Wow, the 79 degree temperature was nice yesterday! Too bad there is rain in the forecast for much of the week. It is still pretty sloppy and muddy across the county. We need a lot more dry days to make up for all the precipitation we received this winter and already this spring. Thank you to everyone who attended last week’s beef clinic. We had a full house who learned more about producing high quality beef. Dr. Lyda Garcia, OSU Extension Meat Specialist, gave a wonderful presentation. We have already scheduled Dr. Garcia for an August hands-on workshop where she will grade out and cut up a ½ beef carcass for producers to get a hands-on visual on improving meat quality and consumer satisfaction.

Speaking of satisfaction….on Sunday, I ran the 10 mile drop road race from Route 44/90 in Concord down to Fairport Harbor in Lake County. What was really great, besides that I survived, was that as I crossed the finish line, I was handed not only a bottle of water but also a bottle of Dairyman’s Chocolate milk. What a great thing to see! It was great to have Scott Higgins (American Dairy Council Mideast) speak at this year’s dairy banquet about all the cool dairy linkages that are happening but to see it happen at a large road race was outstanding. Have a good and safe week!

David Marrison, AG Educator

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Joe Bodnar Memorial Northern Classic Steer & Heifer Show to be held on this Saturday, April 18

The Ashtabula County Cattlemen’s Association will be sponsoring the 18th Annual Joe Bodnar Memorial Northern Classic Steer & Heifer Jackpot Show on Saturday, April 18 at the Ashtabula County Fairgrounds in Jefferson, Ohio. This good old fashion jackpot show will start promptly at noon.

The show is open to all youth under the age of 21 and will begin promptly at noon. An entry fee of $30 per head is required. Cash prizes will be awarded to individual class winners and to the Champion Steer, Reserve Champion Steer, Champion Heifer, and Reserve Champion Heifer. In addition to the open show, a Showmanship class and an Ashtabula County Class will be held. Local residents are encouraged to come out and watch this show. A registration flyer can be found at: http://go.osu.edu/ne-events. More information about this program can be obtained by calling the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008
ODA launches 2015 Ag is Cool! Contest

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) announced it will begin accepting entries for the 2015 “Agriculture is Cool!” Creative Expressions contest. Ohio children enrolled in school or home schooled during the 2014-2015 academic year have until June 5, 2015, to capture their personal interpretation of why Ohio agriculture is cool for their chance to win prizes including tickets to the Ohio State Fair.

“Ag is Cool!” entries, which can include an original video, photograph, drawing, or painting, will be judged in the following age categories. One winner from each age group and category will be chosen:

Grades K-2: Photography, Drawing or Painting
Grades 3-5: Video, Photography, Drawing or Painting
Grades 6-8: Video, Photography, Drawing or Painting
Grades 9-12: Video, Photography, Drawing or Painting

All entries will be judged by a panel that may include representatives from the Ohio Department of Agriculture, the Office of the Governor, the Ohio Expo Center, and professionals in the areas of video production, photography, drawing, painting and other visual arts. Judging will be based on the student’s visual representation of the “Ag is Cool!” theme, if it accurately reflects 21st Century agriculture, creativity and use of Ohio images, and quality of work. Award winners will be recognized by the Office of the Governor and other state officials at the Ohio State Fair on July 29, 2015.

For additional information about the contest, a complete copy of the rules and entry forms visit [http://www.agri.ohio.gov/AgIsCool/](http://www.agri.ohio.gov/AgIsCool/) or call 614-752-9817.

Bioproducts & Biofuels Workshop to be held on Tuesday, April 21 in Ashtabula County
OSU Extension through a partnership with two national grant projects will be offering a Bioproducts & Biofuels Workshop on Tuesday, April 21, 2015 from 10:00 am to 5:30 p.m. in Jefferson, Ohio at the Ashtabula County Extension office located at 30 Wall Street, Jefferson, Ohio.

This workshop will help agricultural industry personnel and interested producers to learn more about growing crops for fuel or commercial products. The focus is to provide practical knowledge, teaching materials, and assessment tools to assist producers in shifting to feedstock production for energy and bio-based products. One focus is on using “marginal lands” which are typically not ideal for growing grain or forage crops.

