What a way to slosh into the month of June. Some parts of our county have received over 4 inches of rain since Saturday night! Our weather stays true to course with 80 degrees one day and into the 40 the next. Let’s hope the month of June settles into more of a typical weather patterns. Today, the news broke on the ban of poultry from county fairs this year. See the first two articles for more information. More details can be received by contacting our local 4-H Extension Educators.

I have also included 3 three great crop related articles for your review. We would also like to welcome Jenny Pugliese and Tori Kanicki to the Ashtabula County Extension office summer staff. Both are very talented ladies and we are excited to have them working for our agricultural producers and 4-H youth this summer! Plus, we want to know who has the best burger in Ashtabula County? Send in your nominations to the Ashtabula County Cattlemen’s Association today. Local dairy farmers will want to take time to read the A2 cow article. What do you think of this new angle on marketing specialty milk? I hope everyone has a safe and good week.

David Marrison, AG Educator

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**Ohio Taking Proactive Effort to Remain Free of Deadly Avian Flu as other States Struggle with Effects of Virus**

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (June 2, 2015) – In an aggressive move designed to help protect Ohio’s $2.3 billion poultry industry from the avian flu that has so negatively impacted other poultry-producing states, today the Ohio Department of Agriculture canceled all live bird exhibitions this year. The ban includes county and independent fairs, the Ohio State Fair, and all other gatherings of birds for show or for sale, including auctions and swap meets. Similar bans have been enacted in other poultry states. So far, Ohio is virus-free and the move is intended to continue that status.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)—also called the avian flu—is an extremely contagious virus that primarily affects domestic poultry and is
believed to be spread by wild, migrating birds. The United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) first confirmed the virus in the U.S. beginning in late 2014. Since that time more than 44 million birds at more than 197 locations have been affected.

“This was a difficult decision because it means young people can’t show their birds at fairs, but it’s in the best interest of an industry that literally thousands of Ohio families and businesses depend on and which provides billions of dollars to our state’s economy. The right move isn’t always the easy move, but this is the right move, especially when you see just how devastating the virus has been to other big poultry states like Iowa and Minnesota. Ohioans need to do all we can to ensure that we protect our industry and that we help avoid a costly spike in the price of important foods like chicken, turkey and eggs,” said Ohio Department of Agriculture Director David T. Daniels.

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 employ more than 14,600 jobs and contribute $2.3 billion to the state’s economy. Ohio’s role in national poultry production is even greater considering the loss that other major poultry states are experiencing.

“One of the ways avian influenza spreads is by direct contact with contaminated materials coming from other infected birds. This means that exhibitions, auctions and swap meets where birds are co-mingling pose a high risk of unintentionally spreading this disease. Until we can be sure that there has been no transference from the wild bird population migrating through the state, we need to do all we can to minimize the exposure for our domestic birds,” said State Veterinarian Dr. Tony Forshey.

Similar concern about the potential spread of disease that can happen when birds are brought together for shows and sales has caused Ohio’s neighboring states of Indiana, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Michigan to make the decision to cancel shows for at least the 2015 fair season. Of those states, only Indiana has had a flock test positive for HPAI.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture is working closely with the state’s poultry producers and the USDA APHIS to provide training and to closely monitor the health of poultry in the state. Detailed plans and protocols are in place to allow for a quick and coordinated response in the event HPAI is detected in Ohio.

Human health and food safety
Despite the severity of the outbreak in birds, no human infections have been associated with HPAI and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers the risk to people from these viruses to be low. Federal and state law already ensures birds and poultry products that are affected by HPAI are prohibited from entering the food chain.

Consumers should continue to employ standard food safety practices. Cooking poultry, including game birds, to the proper temperature and preventing cross contamination between raw and cooked food are always recommended to protect against viruses and bacteria.

Recommendations for local fairs
The department is working with county and independent fair boards to identify options that will keep youth who are already raising poultry from losing their opportunity to have a fair project. The recommendations include amending the deadlines for students to switch projects and allowing the use of props or photos in place of live birds.

“The experience of raising a live animal to show at the fair builds character and teaches responsibility. We don’t want to deprive anyone the opportunity to complete their projects. For that reason, we are working with Ohio State University Extension to send out guidance to the fair boards and 4-H committees urging them to be creative and find a solution that will allow their young people to still have a fair experience, even if they cannot bring their project to the fairgrounds,” said Director Daniels.
Biosecurity recommendations for poultry owners

Dr. Forshey is reminding all bird owners, whether commercial producers or backyard enthusiasts, to continue to practice good biosecurity, prevent contact between their birds and wild birds, keep birds inside as much as possible, and report sick birds or unusual bird deaths to their veterinarian immediately.

