Holy, July. We finally got a stretch of nice weather! Last week should have been dubbed by “Ohio Hay Week” for all the hay which was made. With more favorable weather in the forecast for this week, it looks like we will have two great weeks for hay making. It was been quite a few years since we can say that. While the quality of the hay is poor, as the old saying goes, “It is better than eating snowballs!” Now, the hope is that we don’t go the other way with the weather and go dry; especially for how shallow rooted the crops are this year. We have lots of great field days/events scheduled for the end of August. Hope to see you at one of these or at the Ashtabula County Fair on August 11-16!

David Marrison, AG Educator

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Northeast Ohio Cover Crops Field Night Scheduled for August 18

OSU Extension is pleased to be offering a “Northeast Ohio Cover Crops Field Night” on Tuesday, August 18, 2015 at Caroma Farms located at 9499 State Route 46 in North Bloomfield, Ohio from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. We are very appreciative of the Barnett family for hosting this field night. The family is one of the early adopters of the use of cover crops and this will be a great opportunity for area farmers to learn more about cover crops.

This field night will feature Jim Hoorman from OSU Extension. Jim is a nationally known speaker in cover crops and will be on hand to help producers learn how to successfully use cover crops. This will be a great opportunity for crop producers who are looking to use cover crops to improve soil fertility, improve soil structure and increase the capacity of soil drainage.

During the field night Jim will discuss the basics of how cover crops increase soil organic matter and improve nutrient recycling and how roots change soil structure and improve drainage. Jim will share details of the major cover crops and how they are used in crop rotations such as corn and soybean. Each cover crop has a niche or special purpose. Legume cover crops are typically used to produce homegrown nitrogen. Grass cover crops are used to increase soil organic matter, recycle excess nutrients, and reduce soil compaction. Brassica crops are grown to loosen the soil, recycle nutrients, and suppress weeds. Some other cover crops are grown to suppress insects, disease, weeds, or attract beneficial insects.

Jim will also share how cover crops may be used to supplement forages for dairy, beef, and sheep. Attendees will also learn more about the economics of using and purchasing cover crops. Discussion will also be held on how cover crops may increase soil productivity and decrease chemical input costs through reduced herbicides, less fungicides, and improved nutrient efficiency.
The use of cover crops should be strongly considered in 2015 as we have thousands of acres which were not planted due to the extremely wet weather. Now is a great chance to plant a cover crop, or two, to help improve and protect our heavy soils here in Ashtabula County.

This workshop is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served. Participants are requested to dress for the weather as it will be held rain or shine. Participants are asked to bring a lawn chair. More information about this program can be obtained by calling the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008.

OSU Extension to host Northeast Ohio Grape Field Day on Thursday, August 27

OSU Extension will be hosting the Northeast Ohio Grape Field Day on Thursday, August 27 in Harpersfield, Ohio. This field day has been developed to increase the management skills of commercial juice and wine grape growers.

The afternoon session titled, “Strategies for Managing Winter Injured Vines” will be held from 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. at Ferrante Winery & Ristorante - 5585 State Route 307, Harpersfield, Ohio. This session will continue the grape industry’s focus on recovering from two severe winter injury events in 2014 & 2015. Dr. Imed Dami, Nick Ferrante, and Matt Meineke will present information on how the Ohio grape industry is adapting to winter injury concerns. Learn more about hilling & dehilling and how some growers are burying canes. Learn the when, how and outcomes of each method. Learn more about OARDC’s retraining trials which are being conducted at Ferrante’s.

Following the afternoon portion, participants will travel a short distance to Kosicek Vineyards located at 636 State Route 534, Harpersfield, OH 44041. A picnic style dinner will be served prior to the sprayer calibration workshop at Kosicek Vineyards from 5:3- to 6:00 p.m. The dinner fee will be $5 per person. In order to ensure a meal, we must have reservations by Thursday, August 20. Reservations can be made by calling the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008.

