While the weather may feel like spring it is still a Merry Christmas Week in Northeast, Ohio! Good news from Congress with the passage of a permanent Section 179 deduction for businesses purchasing equipment. This will make tax planning a lot easier without the uncertainty of this deduction from one year to the next. I think most farmers will be glad to see 2015 be in the rear view mirror due to the rollercoaster weather and low commodity prices. I hope each of you have a happy holiday season. Have a great holiday week!

David Marrison, AG Educator

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Section 179 Deduction Made Permanent in Budget Bill
Farmers who have been anxious about the status of Section 179 can now breathe easier. The year-end tax extender legislation cleared the U.S. House of Representatives (vote of 316-113); was approved by the Senate (vote of 65-33) and was signed into law by President Obama on December 18. This legislation will fund the government through September 2016.

One of the key provisions for farmers is to make Section 179 permanent at the $500,000 level which is an increase from the previous limit of $25,000. Once equipment purchases total $2 million, then the allowed Section 179 amount will start to phase-out dollar-for-dollar and no more will be allowed after $2.5 million. Additionally, the amount will be indexed to inflation in $10,000 increments. Starting with tax years beginning in 2016, air conditioning and furnace units will also qualify for Section 179.

The bill also extends the existing bonus depreciation for the purchase of new capital assets for another five years, at 50 percent for 2015-2017, 40 percent in 2018 and 30 percent in 2019. Also, if certain plants bearing fruit or nuts are planted before 2020, the farmer may take bonus depreciation on the costs of these plants. The remaining plant cost is then capitalized as part of pre-productive costs and then depreciated over 10 years when the plants reach commercial production.
Ashtabula County Ag Year in Review
By David Marrison

2015 was one of great turmoil and unrest across the globe. Terrorist attacks in Paris. A refugee crisis in Syria. A Russian airline is bombed. Turkey shoots down a Russian fighter jet. The San Bernardino shootings. Sadly, our world is becoming a more dangerous place. The year will also be remembered for deflate gate, the riots in Baltimore, Maryland & Ferguson, Missouri, Bruce/Caitlyn Jenner, scandals for the Bill Cosby and the Dugger families, the legalization of gay marriage by the Supreme Court, and a year of growing separation between our political leaders and the citizens who they are to be representing.

Agriculturally, it was a year of struggles for our nation’s farmers. Volatile weather and declining commodity prices reduced farm sector profits significantly. And by all predictions, it appears this trend will continue into 2016. As the year comes to a close, I would like to share my top five agricultural news stories for 2015:

**Roller Coaster Weather**- It seems as our weather always makes the top five ag news events for Ashtabula County and 2015 was no different! In fact, 2015 was one of the craziest weather years that I can ever remember. The winter months hit us with bone chilling temperatures and plenty of snow. We had a nice stretch of weather to start May but then from Memorial Day through the end of June, we were pummeled by excessive rain. Then to add insult to injury we were hit with drought conditions from late July through August. All this was then followed by one of the nicest falls on record which translated to one of the earliest completions of harvest in my life time. But, as expected, our yields suffered greatly from the rollercoaster weather. Not a good year for crop production here in Ashtabula County.

**Avian Influenza**- In 2014 the big animal health story was PEDv in hogs. In 2015, it was Avian Influenza (Avian Flu) in chickens and turkeys. Avian Flu is an extremely contagious virus that primarily affects domestic poultry and is believed to be spread by wild, migrating birds. A major outbreak of this disease hit the United States affecting more than 44 million birds from commercial and backyard flocks at close to 200 locations in 15 states in early 2015. Consumers saw higher egg prices and Thanksgiving turkeys as a result. As a preemptive measure to protect Ohio’s poultry industry, the Ohio Department of Agricultural canceled all poultry exhibits at fairs across the state including Ashtabula County. Thankfully, the disease was never found in Ohio and the ban has been lifted for 2016.

