update on feeding trial results from the Lancaster Research station.
- **Halfman & Ryan Sterry**, UW-Extension St. Croix, will provide an update on calculated Holstein steer yardage costs and tools to calculate your own.

Pierce County Farmland Cash Rent Study

Pierce County Farmers will spend nearly \$10.5 million in 2016 on 69,000 acres of rented cropland (2016 estimate derived from most recent census). As a percentage of all county cropland, 38 percent is rented. The Pierce County UW-Extension Office annually receives over 300 inquiries about cropland rental rates. This study is intended to provide information for landlords and tenants who negotiate leases. In January 2016 566 landlords and tenants were randomly selected and sent a mail

questionnaire. This sample consisted of 265 parcels and represented 16 of the 17 Pierce County Towns. The overall response rate to the survey was 45 percent. Among the respondents, 42% were tenants, 38% were landlords and 20% identified both roles. To access the full Pierce County Land Rent Summary contact the Pierce County UW-Extension office or view our web page <http://pierce.uwex.edu/agriculture/>, click on "Crops" under Agricultural Areas of Interest.

Strategies to Consider with Tight Margins

Extension Clark County Crops & Soils Agent

With decreasing grain prices, how can I produce a profitable crop? The decrease in the grain market will have farm managers “scrambling” to remain profitable in 2016. With the past market prices, many planted, harvested, and sold crops without much thought to cost of production or marketing. Let’s review some basic steps to provide a profit on your farm.

Soil test

- For ~\$1.50 per acre this may be one of the least cost management tool available, yet it at times is the least considered. A soil test will provide a snapshot of available crop nutrients and recommendations for the crops you have selected.
- Remember, soil is alive, dynamic, and in some state of flux. View soil as your savings bank which will provide and store nutrients for your growing crop.
- Cover the basics first (pH, macronutrients), then review secondary and micronutrients. Remember, correcting pH will provide a greater amount of available nutrients from the soil nutrient bank. If a soil test is below optimum levels, apply fertilizer at crop removal to reduce fertilizer inputs, if the soil test is above an optimum level little additional fertilizer may be required by the crop.

Account for your “on farm” nutrients

- Livestock manure and legume credits are the on farm nutrients. Livestock manure should be applied to fields that will have the greatest response from the fertilizer application (low or optimum nutrient levels). Remember manure is a fertilizer that contributes plant nutrients to the soil nutrient bank and become available to the crop. It will reduce purchased fertilizer and allow sustainability of the farm.

Complete a crop budget

- A crop budget including cost of inputs, farm yields and a local selling price for your crop will be required.

Farm managers must know their cost of production to establish a market price to sell their crop. UW-Extension has a number of spreadsheets or factsheets to assist farm managers in developing a budget.

Market crop or look for an alternative crop or markets

- Marketing a crop can be complex or simple. If you have a livestock enterprise the majority of the grain and forage will be marketed through livestock products sold off the farm at a higher price compared to the current cash market.
- Developing a marketing plan for grain would be the next consideration. A grain marketing plan is developed to capture additional income from grain sales during the year. Successful grain marketing will require an understanding of markets and resist fear/panic sales during the year. The goal of a plan is to capture additional income during the year by following some strict guidelines and/or incorporating risk management tools to return greater income from the grain you produce. To develop a marketing plan you must know your cost of production.
- Alternative crops may be another consideration, remember you must have a market for an alternative crop before you consider planting the crop.

Remember, you can’t manage the environment. You can only manage what is measured. Year after year management decisions are made as a result of the previous year’s environment. Plan for what is normal in your area. Ask questions of your agronomy professionals, UW-Extension agents, and UW specialists and make decisions from non-biased information that has research evidence.

Hop Production for the Wisconsin Craft Brew Industry 7th Annual Seminar

The 7th Annual Conference will take place on March 12, 2016 at the Pearl Street Brewery in La Crosse, WI. Topics will be focused on hop production and quality. All growers and brewers are welcome. We will not spend time on beginning grower topics, but beginning hop producer packets will be available while supplies last. With a variety of topic ranging from plant pathology, herbicides, disease update and what to look for to assessing where small growers fit. For more information and to access the registration materials please contact the Buffalo County Extension office at 608-685-6256 or go to their web page: <http://buffalo.uwex.edu/agriculture/barley-and-hops/>.

Through the University of Wisconsin– Extension, people of Wisconsin and beyond can access university resources and engage in learning, wherever they live and work. Fundamental to this mission are UW-Extension partnerships with the 26 UW campuses, the county and tribal governments, and other public and private organizations. Fulfilling the promise of the Wisconsin Idea, UW-Extension extends the boundaries of the university to the boundaries of the state and helps the university establish beneficial connections with all of its stakeholders.

Purpose to which we commit.... We teach, learn, lead and serve, connecting people with the university of Wisconsin, and engaging with them in transforming lives and communities

Vision of what we want to become... A thriving, well-known and sought-out educational resource that reflects the rich diversity of the state

Values we strive to live by... Community, Discovery, Inclusiveness, Relationships and Respect