Good biosecurity practices for poultry owners include the following:

- **Monitor flocks** for unusual signs of illness such as “snicking” (sneezing), a 1 percent or more decrease in egg production, or an increase in mortality. Other signs to look for are wheezing, lethargy, and depression.

- **Practice personal biosecurity** and avoid contact with sick/dead poultry or wildlife. If contact occurs, wash your hands with soap and water and change clothing before having any contact with healthy domestic poultry and birds.

- **Keep unauthorized visitors from having contact** with poultry, a good practice whether or not there is a disease threat. Authorized persons should be required to wear protective clothing and shoes before entering a commercial poultry house.

- **Avoid contact between your birds and wild birds** whenever possible due to the migratory nature of HPAI. These virus strains can travel in wild birds without them appearing sick.

- **Clean and disinfect** farm vehicles or equipment before moving them on and off your property.

Sick birds or unusual bird deaths should also be immediately reported to the Ohio Department of Agriculture’s Division of Animal Health at 1-614-728-6220 or through USDA APHIS’s toll-free number at 1-866-536-7593. Additional information on biosecurity from USDA APHIS for backyard flocks can be found at [http://healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov](http://healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov) or by visiting [www.ohioagriculture.gov](http://www.ohioagriculture.gov).

4-H Fair Bird Exhibits Cancelled in Ohio to Protect Industry from Avian Flu

Published on June 2, 2015

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio 4-H is expressing support of the Ohio Department of Agriculture’s decision to cancel all live bird exhibitions at county and independent fairs in 2015 to protect Ohio’s $2.3 billion poultry industry from the current avian flu outbreak affecting the United States.

The cancellation, announced today (June 2) by Agriculture Director David T. Daniels, covers poultry and waterfowl exhibits and also extends to the Ohio State Fair and all other gatherings of birds for show or for sale, including auctions and swap meets.

“We appreciate Director Daniels’ leadership in protecting Ohio’s poultry industry,” said Bruce McPheron, vice president for agricultural administration and dean of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences at The Ohio State University. “We are committed to providing 4-H youth with a positive learning experience about poultry, and believe that can be achieved without the live animals being present.”

Ohio 4-H programs are run by Ohio State University Extension, the outreach arm of the college.

Since last December, an unprecedented outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5 linked to wild migratory birds has gripped the U.S. poultry industry, affecting more than 44 million birds from commercial and backyard flocks at close to 200 locations in 15 states, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

No cases of avian flu have been reported in Ohio so far, and the ban is intended as a proactive measure to keep this extremely contagious disease out of the state, ODA said in a statement. Wild or domesticated waterfowl can carry
and spread the virus, but they do not show symptoms. The virus is not dangerous to humans, and poultry products are safe to eat.

“This was a difficult decision because it means young people can’t show their birds at fairs, but it’s in the best interest of an industry that literally thousands of Ohio families and businesses depend on and which provides billions of dollars to our state’s economy,” Daniels said. “The right move isn’t always the easy move, but this is the right move, especially when you see just how devastating the virus has been to other big poultry states like Iowa and Minnesota.” According to ODA, Ohio ranks second in the nation in egg production and ninth nationally in turkey production. The state is home to 28 million laying chickens, 12 million broilers, 8.5 million pullets and 2 million turkeys. Ohio’s egg, chicken and turkey farms provide more than 14,600 jobs.

“Four-H is about fun, but underneath it all, it’s about learning and education. Our members who have chosen poultry projects this year have a fantastic learning opportunity in front of them,” said Tom Archer, state 4-H leader for OSU Extension. “Yes, they won’t be showing a live animal, but they will be learning about how a disease can affect an animal and an industry. We will provide other creative ways for our members to show what they have learned about poultry at our county and state fairs.”

Lucinda Miller, 4-H youth development specialist for companion and small animals programs, said she understands 4-H youth planning to show birds at fairs this year will be disappointed and appreciates their enthusiasm for learning. In 2015, 9,113 4-H youth across the state are taking poultry-related projects out of the 69,653 total youth enrolled in 4-H organized community clubs.