Session topics for this workshop include: Sustainable Bioenergy Cropping Systems; Switchgrass, Miscanthus and Other Perennial Grasses for Ethanol; Bio-products from Miscanthus; High Value Bio-based Products (Fuels, Chemicals and more); Evaluating and Calculating Soil Organic Carbon; and Ecosystems services and analyzing Soil Quality (test kit). Featured Speakers for this training workshop are: Randall Reeder, Extension Ag. Engineer (retired), Ohio State University; Dennis Pennington, Michigan State University; Jon Griswold, Aloterra Energy; Katrina Cornish, Ohio State University; Dennis Hall, Ohio Bioproducts Innovation Center, OSU; Jerry Grigar, State Agronomist, USDA-NRCS, Michigan; and Rafiq Islam, Soil Scientist, Ohio State University

This workshop is being sponsored and funded by OSU Extension, NewBio and SunGrant. The registration cost for this program is $15 per person and is requested by April 14, 2015. The registration fee was reduced dramatically due the sponsorship of the NewBio and SunGrants. More information about this workshop, can be obtained by calling the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008. A programs flyer can be found at: [http://go.osu.edu/ne-events](http://go.osu.edu/ne-events)
Hops Production Tours on Tap at OSU
By Tracy Turner

Growers and others interested in learning more about the Ohio hops research at The Ohio State University can attend tours of its hop fields in both Piketon and Wooster. The “Hops Production to Enhance Economic Opportunities for Farmers and Brewers” project is offering early stage growers, advanced growers and anyone else interested in hops production an opportunity to tour the hop research trials.

Participants can learn basic information on how to get started in hops production as well as what resources may be available to help growers, said Charissa McGlothin, program assistant with South Centers. The tours will feature basic information on the ins and outs of hops production, including trellis construction, drip irrigation and how to evaluate which variety of hops growers are interested in producing, McGlothin said. The tours will also feature discussions on hop yard construction, establishment cost, bine training, irrigation, variety selection and fertilization.

The hops tours are from 10 a.m. to noon on first Fridays of May, June, September, October and November, she said. Participants will get to see an overview of the research conducted at the center and a tour of the Piketon facilities. The Wooster tours will also be offered at the OARDC Horticultural Research Unit 2, 5082 Oil City Road. The Wooster tours are hosted by Mary Gardiner, an Ohio State entomologist and led by Chelsea Smith, an Ohio State entomology research assistant. The South Centers tours are hosted by Brad Bergeford, an Ohio State Extension Educator, and assisted by Thom Harker, an Ohio State horticulture research assistant.

Interested parties must register by the Wednesday before the tour by contacting McGlothin at 740-289-2071, ext. 132, or mcglothin.4@osu.edu. Registration is $15 per family or farm.

Wheat Management by Growth Stage
By Laura Lindsey, Pierce Paul, Ed Lentz, & Mark Loux

The winter wheat crop is greening up and as such growers will need to pay attention to crop growth stage in order to make adequate management decisions. Wheat growth stage identification is critical for effective timing of fungicide, insecticide, herbicide, and fertilizer applications. Hence, crop growth staging is extremely important, since failure to correctly identify these stages may lead to inadequate timing of applications, which may result in violation of pesticide label restrictions (products being applied off label), inferior efficacy or product performance, and injury to the crop. In addition, effective and timely pesticide applications and pest and disease management are extremely important for profitable wheat production as they all affect the number of tillers/heads produced per acre, seeds produced per head, and seed size. These all add up to higher grain yields and excellent test weights.

If you have not done so already (and you probably haven’t due to the excessive rainfall...), now is the time to check fields in order to identify crop growth stage. Currently, most of the wheat in Ohio is between the green-up and erect stem stages (Feekes 2-5) of development and will likely begin jointing (Feekes 6) within the next 7-10 days as the weather continues to warm up.

**Feekes Growth Stage 2-5 (tillering, green-up and erect growth).** Tillering (the production of side shoots) usually occurs in the fall and early spring. For most of the early planted fields, particularly those in the southern half of the state, tillering is now complete (Feekes 3) and the wheat is either at or approaching the erect stem stage (Feekes 4) of development. This is the ideal stage for evaluating your wheat stand, begin scouting for insects and weeds, top-dressing nitrogen, and finishing-up herbicide application. For those late-planted or northern fields that are still greening-up (not yet at the Feekes 3 growth stage), a nitrogen application at this time will likely increase tillering, and consequently, the number of head produced per foot of row. However, for those fields at the Feekes 4-5 growth stage, nitrogen application will have very little effect on tiller development but will affect the number of seeds
produced per head and seed size. To read more about evaluating wheat stands see this C.O.R.N. newsletter article from a couple of weeks ago: http://corn.osu.edu/newsletters/2015/2015-06/wheat-is-starting-to-green-up.