**Greg Johns Retirement**- In April, Greg Johns retired after 30 years of managing the OARDC Ashtabula Agricultural Research Station (AARS) in Kingsville, Ohio. The AARS was established in 1985 to allow researchers from Ohio State to conduct grape research in the heart of Ohio’s grape region. Over the years, OARDC has built trellised vineyards, two operations buildings, a cold storage facility and an automated weather station on the site. Greg has been the only manager of the research station in its history and our grape industry owes him a great deal for his dedication and work over the last three decades.

**Ashtabula County Barn Quilt Trail**- The Ashtabula County Barn Quilt Trail wanders across our beautiful county, taking in farms, orchards, wineries, historical sites and private property owners proud of their county, businesses and homes. The trail is Ashtabula County’s fastest growing tourism attraction. Launched in early 2014, it has already grown to include 67 “quilts.” At the end of July, barn quilts for 4-H, OSU Extension and FFA were dedicated at the Ashtabula County fairgrounds. These 3 three quilts join the Ashtabula County Farm Bureau Barn Quilt which
was dedicated in 2014. More information about the trail can be found at: http://www.barnquiltashtabulacounty.com/

Miscanthus Grass Turning into Containers and Oil Absorbents- 2015 was a very successful year for Aloterra Energy in Ashtabula County. Last winter, they had a successful harvest season due primarily to the switch to chopping the miscanthus like silage versus baling it like hay. The miscanthus is being processed into two major products. The first is as an absorbent. Aloterra Energy is making this product at a site in Andover and it is being used across eastern Ohio by oil & gas companies to clean up spills. The second use is being made into compostable food containers. In September, Aloterra Energy started producing bio-degradable food containers in a plant in Ashtabula Township. In the future, the facility will be able to produce over 10 million containers each year. Talk about an environmental impact. This facility is really impressive and will give a shot in the arm to our manufacturing sector and to conservation efforts across the country for many years to come.

I wish each of you the very best for 2016. A special thank you is extended to the 1,200 dedicated Ashtabula County farmers who work 365 days a year to provide safe and nutritious food for our county. To close, I would like to offer the following quote from Edith Lovejoy Pierce who stated, “We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year’s Day.” Ashtabula County, have a good and safe new year!

Northeast Ohio Phosphorus Task Force Seeking Farmers to Help Track Data for Pilot Project
By David Marrison

A newly formed committee is meeting in Ashtabula County titled the Northeast Ohio Phosphorus Task force. Thus far, the committee has met twice and we are trying to be proactive in response to Senate Bill 1 which has created new rules for manure and fertilizer application in Northwest Ohio. A concern of our committee is Senate Bill legislation could be made state wide which would severely hamper animal agriculture in NE Ohio. Our committee is looking for PROACTIVE research and education measures which our farm community can adopt to help improve water quality in both the Lake Erie and Ohio River watersheds.

Our first project is to track two items during the upcoming winter. We are asking farmers to monitor the weather & soil conditions which are present each day from January through the end of March. We are asking for cooperators to track two questions each day; these being: #1: Is your ground snow covered or frozen and #2: Is the top two inches of the soil saturated. According for the new legislation from Senate Bill 1, no manure or fertilizer can be applied (without incorporation) if these conditions exist in Northwest Ohio. We are completing this research to ascertain the percentage of days in our watersheds where it would be acceptable for manure or fertilizer application. Our goal is to have at least one cooperator from each township in Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake or Trumbull County to track this data for us.

Farmers interested in tracking should contact David Marrison at 440-576-9008 or marrison.2@osu.edu so that your name is added to our cooperator list. Thanks for helping us to be proactive.
2015 Agricultural Year in Review
http://ageconomists.com/2015/12/14/the-2015-agricultural-year-in-review/#more-153547

It’s hard to believe, but it’s nearly time to turn the calendar to 2016. That means it’s time for us to take a look back at the year that was 2015. At first blush it didn’t seem like 2015 was as notable as 2014, but as we got to thinking about it 2015 was pretty darn interesting. Here’s our top 20 agricultural stories of 2015.