“I remind our youth that they can complete their poultry projects without showing the animals at the fair. It’s not a requirement for completion,” Miller said. She added that there are a number of alternative ways by which 4-H youth with poultry projects can participate in the fair and show what they have learned — including interviews with judges, demonstrations with props or pictures, skits, skill-a-thons, “Avian Bowl” contests and more. “We are encouraging our 4-H educators to work with their local fair board partners to identify alternative activities that can be implemented at their counties,” Miller said. “At the state level, we will put together resources and activities and make them available to educators, 4-H youth and fair board members online.”

**Ponding Effects on Corn**
By Peter Thomison

Rainfall was mixed across Ohio over the past weekend. Although some areas of SW Ohio missed appreciable rainfall, many fields in NE and NW Ohio received up to 3 to 4 inches of rain resulting in localized ponding. If ponding and flooding was of a limited duration, i.e. the water drained off quickly within a few hours, the injury resulting from the saturated soil conditions should be minimal.

The extent to which ponding injures corn is determined by several factors including: (1) plant stage of development when ponding occurs, (2) duration of ponding and (3) air/soil temperatures. Prior to the 6-leaf collar stage (as measured by visible leaf collars) or when the growing point is at or below the soil surface, corn can usually survive only 2 to 4 days of flooded conditions. Since most corn is not beyond the V5-V6 stage, it’s vulnerable to damage from ponding and saturated soil conditions. The oxygen supply in the soil is depleted after about 48 hours in a flooded soil. Without oxygen, the plant cannot perform critical life sustaining functions; e.g. nutrient and water uptake is impaired, root growth is inhibited, etc.
If temperatures are warm during ponding (greater than 77 degrees F) plants may not survive 24-hours. Cooler temperatures prolong survival of corn plants, so the lower temperatures forecasted this week should be beneficial. Once the growing point is above the water level the likelihood for survival improves greatly.

Even if ponding doesn't kill plants outright, it may have a long term negative impact on crop performance. Excess moisture during the early vegetative stages retards corn root development. As a result, plants may be subject to greater injury during a dry summer because root systems are not sufficiently developed to access available subsoil water. Ponding can also result in losses of nitrogen through denitrification and leaching. Even if water drains quickly, there is the possibility of surface crusts forming as the soil dries that can impact the emergence of recently planted crops. Growers should be prepared to rotary hoe to break up the crust to promote emergence.

For corn that’s emerged, check the color of the growing point to assess plant survival after ponding. It should be white to cream colored, while a darkening and/or softening usually precedes plant death. For corn not yet emerged, evaluate the appearance and integrity of seeds or seedlings that have yet to emerge (likely rotting if discolored and softening). Look for new leaf growth 3 to 5 days after water drains from the field.

Disease problems that become greater risks due to ponding and cool temperatures include pythium, corn smut, and crazy top. Fungicide seed treatments will help reduce stand loss, but the duration of protection is limited to about two weeks. The fungus that causes crazy top depends on saturated soil conditions to infect corn seedlings. There is limited hybrid resistance to these diseases and predicting damage from corn smut and crazy top is difficult until later in the growing season. However the economic impact of these latter two diseases is usually negligible.


Jennie Pugliese Summer ACRES Intern for Ashtabula, Geauga & Trumbull Counties
Hi all! I’m Jennie Pugliese and I am the new ACRES intern at the Ohio State University Extension office in Jefferson. I grew up in Ashtabula along the lakeshore out in Saybrook township. I attended high school at both Saints John and Paul Catholic High School and Geneva High School. I graduated from Geneva High School in 2011 and was accepted and enrolled at the Ohio State University in Columbus during the Autumn of 2011. During my time there I pursued a degree in Sustainable Plant Systems with a focus in Horticulture and obtained a minor in Soil Science within the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences.

This May I graduated Summa Cum Laude from Ohio State with a Bachelor’s of Science in Agriculture. In the past I worked as an intern at the Ashtabula Agricultural Research Station in Kingsville. While the research was more grape-focused I gained an insight into the world of academic research and saw first-hand how that research can help farmers and producers in the area. So this upcoming fall I will be heading back to Ohio State for graduate school to pursue an M.S. in the field of soil science and agronomy. I will be studying under Dr. Steve Culman.