**Feekes Growth Stage 6 (first node visible).** This growth stage can be identified by examining the large tillers in the fields for the presence of the first node. Pull multiple large tillers, strip down the lower leaves and leaf sheaths on the stem, and check for the presence of the first node at the base of the stem. If this node is visible (or can be felt), your wheat is at jointing (growth stage 6). At growth stage 6, the node is above the soil line and appears as a slightly swollen area of a slightly different shade of green from the rest of the stem. If the node is not yet visible, the wheat is probably at Feekes growth stage 5. Feekes growth stage 6 usually occurs mid- to late April.

Growth stage 6 signals the beginning of stem elongation. Nitrogen should be applied by this time to maximize yield. This is also the growth stage when some herbicides can no longer be applied. For instance, herbicides such as 2,4-D, Banvel, or MCPA should not be applied after Feekes growth stage 6.0, as these materials can be translocated into the developing spike, causing sterility or distortion. Huskie and products containing thifensulfuron and thifensulfuron can be applied through Feekes stage 8, and bromoxynil can be applied until stage 9. Keep in mind that the thifensulfuron/thifensulfuron-containing products such as Harmony Xtra should generally be mixed with dicamba, 2,4-D or MCPA to broaden the spectrum of control, which affects how late they can be applied. The chart on page 143 of the 2015 Weed Control Guide provides a snapshot of growth stage information. For more on wheat growth stage identification visit: http://ohioline.osu.edu/agf-fact/pdf/0126.pdf

You should also begin scouting for early season diseases such as Septoria and powdery mildew. However, we do not recommend foliar fungicide application this early in the season. Although some producers may be interested in tank-mixing foliar fungicides with nitrogen or herbicides, our data shows that under conditions in Ohio fungicide applications at or before jointing do not provide adequate protection of the flag leaf and the heads. Keep reading the C.O.R.N. newsletter for more updates on the progress of the wheat crop and management tips and guidelines.

**Utilize the K.I.S.S. Method for Beef Cattle Calving & Breeding Season**

By John F. Grimes, OSU Extension Beef Coordinator

The acronym used in the title of this article can mean a couple of different things depending on your perspective. Most of us have probably heard the less politically correct version of the K.I.S.S. acronym: "Keep It Simple, Stupid!" However, when referring to the current beef cattle calving season and imminent breeding season, I prefer to use this version of K.I.S.S.: "Keep It Short and Sweet!"

There can be compelling arguments to make when choosing the best calving season for a particular operation. It is my experience that there is no single best choice for a calving season for all operations. Each operation is unique as to the assets available to devote to the cattle operation including labor, facilities, feedstuffs, etc. Ultimately, the selection of your particular calving season should be determined by the likelihood of achieving the highest conception rates and calf crop percentage weaned based on your available resources.

Regardless of when you calve, there is little justification for a lengthy breeding season. If you are currently involved in a longer breeding season, there are valid economic and management reasons to make a change. Research published by researchers at Oklahoma State University and Texas A & M found a positive relationship between number of days of the breeding season and the production cost per hundredweight of calf weaned. They also reported a negative relationship between number of days of the breeding season and pounds of calf weaned per cow per year.

A 60 day breeding season is an ideal goal to shoot for and it is hard to justify any calving season longer than 90 days. Shortening a calving season requires a little discipline, a commitment to some basic facilities, some rigid culling, and a
willingness to use technology and other resources available. It may be impractical to move to a 60 - 90 day calving window in one year but there is no time like the present to start working towards this positive change.

Nearly every management decision associated with the cow herd is simplified with a shorter calving season. Herd health, nutritional, and reproductive management are much easier when all cows are in a similar stage of production. Restricting the breeding season to 60 to 90 days will produce a more uniform calf crop which enhances marketing opportunities. It is easier to match up your forage supply with the nutritional demands of your herd when all animals are in a similar production cycle. Vaccination programs are more effective when animals in the breeding herd are in a similar reproductive status.

A more concentrated calving season is important for the smaller or part-time producers who have major time restrictions in their daily lives. I don't know of any producer that enjoys the stress and worry of calving season over an extended period of time. This is especially true if calving season comes during inclement weather and you are away from the farm for long stretches of time during an average day.

Over the years I have heard many excuses for why producers have lengthy or even year-round calving. One excuse frequently heard relates to the lack of facilities to maintain herd bulls away from the cow herd for any length of time. I personally believe a facility to maintain a herd bull separate from the cows should be a requirement for any cow-calf operation. These facilities can be simple yet secure and not require a large financial commitment from the producer. This simple management step would go a long way towards shortening the length of the calving season across the state.