The Farm Economy Takes another Step in the “Big Adjustment”
1) The down-trend continues. As 2015 began, farm sector profits continued to fall and the downturn actually starts to look a bit epic in nature, with declines of historic magnitudes. It’s a good thing we headed into this downturn in great financial shape. Further, while the year began with crop producers feeling the impact of lower prices, by the end of the year livestock prices had fallen as well and bankers started to talk about financial challenges in farm country. Most farm magazines seemed to run story after story about adjusting to falling incomes.

2) Farmland values start to decline. Last year we argued that 2014 would go down as the year when farmland prices stopped shooting higher. That certainly seemed true for 2015. The stories of all-time high prices are now few and far between and most data suggest that those prices are actually softening anywhere from a lot to a little. Our view is that fundamentals certainly don’t support prices or rents going up from here.

3) Credit demand up, but conditions stay strong so far. As incomes fell the demand for credit in agriculture increased substantially. The good news is that there appears to be plenty of credit available and on balance most borrowers remain in relatively good financial condition. Currently, delinquencies are low. Whether this holds going forward will likely be one of the top stories of 2016.

2015 Production
4) Acreage decisions. With budgets under much more scrutiny, and coming off record corn and soybean crops it was an open question as to how producers might allocate their acreages in 2015. Given price relationships that were pretty close to last year, most stood pat. As a result, corn acres fell slightly from 2014 to 88 million acres, leaving us well below the 2012 peak of 97 million acres. On the other hand soybeans were virtually unchanged from 2014’s record planting of 84 million acres.

5) Different areas produce top yields, but the end result is the same. Coming on the back of record production many wondered whether we could possibly grow another big crop in 2015, and the obvious answer was yes. Despite some early worries about too much rain, 2015 was apparently another very good year for corn and soybean production in the U.S. While areas in the Southern Corn Belt had tremendous production in 2014, this year it was the North’s turn. The end result was a national corn yield just below last year and a record large national soybean yield.

6) El Nino arrives. While El Nino was predicted but never came in 2014, it showed up in 2015. As a result the Great Plains were wet and drought continued to grip California and the West through the summer. As we noted, El Nino is no guarantee of record corn or soybean yields, but this year it delivered.

7) Challenges spill into livestock markets: Several years of high livestock prices and better weather led to a rebuilding of the U.S. cattle herd. Then livestock prices tumbled – with days of limit down price moves reminding us just how much price risk is present in agriculture. Live cattle futures prices traded $30 per cwt lower by the end of the year.

8) Avian Flu: In 2014 the big animal health story was was PEDv in hogs. In 2015 it was Avian Flu in chickens and turkeys. Egg prices and thanksgiving turkeys were pricier in 2015 as a result. Agribusinesses get Restless
9) Precision Planting sold to John Deere. This fall John Deere announced it was purchasing Precision Planting from Monsanto’s Climate Corp Division. As part of the deal, Climate Corp gains access to John Deere’s software platform.

10) Dow and DuPont to merge. After much speculation, Dow and DuPont announced in early December they would merge. As part of the merger, the combined company plans to eventually split into three companies. One of these would focus on agriculture.

11) Syngenta gives Monsanto the Heisman stiff-arm … three times. Monsanto tried it’s best to court Syngenta in 2015. There was the initial offer in early May, the second offer in June, and the third offer in August; all of which were declined. Syngenta would get and decline another offer in November from the state-owned China National Chemical Corp.

12) Hits keep coming for biotech. Dow found out this year that getting approval for a new solution to stubborn weeds is becoming very difficult. After getting initial approval in 2014 and expanded approval in early 2015, the EPA announced in November is was seeking to overturn their previous approval of Dow’s Enlist Duo herbicide, a 2,4-D and glyphosate product. Dow still expects the product will be available in 2016.