In the past I worked as an intern at the Ashtabula Agricultural Research Station in Kingsville. While the research was more grape-focused I gained an insight into the world of academic research and how that research can help farmers and producers in the area. I’m excited to start my internship here and to apply what I’ve learned in the classroom to the field. I’m also excited to work with farmers in the area as I’d like to work as an agricultural consultant in the future. I believe this internship will provide me with training and experiences that will benefit and enhance my time during graduate school.
**Tori Kanicki Summer 4-H Intern for Ashtabula County**

Tori Kanicki is currently the OSU Extension Summer Assistant Intern in Ashtabula County. Through this position, Tori will assist County Staff with Summer Youth Camps, Summer School Enrichment programs, and Junior Fair activities.

Tori is a fourth year student at The Ohio State University and is majoring in Communications. She was a member of Ashtabula County 4-H for 10 years; some of the projects she has taken are feeder calves, market steers, and beef breeding heifers. Tori has been involved with the Ashtabula County 4-H camp counselor program for the last 6 years as a counselor, craft coordinator, and Dean of Women.

Growing up in Ohio, Tori is an avid Buckeyes fan; game days in Columbus and going to the games are one of her favorite activities at school. Tori’s favorite pastime is showing cattle throughout the state of Ohio and working with her family’s small herd of cattle at Kanicki Cattle Company. She also enjoys going camping with her family and friends. Tori is very excited to begin her summer internship at the Ashtabula County OSU Extension Office. She enjoys meeting and working with new people and she is excited for the opportunity from this internship to meet and work with different people throughout Ashtabula County.

**Northeast Ohio Crop Update- May 27, 2015**

By Les Ober, CCA & OSU Extension Program Assistant

The planting season for Corn and Soybeans is rapidly moving toward completion in Northeast Ohio. At this writing I am estimating 90% of the corn and 70% of the soybeans are in the ground. For the most part 60% of the corn and 40% of the soybeans have emerged. With such a fat paced planting season there are always a few glitches that have to be dealt with. This year one of those problems has been coordinating the herbicide spray program to keep up with planting. With everything going into the ground at once and some very dry and windy conditions in localized areas, a few problems may come up.

With corn there is some flexibility as most corn herbicides can be applied pre-emerge and even early post-emerge if need be. Here the grower need to consult the label to make sure that the corn is within the application tolerance for the growth stage that it is in. Dry weather can also interfere with the efficacy of certain herbicide if there is not enough moisture to activate the product. You once again need to read the label to make sure that the product will still activate and be effective under low moisture conditions.

Soybeans on the other hand have a completely different set of problems associated with them. Because control of broadleaves is the hardest in soybeans you and you need match the product to the problem weeds in your fields. Most of the broad spectrum control is associated with products that contain a strong pre-emerge residual component. Products like Valor XLT need to be applied before planting and no later than 3 days after planting. If you are trying to spray everything at once on a very close spray schedule a few windy days can put you outside that window of opportunity. Also a week or 10 days of dry weather with the product sitting on the soil surface with no rain to activate the product can put its efficacy at risk. Any weed that emerges after application and before the activation may not be fully controlled. You need to consider all of the options and how they fit into the weather pattern you are in. With beans the big concern is resistant weeds that may get around the pre-emerge application.

These will have be dealt with an early post-emergent application. You need to carefully scout your fields and keep track of how your spray program is working. If you have problems get back out there and get them corrected before they get out of control. Here is an article by Ohio State University Weeds Specialist, Mark Loux that goes into detail on how to deal with the above problems:
Residual Herbicide Issues – were they applied, are they working, what to do
by Mark Loux

While a variety of rainfall and soil moisture conditions can be found around Ohio, a shortage of rain following application of residual herbicides seems to be common. We are hearing about weeds emerging early in the season even where residual herbicides were applied, which is an indicator of inadequate herbicide “activation”, or lack of downward movement into the upper inch or two of soil where weed seeds germinate. Herbicides vary in the amount of rain required for activity, due to differences in water solubility and adsorption to soil, and whether absorption into the plant occurs via roots or shoots. Ignoring all of this though, the general rule is that a half to one inch of rain is needed within about a week after application to ensure activity. Some considerations for this situation:

- Later rain will cause residual herbicides to eventually become active, but by then weeds may have already emerged through the thin layer of herbicide on the soil surface. There is the possibility of “reachback activity” from some herbicides, where emerged weeds are controlled, due to uptake of herbicide by roots. In our experience, this is erratic and not that reliable unless weeds are very small.