Dr. Les Anderson, Beef Extension Specialist, University of Kentucky and a frequent contributor to the Ohio BEEF Cattle letter, reminds us that there are several heat synchronization programs available to producers. These tools do not have to be used exclusively in artificial insemination programs and can improve conception rates in herds using natural service sires.

One method to improve reproductive performance of your cow herd is to synchronize estrus prior to bull turn out. Studies conducted at UK have demonstrated that treatment of cows with a CIDR device for 7 days before natural service can have increase pregnancy rate 5-15% and can increase the proportion of cows that calve in the first 30 days of the breeding season. Anderson's data indicates that the CIDR devices only need to be inserted in cows that are likely to have trouble conceiving early in a breeding season; late-calvers and two-year old cows. By "targeting" our reproductive management to these cows, one can improve the whole herd performance and limit our input costs.

A shorter calving season will eventually lead to greater efficiencies in reproduction rates. Palpate shortly after the conclusion of the breeding season and cull heifers and cows that don't conceive within your given calving season and don't look back. Keep daughters of the cows that get bred early each calving season. If necessary, buy bred females that calve within your desired window to replace the open females. Implementation of these practices will certainly improve your herd's reproductive performance over time.

Given the current prices seen in today's cattle markets, culling females with poor reproductive performance should not be a difficult decision. Open yearling heifers can be sold as heavy feeder cattle or fed a finishing ration for a short period and sold as market heifers. Prices for feeder and market cattle remain historically very favorable. Open cows are selling at a premium price compared to historic levels so take advantage of this marketing opportunity.

You may slip below your targeted herd size through aggressive culling. I will contend that a producer can manage through this issue. Replace open females or females conceiving outside of a 60-90 day calving season window with bred heifers or young cows that fit your shortened calving season. While quality replacement females may be selling
at a higher price than previous years, the value of a shortened calving window with simplified management and improved marketing possibilities will more than compensate for the added expense of purchased replacement females.

I encourage you to adopt the "K.I.S.S." philosophy as you approach the 2015 breeding season and the resulting 2016 calving season.

**Improving Tractor Ride Comfort**
By: Dewey Mann, Research Associate

As the ground temperature begins to warm up, preparations for spring planting are well underway. By the time this article goes to press, many farming operations will have already completed maintenance checks on spring planting equipment; meters calibrated, bearings and chains (if equipped) lubricated, planter unit leveled, change oil in the planter tractor, etc. Typically, ‘tire inflation pressure’ only makes the maintenance checklist if the operator has a planter with a ground drive system*. Sure, we might ‘check’ the tire pressure on the planting tractor, but where does our target inflation number come from? Possibly an inflation pressure we have used for years (25PSI), or a number we have heard thrown around the coffee shop. Proper tire inflation pressure can increase productivity, fuel efficiency, and yes, even ride comfort.

Common means of suspension on agricultural tractors include (from operator to the ground): seat, cab, axle, and tire suspension. Aside from upgrading to a newer model tractor, the quickest method for influencing ride comfort is to adjust tire inflation pressure (tire suspension). Consulting tire load and inflation tables, from the tire manufacturer, is likely the best source for determining the proper tire inflation pressure.

A row crop tractor equipped with 480/80R42 duals (4 tires across the rear axle), and an axle weight of 16,000lbs (4,000lbs per tire), the proper tire inflation pressure would be 12PSI (pounds per square inch). The same concepts also apply for utility or lawn and garden tractors. If a lawn and garden tractor had a rear axle load of 1200lbs (600lbs per tire), and was equipped with 21x8.00-10 NHS tires, the recommended inflation pressure would be 10PSI.

ALWAYS consult the tire load and inflation pressure tables, and communicate with your local tire dealer to ensure the proper inflation pressures are being used; and they the tire manufacturer will guarantee the warranty at the selected inflation pressure.

*For those not familiar with planting equipment, a ground drive planter transfers power from a ground wheel, through a drive shaft to the planter transmission; if the diameter of the ground drive tire is altered (inflation pressure too high or too low), the planter rate will also be altered (underseeding, or overseeding). Modern planting systems are utilizing hydraulic or electric powered drive systems. Example load and inflation scenarios referenced using: [http://www.firestoneag.com/en/tire-info/load-inflation-tables/default.aspx](http://www.firestoneag.com/en/tire-info/load-inflation-tables/default.aspx)

Dewey Mann, research associate for agricultural safety and health, and lecturer for agricultural systems management, can be reached at (614) 292-1952 or [mann.309@osu.edu](mailto:mann.309@osu.edu).