Following the picnic dinner, growers will participate in a “Preparing and Calibrating Air Blast Sprayers” session from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Kosicek Vineyards. Dr. Erdal Ozkan, from OSU’s Department of Food, Agriculture, and Biological Engineering, will lead an air blast sprayer calibration session and update growers on optimizing spray coverage for better control of pests and diseases. This workshop will help save you MONEY and make you a more effective, efficient spray applicator. Learn more about calibration, how to use water sensitive paper strips, and learn about enhanced coverage and drift reduction through recent nozzle advancements. Dr. Ozkan will also recommend improvements to equipment, GPA, pressure, nozzle selection, and speed to maximize coverage and control. A special thank you is extended to Fred’s Water Service in Madison, Ohio for supplying the air blast sprayer for this workshop. Two hours of Commercial & Private CORE Pesticide Applicator Credits will be offered for attendees.

Stink Bugs in Soybeans
By Andy Michel

As our soybean begins to develop flowers and pods, we need to be aware of stink bugs that will begin feeding. Although more common in the southern US, we have been noticing more stink bugs in soybean the past few years, even some fields where economic damage was seen. There are several species, including the green, the brown, the red-shouldered and the brown marmorated stink bug. These insects have piercing/sucking mouthparts similar to aphids, and will pierce through the pod to feed on the developing seed. Damaged seed are
often flat, shriveled, wrinkled or completely aborted. Over the next few months, we will begin to see stink bugs move into soybean, and now is a good time to begin scouting. To sample for stink bugs, take 5 sets of 10 sweeps. An average of 4 stink bugs per set of 10 indicates an economic population. We are interested in gathering information on stink bug species distribution across the state and will begin our surveys this week. Please let us know of any fields that might have a high number of stink bugs.

Solving Financial Challenges on the Family Farm
By: Chris L. Bruynis, Assistant Professor & OSU Extension Educator

This year is turning out to be a challenging year not only due to the weather, but due to low revenue streams into many family farm businesses. Granted not all family farms will find themselves facing financial issues, but there will be some that will. For those that will, the stress can be significant and management decisions paramount.

The starting place is to determine if the issue is a profitability, liquidity, or solvency issue. Managers need to determine if the lack of profitability is temporary due to an isolated condition or if the problem is likely to continue into future years if no business changes occur. If the business is not profitable, then management decisions need to be made to correct the problem. If management determines that business changes cannot correct the lack of profitability (like not having control over commodity prices), then they must put a timeline on how long they can or want to continue to farm waiting on these conditions to change. There are several considerations that farmers need to think about including the operator’s current age, potential income streams if they exit farming, future generations’ involvement in the business, and current net worth.

Solvency should be examined to determine the risk capacity of the farm business (see http://www.cffm.umn.edu/Publications/pubs/FarmMgtTopics/FarmFinanceScorecard.pdf to calculate and interpret financial ratios). If the farm has very low levels of debt relative to the asset valuation, there is capacity to borrow additional funds to survive the financial shortcomings of 2015. If the opposite is true, additional loans, at least from traditional sources, will probably not be an option. Solvency examines the business’ overall ability to meet its financial obligation. Liquidity is similar but only looks at the business’ current year ability to cash flow the operation. Businesses that can remain liquid, even though unprofitable, can survive the short term financial shortfall.

Financial shortfalls are stressful on farmers and their families. Research following the farm crises of the early 1980’s showed that farmers used three strategies to manage the financial shortfalls. These were increase/extend income, decrease expenses, or increase labor income (efficiency). These concepts are not all that difficult to identify, however, actually putting them into practice is more challenging. Here is a list of ideas to consider. Be careful to think these through completely and find a strategy that does not further reduce family income or put the farm business at risk long term.

1. Shift the farm business toward more profitable enterprises
2. Renegotiate lease rates on assets used in the farm business (ie. land, equipment)
3. Sell non-productive or unused assets
4. Refinance operating loans to improve cash flow (only if financial decline is temporary)
5. Seek off-farm employment only if it does not affect farm productivity(for one or more family members involved in the business)
6. Increase the acres or number of livestock to improve labor efficiency on profitable enterprises (only if not already fully employed – remember you still have to have time to manage the business)
7. Make sure there is a positive rate of return on all inputs (ie. fungicides, micronutrients, feed additives, etc.). If it costs to $5.00 to make $2.50, why are you doing it?
8. Select lower priced inputs (providing they preform similarly – don’t pay for brand recognition)
9. Delay nutrient application (providing the soil fertility is adequate to grow desired crops)
10. Delay replacing capital assets (this only works until repairs, delays, etc. become greater than loan payments)
11. Reduce family living costs (delay vacations, major home renovation, big ticket furniture and appliances, etc)

This is not an exhaustive list of possible management decisions that farmers can make in their businesses but a starting place to start the thought process. The main message is to pay careful attention to your business’ profitability, liquidity and solvency to make sure financial stress is identified quickly and the appropriate management decision(s) implemented to prevent further financial decline.