- Escaped weeds will usually require treatment with postemergence herbicides. Applying POST when weeds are small ensures more effective control and prevents interference with the crop. Keep in mind that where residual herbicides have largely failed, we defer to the basic principles of weed removal timing for total POST systems. Weeds in corn should be removed before they exceed 2 inches in height, and in soybeans before they exceed 4 to 6 inches in height (giant ragweed will typically be larger than the rest of the weeds). There is probably some flexibility in these sizes where the residual herbicides had enough activity to substantially reduce weed populations, so this can be somewhat of a judgement call.

- Be sure the postemergence herbicides fit the weed population. Residual herbicides typically remove many weed species, leaving one or two that are then targeted with POST herbicides (e.g. giant ragweed, marestail, morningglory). Where residual herbicide activity is reduced, the full complement of annual weeds can be present, requiring a more comprehensive POST herbicide treatment.

There are also fields with emerged corn where no herbicide has been applied yet. Most residual corn herbicides can be applied to emerged corn, and some of them have enough foliar activity to control small, emerged weeds without the need to add postemergence herbicides. In addition, the majority of the corn hybrids are resistant to glyphosate and/or glufosinate (Liberty), which can be combined with residual herbicides to control weeds emerged at the time of application. It’s also possible to mix in some other POST herbicides such as Impact, dicamba, 2,4-D, Capreno, etc to control emerged weeds, instead of glyphosate or Liberty. Some issues to be aware of with regard to postemergence application of residual corn herbicides follow.

- Only Degree and Degree Xtra can be applied using 28% as the spray carrier once corn has emerged. All other herbicides should be applied in water. Degree Xtra and Degree can be applied in 28% on corn up to 6 inches tall, when air temperatures are less than 85 F. Expect some leaf burn from these mixtures.

- There is usually a maximum corn size specified, which can be based on growth stage or corn height. This can be as small as the V2 stage for some herbicides, such as Corvus and Balance Flex. This information can be found in the herbicide description section of the “Weed Control Guide for Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois”.

- Most premixes or tank mixtures that contain atrazine can adequately control small broadleaf weeds, and especially those that contain another broadleaf herbicide (e.g. Lexar, Lumax, Instigate, SureStart). Grasses more than about an inch tall will require the addition of glyphosate, Liberty, or other herbicide with effective grass activity.
- Follow adjuvant recommendations closely to minimize the risk of injury and do not assume that it is always possible to use an adjuvant once corn has emerged.
- Based on our research with this type of approach to herbicide management, herbicides should be applied when weeds are less than about two inches tall to ensure that they have been prevented from causing yield loss.

- We find that herbicide labels can lack enough information on adjuvants and tank-mix partners for this situation. Be sure to check with dealers and manufacturer/distributor agronomists to get specific information when necessary.

The situation in soybeans is vastly different than in corn, since most residual soybean herbicides cannot be applied once the soybeans have emerged. Failure to apply residual herbicides in soybeans typically results in the need to apply POST earlier in the season, which can result in the need for a second POST application to control late-emerging weeds. This can sometimes be avoided by applying an early POST treatment that has some residual. Several residual soybean herbicides can be applied early POST, and several POST herbicides do have some residual activity. These include the following: Pursuit (also in premixes with glyphosate such as Extreme and Thundermaster); FirstRate; Flexstar and the generic equivalents (also in premixes with glyphosate and metolachlor and Pursuit); metolachlor (Dual, Parallel, etc); and acetochlor (Warrant). None of these provide residual control of most marestail populations, and it’s about impossible to obtain enough residual control of all the giant ragweed that can emerge after an early POST application. Making a second POST application is a more effective strategy for giant ragweed usually.

There is a brief in-field video covering POST application of residual corn herbicides on our Youtube site (search for “Ohio State University weed science”), or at this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njl4MPL5H4l. You can also subscribe to the Youtube page, and be automatically notified of future videos. Another recently added video takes a first look at studies on various strategies for management of marestail in Enlist and Xtend systems.

**Crop Progress Report:**
Corn: 90% planted 70% emerged condition good
Soybeans: 70% planted 40% emerged
Wheat: heading out should be flowering within the week. Watch the Head Scab Website for updates
Oats: 100% emerged scout for Cereal Leaf Beetle
Forages; Alfalfa and Orchard Grass in bloom, cut now for best quality forage.