Ag Policy
13) Finally a decision on biofuels. In May, the EPA released it’s preliminary decision of proposed targets for biofuel mandates for 2014-2016. The targets were below what Congress called for in 2007 and well below what the agricultural sector hoped for. In November the final decision was released at levels higher than proposed in May, but still behind Congress’s 2007 levels.

U.S. Economy

15) U.S. economy still growing. Albeit slow, the U.S. economy is still growing and is the bright-spot of the global economy. The growth rate for all of 2015 is expected at 2.5%, up slightly from 2.4% in 2014.

16) Interest rates stay low. The Federal Reserve has been carefully watching the economy and trying to determine the appropriate time to raise interest rates. June looked promising but came and went. Now all eyes are on a December rate increase. We looked at what higher rates might mean for farmers and concluded that in the short-run they probably won’t have much impact.

17) Dollar continues to strengthen. The Dollar began its upward swing in 2014 and continued the trend through 2015. Several articles have noted the negative relationship between the strong dollar and U.S. ag commodity exports.

18) Oil takes the big plunge. A big story for 2015 was the fall in oil prices. After trading the first half of the year in the $54 to $65 dollar per barrel range, the price of West Texas Intermediate Crude (Jan 2016) plunged into the $40s and now is trading around $35 per barrel. Strong production has created inflation-adjusted energy prices considerably lower than recent highs.

Global Headaches Become Full-Blown Migraine
19) China woes. The world held its breath as Chinese economic woes began to come to the surface. In late August, China’s stock market crashed erased more than $1 trillion in equity values and sent the primary stock index down
22% in just four days. While the stock market fears have subsided since late Summer, the full impacts of a slowdown in the Chinese economy will take time to fully realize, especially in the agricultural markets China relies heavily on imports for.

20) More turmoil and terrorism. The world remains in turmoil. Terrorist attacks in Paris. A refugee crisis in Syria. A Russian airline is bombed. Turkey shoots down a Russian fighter jet. And so on. Unfortunately, the world remains a dangerous place.

Well that’s it. We actually held it to 20 this year. Overall 2015 was certainly an interesting and sometimes challenging year for much of the agricultural sector. There were clearly some things we could have included like falling used equipment values, stubbornly high cash rents, the new climate agreement, the faltering world economy, and others, but we can save all that for 2016.

Ohio Lifts Ban on Poultry Shows and Auctions
Source: Farm & Dairy

A healthy bird population and a favorable report from the World Organization for Animal Health has led officials at the Ohio Department of Agriculture to lift the statewide ban on poultry exhibits and gatherings. The ag department announced the decision Dec. 17, following a ban on bird shows, gatherings and auctions, that went into effect June 2 to stem the spread of bird flu. It was originally intended to run through April 2016.

The ban was put in place to help stop the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza, which wreaked havoc for poultry producers across Western and Midwestern states, but was never found in Ohio. More than 48 million birds were affected by bird flu, costing the poultry industry more than $1 billion in losses. “We dodged a bullet,” said State Veterinarian Tony Forshey. “Our precautions we put in place certainly had a lot to do with that.”

Biosecurity
In addition to the ban on shows and sales, producers and bird handlers were encouraged to exercise good biosecurity practices, and are encouraged to continue those practices into the future. The U.S. hasn’t reported an outbreak since June, and the World Organization for Animal Health announced Nov. 18, that “the outbreaks in all affected states are now final, closed, and resolved. This now makes the United States free of avian influenza for the time being.”
But state officials say it’s important to continue the same biosecurity practices, to prevent this and other diseases from re-occurring. The spring migration of birds is just around the corner, and poses another risk.

“Our intentions is to allow bird exhibitions to be held next year, an outbreak in Ohio or nearby states may require the reinstatement or even an extension of the ban,” ODA cautions. Ohio Ag Director David Daniels, in a statement to media, said Ohio is home to 50 million domestic birds, which makes the state particularly vulnerable.
“Thankfully, the disease never took hold here,” he said. “I believe this is a justification of the steps taken by our producers and exhibitors to mitigate the risk of an outbreak.” The ban continues in Pennsylvania and will be in effect for the 2016 Farm Show.