Legal Issues Related to Livestock Production Webinar
2015 has seen interesting development in legal issues related to livestock production. In January 2015, a federal district judge ruled that manure (stored or applied to a field) could become a solid waste under federal environmental laws. At the same time, a consortium of environmental and animal welfare groups filed a lawsuit against the EPA for failure to act on their petition to regulate ammonia gas releases from animal feeding operations. The law as it relates to these operations is currently in a state of flux.

On August 6th at noon (EDT) the Northeast Extension Risk Management Education Center will co-sponsor a webinar featuring Dr. Shannon Ferrell, Oklahoma associate professor of agricultural economics, Department of Agricultural Economics, Oklahoma State University, discussing the implications of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and Clean Air Act (CAA) on animal agriculture, recent litigation, and other legal issues.

This webinar is open to livestock producers, Extension educators, agricultural service professionals, and anyone else interested in learning more about the potential impacts of RCRA and the CAA on livestock operations. The webinar is free to attend. [https://webmeeting.umd.edu/aglaw](https://webmeeting.umd.edu/aglaw)

The webinar is sponsored by the [University of Maryland's Agriculture Law Education Initiative](https://webmeeting.umd.edu/aglaw), [University of Maryland Extension Poultry](https://webmeeting.umd.edu/aglaw), [AREC Crop Insurance Education Program](https://webmeeting.umd.edu/aglaw), [DAIREXNT](https://webmeeting.umd.edu/aglaw), the [Livestock and Poultry Environmental Learning Center](https://webmeeting.umd.edu/aglaw), [Texas AgriLife Extension](https://webmeeting.umd.edu/aglaw), the [Northeast Extension Risk Management Education Center](https://webmeeting.umd.edu/aglaw), the [Southern Risk Management Education Center](https://webmeeting.umd.edu/aglaw), and the [MSBA Section on Agriculture Law](https://webmeeting.umd.edu/aglaw).

3-Day Basics of Grazing School to be held in Wooster, Ohio
OSU Extension will be offering a three day in Wooster Ohio at the end of September. The grazing basics school is designed for those new to grazing livestock, and will also offer more in depth information to the more experienced grazer. The school is scheduled for September 29, 30 and October 1 at the Ohio State ATI campus in Wooster. The school will offer a combination of morning classroom sessions with afternoon hands-on learning and practice. There will be some optional evening sessions. Topics covered in the mornings will include: Understanding Pasture Plant Growth, Plant Species Selection, Soil Fertility, Matching Forages to Livestock Nutrient Needs, Minerals, Fencing, Water Systems, Stockpiling, and Economics. The afternoons include interactive sessions covering pasture measurement, paddock setup, livestock grazing, forage and weed identification, nutrient management, water and fencing systems at the 1700 acre Ohio State ATI Grace Drake Learning Laboratory. The cost is $150/person which includes continental breakfast, handouts, noon lunch and refreshments. Pre-registration is required by September 22, 2015. For more information about the grazing basics workshop including a registration form, click on the grazing brochure link:
[http://wayne.osu.edu/sites/wayne/files/imce/Program_Pages/ANR/Grazing%20Basic%20Brochure%20202015%20Revised%207.21.15.pdf](http://wayne.osu.edu/sites/wayne/files/imce/Program_Pages/ANR/Grazing%20Basic%20Brochure%20202015%20Revised%207.21.15.pdf)
Cornfield’s “Cool” Block O Designed to Spur Conversations on Precision Ag Potential

LONDON, Ohio -- A cornfield west of Columbus is showing some Buckeye pride with an unmistakable Block O pattern when viewed from above. The demonstration plot’s design isn’t a crop circle or a corn maze. It was established thanks to new dual-hybrid planting technology that researchers at The Ohio State University are putting under the microscope.