**Damping-off is Not Always Caused by Water Molds and Fungi; Insects Can Play a Role Too**
By Anne Dorrance and Andy Michel
Editor’s note: Meredith Eyre, Graduate Research Assistant, was an author on this article.

Though soil borne pathogens are usually the cause of damping off in Ohio’s poorly drained soils, seedcorn maggot infestation may cause similar symptoms. This maggot is easy to diagnose in the field because it causes very characteristic tunnels as it burrows through any plant material below the soil line (see Figure A). The maggots are small, yellowish-white, and legless (Figure B). If scouting your fields this week, you may find the larvae or perhaps the pupae, which look like small grains of brown rice (Figure C).

These maggots may also cause mild to severe damage to the cotyledons before the plant emerges (Figure D). If tunneling and feeding is severe, the plant will not emerge resulting in a reduced stand count. If mild, the plant may recover just fine, but will have large scars on the cotyledons. Though the scarring alone does not seem to affect the viability of the plant, it indicates the
seedcorn maggot is present in your field

If the tunneling occurs in the taproot or lower stem, the seedling may attempt to send new roots out above the damaged tissue. This may or may not be successful, allowing the occasional plant to recover. Unfortunately, the more likely outcome is damping off as the plant wilts and dies. The diameter of the tunnel may range in size from the tip of a pen to the width of a piece of rice and vary in length.

The maggots are most likely to be found in fields with high organic matter, especially fields that have had cover crops or weeds recently incorporated into the soil. In order to minimize the chances of seedcorn maggot infestation, it’s best to wait at least a week between tilling and planting, especially when soil is cool and damp.

No economic threshold exists and no rescue treatment is available. Growers experiencing lack of emergence, reduced stand counts, or damping off caused by this maggot may need to replant.

Studies suggest seed treatments may reduce or prevent damage from this maggot and are very effective for seedcorn maggot control. While clothianidin (in Poncho) and thiamethoxam (in Cruiser) work well, our data, along with others, suggests imidacloprid (Gaucho) does not. For a complete list of labeled insecticides, see http://entomology.osu.edu/ag/

Where is Ashtabula County’s Best Burger?
Last Thursday was dubbed as National Hamburger Day across the country. I hope that many of you celebrated this day by eating a nice juicy hamburger. Our Ashtabula County Cattlemen Directors have been talking during the past year about conducting a search for Ashtabula County’s best hamburger. So, we want to hear from you. That’s right, we want to hear where you think has the best hamburger in the county. To nominate your favorite burger, just drop me an email to marrison.2@osu.edu or call our office at 440-576-9008 with the name of the burger and its location. We will be pulling together a list of nominations and then will be selecting the best of the best. My mouth is watering just thinking of sampling your nominations!

The Search Is On for A2 Cows
http://www.agweb.com/article/the-search-is-on-for-a2-cows--NAA-catherine-merlo
Posted May 27, 2015

The a2 Milk Co. brings its digestion-friendly milk to the U.S. market. Reaching for a glass of milk may not appeal to the 25% of Americans who suffer from post-dairy digestive discomfort. But The a2 Milk Co. hopes to change that.

In April, the New Zealand-based company launched its a2 milk® brand in the U.S., bringing to the market a product it believes will attract consumers back to the dairy case with what it calls “the milk that might change everything.”

The ultra-pasteurized milk carries all the qualities of conventional fresh milk with one small but important difference. The company’s milk comes from cows that only produce the A2 beta casein protein, found in 30% of typical U.S. dairy herds, says Jeff O’Neill, CEO of The a2 Milk Co. Those cows lack the A1 protein marker, which studies suggest is responsible for reported difficulty in digesting milk. (Most cows carry a mix of the naturally occurring A1 and A2.)
The a2 Milk Co. has developed a proprietary genetic test to identify A2 cows so their milk can be segregated for its supply chain. The company says its entry into the U.S. market should encourage milk-sensitive consumers to rethink dairy and bring it back to their daily routines.

“We’re here to get milk lovers back to drinking milk again,” says O’Neill, who’s based in Boulder, Colo. The a2 Milk Co. has already captured nearly 10% of Australia’s premium milk market, O’Neill says. The company plans to spend $20 million over the next three years to build out its product in the U.S. That will include investment in dairies and processing operations, both of which require strict quality standards to ensure the end product is 100% A2 milk.