Youth exhibitors
The ban caused thousands of 4-H and FFA poultry exhibitors to miss out on showing their birds at the fair, but most fairs substituted the live show with educational events, poster projects and still held an auction for the exhibitors. “As I traveled around the state this summer, I was overwhelmed with the maturity and understanding of the disappointed but supportive young people I spoke with who were unable to bring their poultry projects to the fair,” Daniels said. “It’s a real testament to the strength and importance our 4-H and FFA programs in Ohio.”
Lucinda Miller, Ohio State University 4-H Extension specialist for companion and small animals, said about 10,000 youth showed poultry projects in 2014.

**New year**
The decision to rescind the ban comes in time for youth to register for a new year of poultry projects, and to “have that hands-on, experiential learning” of producing and showing live birds. Miller said state agriculture and 4-H officials worked together to make the most of the situation this year, finding creative ways youth could still participate, and learn from their projects. In fact, she said some fairs are considering ways to continue the educational programs they participated in this year — as a regular event. The poultry project already requires youth to participate in quality assurance training, which includes biosecurity practices.

**Extremely contagious**
According to ODA, avian flu is an extremely contagious virus that primarily affects domestic poultry and is likely spread by wild, migrating birds. The USDA first confirmed the virus in the U.S. beginning in late 2014. Ohio is the second largest egg producer in the country and home to 28 million laying chickens, 12 million broilers, 8.5 million pullets and 2 million turkeys. Ohio’s egg, chicken and turkey farms create more than 14,600 jobs and contribute $2.3 billion to the state’s economy.

**EPA Revokes Approval of Enlist Duo Herbicide to Study 'Synergistic Effects'**
By Stephen Davies  
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EPA plans to cancel its registration of Enlist Duo, a Dow herbicide containing 2,4-D and glyphosate, after becoming aware of new data on “potential synergistic effects” of the two active ingredients on threatened and endangered species, the agency said in a court filing. The herbicide is used on corn and soybeans genetically engineered to be resistant to 2,4-D and glyphosate, killing surrounding weeds while allowing the crop to grow unhindered.

In a motion filed in connection with a legal challenge to the registration brought by environmental and food safety groups, EPA said it was requesting “voluntary remand and vacatur” of the registration. Center for Food Safety Executive Director Andrew Kimbrell said the agency does not need the court’s approval to revoke its approval of Enlist Duo. In a statement, Dow AgroSciences said it “is confident in the extensive data supporting Enlist Duo herbicide” and is “working with EPA to quickly provide further assurances that our product’s conditions of registered use will continue to protect the environment, including threatened and endangered plant species.”

The statement continued: “Recognizing the pressing needs of U.S. farmers for access to Enlist Duo to counter the rapidly increasing spread of resistant weeds - and in light of the comprehensive nature of the regulatory assessments already conducted to support the Enlist Duo registration - we expect that these new evaluations will result in a prompt resolution of all outstanding issues.”

The environmental groups saw things differently. “With this action, EPA confirms the toxic nature of this lethal cocktail of chemicals, and has stepped back from the brink,” Earthjustice Managing Attorney Paul Achitoff said in a news release. He asserted that glyphosate is a probable carcinogen and is wiping out the monarch butterfly. He said 2,4-D also causes serious human health effects, and the combination also threatens endangered wildlife. “This must not, and will not, be how we grow our food,” he said.

Earthjustice and Center for Food Safety (CFS) brought the challenge to EPA’s approval of Enlist Duo in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco on behalf of CFS, Beyond Pesticides, the Center for Biological Diversity, Environmental Working Group, the National Family Farm Coalition and Pesticide Action Network North America.
In its court filing, EPA said it had recently “learned that it did not have all relevant information at the time it made its registration decision” for Enlist Duo in October 2014.