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**7 Agronomic Crop Research Experience (ACRE) Summer Interns Sought for Ohio**

OSU Extension State Specialists are starting a new summer program in 2015 aimed at providing a rich training experience to undergraduate students in a wide diversity of disciplines related to agronomic crop research. These Agronomic Crop Research Experience (ACRE) Interns will support on-farm research throughout the state, by being placed in strategic locations or hubs of on-farm research. **We are excited that one of the summer interns will be based out of the Ashtabula County Extension office for and will work in Ashtabula, Trumbull & Geauga**
The primary responsibilities of the ACREs will be to assist with crop scouting, sample collection, field data collection, laboratory analysis, data entry, field plot maintenance and crop reporting. Other activities related to research, extension and outreach are also likely. The ACRE program will last approximately 12 weeks, allowing some limited flexibility of the student to take a week off for vacation. A mandatory 2-3 day training will occur in Wooster starting on May 18 and the program will finish around August 14, 2015. College students interested in this program, should contact Steve Culman at culman.2@osu.edu. Applications are due by April 17th.

**Good Agricultural Practices Training to be held on May 6 in Ashtabula & Geauga Counties**

OSU Extension will be offering a training program on reducing microbial contamination on fruit and vegetable farms on May 6, 2015 at the Ashtabula and Geauga County Extension offices. The workshop will be offered at the Geauga County Extension Office located at 14269 Claridon-Troy Road in Burton, Ohio from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. and at the Ashtabula County Extension Office located at 39 Wall Street in Jefferson, Ohio from 6:00-9:00 p.m.

Food safety and good agricultural practices, or GAPs, for fruit and vegetable production are the focus of this workshop. In September 2014, the Food and Drug Administration released the proposed supplemental standards for the produce safety rule within the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). The FSMA produce safety rule encompasses known on-farm routes of contamination, such as: workers, animals, and manure. Whether or not a farm will be exempt from these rules, all growers are responsible for providing safe produce to their consumers.

Ohio State University Extension educators present the 3-hour programs. Participants will receive a recordkeeping binder and a certificate of participation as verification to customers that the grower received training in GAPs. Attendees won’t actually become “certified in GAPS” by taking the course. That certification comes only through having one of many possible farm audits conducted by USDA or 3rd party company. If you need to become GAPs Certified, find out what your buyer requires. Some may be satisfied with just a class on GAPs, others may require a completed farm food safety plan and audit. Many large grocery chains require their produce suppliers to have a farm food safety plan and audit. For small farms selling at stands and farmers’ markets, learning about GAPs at the OSU 3-hour course is a good way to stay competitive.

If you are interested in attending one of these GAPs training programs, please visit [www.producesafety.osu.edu/events](http://www.producesafety.osu.edu/events) to download a registration form under the respective event. Growers must register before April 29, 2015, as there is a 10-person minimum in order to proceed with the class. Registration is $20 per person, payable by cash or check, with checks made out to “Ohio State University.” The registration cost of $20 is greatly reduced thanks to a grant from the Ohio Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Program, which helps to cover some of the program costs. For more information or to download a registration form, visit [www.producesafety.osu.edu](http://www.producesafety.osu.edu) or call the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008.

**2015 Upcoming Extension Program**

The following programs have been scheduled for Northeast Ohio farmers this upcoming winter. Complete registration flyers can be found at: [http://ashtabula.osu.edu/program-areas/agriculture-and-natural-resources/upcoming-educational-programs-deadlines](http://ashtabula.osu.edu/program-areas/agriculture-and-natural-resources/upcoming-educational-programs-deadlines)

**2015 Joe Bodnar Memorial Northern Classic Steer & Heifer Show**

Saturday, April 18 at the Ashtabula County Fairgrounds

**Good Agricultural Practices Workshop**

May 6, 2015 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.
Trumbull County Fair
July 14-19, 2015

Ashtabula County Fair
August 11-16, 2015

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PLEASE SHARE...this newsletter with farmers or others who are interested in agricultural topics in Ashtabula & Trumbull Counties. Past issues can be located at: https://go.osu.edu/ag-news. Please tell your friends and neighbors to sign up for the list. CONTACT: marrison.2@osu.edu

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