“In general, farmers have always managed their acreage on a per-field basis, depending on their soil characteristics and other production factors,” said John Fulton, precision agriculture specialist for Ohio State University Extension. OSU Extension is the outreach arm of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences. “Now, 2015 is the first year technology is commercially available to farmers that allows the planting of two different hybrids in the same field.”

Examples of the technology include the Kinze 4900 series planter and Precision Planting’s vSet Select, Fulton said. “With this new precision technology, we can match more productive ground with a racehorse, or offensive type of hybrid, which would maximize yields in a year with good weather and the proper management. On other areas of the field, you might want to place a more risk-averse, or defensive, hybrid that would still produce favorable yields even during adverse growing seasons.”

Fulton is helping lead an OSU Extension effort examining the technology for corn and soybeans on hundreds of acres throughout Ohio, both at Ohio State agricultural research stations and through on-farm research with collaborating farmers. The Block O is located on Field 5, just south of Interstate 70, on Ohio State’s Molly Caren Agricultural Center in London, Ohio, home to the college’s annual Farm Science Review. This year’s Review is Sept. 22-24, and upward of 140,000 attendees are expected. The hybrids for Field 5 were chosen merely for effect, Fulton said. Most of the corn planted there has a traditional golden-colored tassel. The Block O hybrid has a purple tassel. A Case IH planter fitted with Precision Planting multi-hybrid seed meters was used to seed the field.

“It definitely has a cool factor to it,” Fulton said. “But basically, it’s a good opportunity to demonstrate the capability of new technology and start engaging growers and educating them about aspects they need to consider when adopting new technology. And, from our perspective, we want to understand its functionality and, when requested, help companies improve the technology.” Fulton said researchers are just beginning to receive feedback about the technology from farmers this year. “We are at the very early stages to determine where the value exists for the farmer,” Fulton said. “The industry is reporting that this technology could provide a $40 or $50 gain per acre in corn. We don’t have economic data available so we are focused on providing farmers the background and information about the technology before they decide to invest, or if they have already invested, we want to have recommendations for how best to use it.” Plans are to continue the evaluation effort into next year in order to gain further insight and production data to report back to farmers, Fulton said. To keep updated on the project, contact Fulton at fulton.20@osu.edu or watch the Department of Food, Agricultural and Biological Engineering’s precision agriculture website at fabe.osu.edu/precisionag.
The Farm Science Review is sponsored by the college and features educational workshops, presentations, demonstrations and educational opportunities delivered by experts from OSU Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, the college’s research arm. Participants can peruse 4,000 product lines from 620 commercial exhibitors and capitalize on educational opportunities offered by specialists from Ohio State and Purdue University. Advance tickets are $7 at all OSU Extension county offices, many local agribusinesses and online at fsr.osu.edu/about/online-ticket-purchase-information. Tickets are $10 at the gate. Children 5 and younger are admitted free. Hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sept. 22-23 and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 24.

**Vegetable of the Week - Peppers (Capsicum spp.)**

Peppers can be fun to grow! They need well-drained soil and do best in soils high in organic matter. Peppers can be grown from seed or transplants. Peppers are often classified by the shape of their fruit and come in a variety of colors. Any of these shapes and colors may be either sweet or hot.

Peppers should be watered by applying 1 - 2" per week when Mother Nature does not supply adequate rainfall – not much of an issue this season. Drip irrigation is a good alternative when it comes to growing peppers. Irrigate so that moisture goes deep into the soil. Irregular watering, both over or under, can cause flower drop or blossom-end rot, a dark leathery spot on the bottom of the fruit caused by a calcium deficiency. Mulch around the plant will conserve soil moisture and reduce weed growth.

Blossom end rot, sunscald, virus, wilt, leaf blights, flea beetles and aphids can all be issues that one might encounter when growing peppers. Avoid heavy fertilization of peppers which encourages excessive foliage and delays flowering and fruiting.

Peppers are normally harvested in the immature green stage for use in relishes, salads, stuffing, and added for flavor in many cooked dishes. In general, peppers have a short storage life of only 1 - 2 weeks. Cool, moist conditions (45 - 50 F) and 85 - 90% relative humidity are the ideal storage conditions for peppers.

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