“Specifically, Dow did not submit to EPA during the registration process the extensive information relating to potential synergism it cited (in applications) to the Patent Office; EPA only learned of the existence of that information after the registrations were issued and only recently obtained the information.” Over the past two weeks, the agency’s scientists have looked at that data “and believe, based on that review, that the data indicate that the 30-foot buffer on the approved label may not be adequate to protect non-target plant species located outside the treated fields,” EPA said in the filing.

“The agency can no longer represent to the court that its conclusions were correct regarding whether issuance of the registration met the standard in FIFRA (the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Insecticide Act) and whether the buffer zones included in the registration support the finding that the registration will have no effect upon threatened or endangered plant species,” EPA said. The agency said it needs more time to conduct a full assessment of the new data. In the court filing, the government said Dow has indicated it plans to file a response to EPA’s motion for “voluntary remand and vacatur.”

Earlier this month, EPA ordered a halt to distribution of Dow products that have the insecticide sulfoxaflor as their active ingredient. The agency was acting in response to a Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that EPA violated federal law when it approved the pesticide’s registration without additional studies regarding potential impact on honeybees.

Dow AgroSciences at the time expressed confidence that the products would be back on the market. The following is from the company’s statement. “As a result of the extensive data currently available on sulfoxaflor, Dow AgroSciences expects the pollinator protection concerns expressed in (the court) decision to be readily and thoroughly addressed by EPA through further review of scientific data, supporting pressing grower needs for protection against destructive crop pests with renewed U.S. registrations of sulfoxaflor-containing products.”

**Talk to Your Family about Security Online and at Home**

Source: Internal Revenue Service

For families with children and aging parents, it’s important to make sure everyone guards their personal information online and at home. It may be time for “the conversation.” The IRS, state revenue departments and the tax industry have teamed up to combat identity theft in the tax arena. Our theme: Taxes. Security. Together. ([https://www.annualcreditreport.com/index.action](https://www.annualcreditreport.com/index.action)). Working in partnership with you, we can make a difference.

Especially in families that use the same computer, students should be warned against turning off any security software in use or opening any suspicious emails. They should be instructed to never click on embedded links or download attachments of emails from unknown sources.

Identity thieves are just one of many predators plying the Internet. And, actions by one computer user could infect the machine for all users. That’s a concern when dealing with personal financial details or tax information. Kids should be warned against oversharing personal information on social media. But oversharing about home addresses, a new family car or a parent’s new job gives identity thieves a window into an extra bit of information they need to impersonate you.

Aging parents also are prime targets for identity thieves. If they are browsing the Internet, they made need to the same conversation about online security, avoiding spam email schemes and oversharin on social media.
They may also need assistance for someone to routinely review charges to their credit cards, withdrawals from their financial accounts. Unused credit cards should be canceled. An annual review should be made of their credit reports at annualcreditreport.com to ensure no new accounts are being opened by thieves, and reviewing the Social Security Administration account (https://www.ssa.gov/) to ensure no excessive income is accruing to their account.

Seniors also are especially vulnerable to scam calls and pressure from fraudsters posing as legitimate organizations, including the Internal Revenue Service, and demanding payment for debts not owed. The IRS will never make threats of lawsuit or jail or demand that a certain payment method, such as a debit card, be made.

Fraudsters will try to trick seniors, telling them they have won a grand prize in a contest or that a relative needs money – anything to persuade a person to give up personal information such as their Social Security number or financial account information.

Some simple steps – and a conversation – can help the young and old avoid identity theft schemes and scammers. To learn additional steps you can take to protect your personal and financial data, visit Taxes. Security. Together at https://www.annualcreditreport.com/index.action You also can read Publication 4524, Security Awareness for Taxpayers which I accessible at: https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p4524.pdf

Each and every taxpayer has a set of fundamental rights they should be aware of when dealing with the IRS. These are your Taxpayer Bill of Rights (https://www.irs.gov/Taxpayer-Bill-of-Rights). Explore your rights and our obligations to protect them on IRS.gov.

9 Ways to Keep Your New Drone off the Naughty List
By Ben Potter

According to the FAA, several hundred thousand drones will be unwrapped this Christmas. Many will be unwrapped by farmers, eager to put them to use on the farm as a high-tech scout and data collector.

But it’s important for these yuletide gifts to be nice, not naughty. The FAA has the right to issue hefty fines to drone operators for misuse, or for failing to register their drones in the first place. “Make no mistake – unmanned aircraft enthusiasts are aviators, and with that title comes a great deal of responsibility,” says U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx.

The “Know Before You Fly” initiative has provided the following 9 recommendations for safely operating your new drone.

- Don’t fly higher than 400 feet.
- Keep a visual line of sight with your drone.
- Stay clear of other aircraft.
- Contact airport authorities or air traffic control before flying within 5 miles of an airport.
- Avoid flying over stadium events groups of people in general.
- Stay away from fires and other emergency response efforts.
- Don’t fly under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Register your device at http://knowbeforeyoufly.org/register-your-drone/
For more information, visit KnowBeforeYouFly.org. For industry-leading coverage of drones in agriculture, visit www.FarmWithDrones.com.

**2016 Ohio Beef Cattle Webinar Series- Watch it in Ashtabula County**
The Ashtabula County Extension office and the Ashtabula County Cattlemen’s Association would like to participate in the 2016 Ohio Beef Cattle Webinar Series during the winter of 2016. This free webinar series will be held on Tuesday evenings, January 19, February 2 and February 16, 2016 with each session beginning at 7:00 p.m. The programs will address some of the most important issues currently facing Ohio’s beef industry. Rapidly changing forces are constantly shaping the beef industry's landscape and successful producers need to stay abreast of changes to remain competitive.

The school begins on January 19, 2016 with a focus on outlook, marketing and risk management. Dr. Derrell Peel, Oklahoma State University Livestock Marketing Specialist, will kick off the program with his insight into the beef cattle market outlook. Sam Roberts of United Producers Inc. will offer suggestions on market risk management and capturing profitable pricing opportunities in the coming year. The February 2, 2016 session will address management priorities for profitable beef production. Members of the OSU Extension Beef Team will address important concepts including calving windows, genetic choices, breeding management, crossbreeding and economic traits that will impact profit potential. The series will conclude on February 16, 2016 with a focus squarely on the end product. Dr. Lyda Garcia, Assistant Professor of Meat Sciences at The Ohio State University, will demonstrate carcass fabrication into primal and sub-primal cuts and discuss how quality and yield differences establish beef values.

There is no fee to attend these webinars at the Ashtabula County Extension office. For more information, call the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008.

**Ohio Farm Bureau Federation and Wright & Moore Law Sponsoring Seminars Dealing with Employment Law and Crisis Prevention on your Farm**

Each meeting will provide information about employment practices to protect farmers’ businesses, legal compliance measures and crisis preparedness methods. The information is drawn from a comprehensive handbook, “Livestock Farm Labor and Crisis Prevention Guide,” which was produced by Ohio Farm Bureau and Wright & Moore. Agricultural law attorneys, veterinarians, communications experts, policy experts, industry representatives and farmers provided input for the guide.

The seminars will describe how to deal with employee disputes and public criticism as well as how to conduct background checks on applicants, what to put in an employee manual and how to create a crisis plan. Agribusiness owners who have adopted the handbook’s recommendations also will be speaking at the meetings. Participants will receive a copy of the handbook, and lunch will be provided.

- The meetings are:
  - Jan. 28: Clinton County Fairgrounds in Wilmington, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Registration deadline is Jan. 22.
  - Feb. 18: Owens Community College in Findlay, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Registration deadline is Feb. 12.
  - March 24: OARDC Shisler Center in Wooster, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Registration deadline is March 18.

Cost is $35 for Farm Bureau members and $110 for non-Farm Bureau members, which includes an OFBF membership. To register, contact Amy Hurst at 614-246-8262 or ahurst@ofbf.org.
2016 Ohio Hops & Malting Barley Conference & Trade Show
Registrations are now being accepted for the 2016 Ohio Hops and Malting Barley Conference & Trade Show which will take on February 24-25, 2016 at the Fisher Auditorium and the Shisler Conference Center in Wooster, Ohio. New this year, the conference will be offering sessions for the beginner and advanced hop growers, and also barley growers.

Presentations will be broken into separate courses for the beginner and advanced growers. Presentations will cover:
- Malting Barley in Ohio
- Mechanical Harvesting of Hops
- Pelletizing and Processing Hops
- Planting for Profits
- Growing for the Brewing Market
- Overview & Managing Diseases
- Collaborative Hop & Barley Marketing
- Giving Hops a Jumpstart
- Management for Beneficial Insects
- Overview of 2015 Hop Pests
- Hop Plant Propagation & Sales
- Cover Crops for Soil Health
- Weed Control & Herbicide Options
- Management of Nitrogen in Hops

The registration cost $175.00 for two days or $100.00 for one day. The cost includes: Attending both days (full price) or one day (half price) to hear educational speakers from OSU, other universities, growers, and the brewing industry; Lunch and snacks for both days for full price, or half price for one day; Flash drive with presentations; Conference booklet with vendor, speaker, and other program information; and Access to the Trade Show. The deadline for attendees to register is Friday, February 5, 2016. Seats are limited! So don’t delay, register today! For full details and to register, go to go.osu.edu/OhioHopsAndBarleyConference

10 Reasons Santa is a Farmer
Finally, I would like to share again this year the ten reasons why Santa could be a part time farmer. After all, he has the same MO – that is investigation talk for Method of Operation – as a farmer.
1. Just like a farmer, he works all year on a commodity, and at the end of the year he gives it all away and starts all over again for next year.
2. He has to keep his livestock in good shape to see him through the year and get the job done.
3. He knows how to get by with the same equipment season after season.
4. His job and final delivery depend greatly on the weather, He works outside even in the worst of weather conditions.
5. He’s good with kids. Kids love animals, and both Santa and farmers have the market cornered on providing lovable and cuddly animals.
6. Both Santa and farmers love the colors red and green. Farmers especially like farm equipment in these colors.
7. Santa and farmers both work late hours, enjoy good food, frequent the malls annually, and have the public perception that they can perform miracles with little or no return. Both cover a lot of ground in a hurry when the pressure is on.
8. Both have the ability to ho – or is it hoe? – during tough times.
9. And when you really think about it, Santa does wear boots somewhat like a farmer.
10. and finally…..both help to take care of the needs of the whole world.
2016 Winter Extension Program Dates
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

Northeast Ohio Pesticide Recertification & Fertilizer Certification Sessions
January 15, 2016 at the Williamsfield Community Center
January 29, 2016 at the Geauga County Extension Office
February 10, 2016 at the Trumbull County Extension Office
February 26, 2016 at the Perry Community Center

State Beef Webinar
January 19, 2016 at the Ashtabula County Extension Office
February 2, 2016 at the Ashtabula County Extension Office
February 16, 2016 at the Ashtabula County Extension Office

2016 Northeast Ohio Agronomy School
February 23, 2016

Northeast Ohio Winter Beef Clinic
February 25, 2016 at the Ashtabula County Extension Office

2016 Northeast Ohio Winter Grape School
March 16, 2016

2016 Ashtabula County Dairy Banquet
Saturday, March 19, 2016 at the Lenox Community Center

2016 Joe Bodnar Memorial Northern Classic Steer & Heifer Show
Saturday, April 16, 2016 at the Ashtabula County Fairgrounds

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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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