The company also will invest in additional research, consumer outreach, marketing and advertising. “We need to show people we’re serious,” O’Neill says. “This is going to be a big brand. It takes a lot of investment.” So far, the a2 brand milk is being sourced from four certified dairies and nearly 2,000 cows in the U.S. Cows are genetically tested to determine which carry only the A2 protein. Byrne Dairy in Upstate New York processes the extended shelf-life milk for The a2 Milk Co. “We’re talking to a variety of other processors to establish a production and processing chain,” O’Neill says.

Dan Rice of Firth, Neb., owns and operates one of the dairies providing a2 Milk. “It’s all about producing the best milk you can,” Rice says. “We’ve seen lives change through a2 Milk. It’s great to bring people back to the dairy category again.” Rice’s vertically integrated operation has its own branded milk label, Prairieland Dairy. Half of the production from his 1,300 cows goes to his brand, which is sold in Nebraska. The other half heads to the a2 processing facility in New York.

“Research has shown there is no difference in the health or reproductive or feed efficiency of A2 cows,” Rice says. Producing a2 Milk requires extra efforts, from certifying his herd to keeping dairy equipment segregated. But Rice is a fan and says he’s definitely in it for the long haul. “Our goal is to be 100% a2 Milk in the next three to five years,” he says. “It’s worth our time and effort to do it.” Neither Rice nor O’Neill will divulge the a2 farmgate milk price. But they acknowledge it’s higher than the conventional milk price. At retail, a half-gallon of a2 Milk has an introductory price of $3.79. By comparison, organic milk from Horizon or Organic Valley is fetching $5.49 per half-gallon.

The company has been focused on getting established in Southern California, where customer response to a2 milk has been “fantastic,” says O’Neill. The brand will roll into Northern California this summer. Appearing in major stores, such as Whole Foods, Kroger and Sprouts, a2 milk is generating “a lot of interest from other major chains,” he adds. The a2 Milk Co. is steadily growing in New Zealand, Great Britain and China. The company also sells infant formula in China and plans further development in Asian markets.

An emerging body of research, including an independent U.S. study in 2009 published in Nutrition Today, shows that one in four Americans feel discomfort after drinking milk, says Bonnie Johnson, nutrition director for The a2 Milk Co. A large proportion of them are misdiagnosing themselves as lactose intolerant. Additionally, a recent human study, published in the European Journal of Clinical Nutrition in 2014, found that A1 beta-casein protein digests differently than A2. “We hope that the availability of a2 Milk in the U.S. will reverse the trend of declining milk consumption and improve the nutritional health of Americans,” Johnson says.
Fruit of the Week- Strawberry (Fragaria x ananassa).
By Jacqueline Kowalski, OSU Extension-Cuyahoga County

Ohio strawberry season is upon us! Strawberries are an excellent choice for the home garden and edible landscapes. Strawberries can be categorized into three general types: June-bearing, day-neutral, and ever-bearing. Common June-bearing cultivars are 'Earliglow,' 'Annapolis,' 'Honeoye,' 'Allstar,' 'Lateglo,' and 'Ovation.' Common cultivars of day neutral types are 'Albion,' 'Tristar,' and 'Tribute' while 'Ozark Beauty' and 'Quinault' are the most common cultivars of ever-bearing types. Many times ever-bearing and day-neutral types will be lumped together. June-bearing cultivars are the most productive, produce from late-May to late-June, and will produce a full crop a year after planting whereas day-neutral and ever-bearing types will produce small crops throughout the growing season and will produce berries soon after planting. One cannot tell the difference by looking at the plants, so it is important to know the type that you have for management purposes.

Strawberries prefer full sun, slightly acidic soil and although they will produce a crop in many types of soil, they produce best in well-drained, loose, fertile soil with high organic matter content. The best time to plant strawberries is generally May. June-bearing cultivars should be planted 12 - 24" apart with 36 - 40" between rows and other cultivars should be planted 8 - 12" apart with 30 - 36" between rows. Strawberries also do well in containers and vertical planters. Strawberry beds should be kept weed-free. Remove the flower buds of June-bearing cultivars in the first growing season and 6 weeks after planting for day-neutral and ever-bearing cultivars. Remove unwanted runners in the first year after planting for all cultivars. Fertilize based on soil test recommendations. Ensure that the plants receive 1" of water per week.

June-bearing strawberries should be renovated immediately after harvest is complete for the season by mowing them down to 1" above the crown in order ensure adequate bud set for the following year and to remove diseased foliage. Strawberry plants produce fruit for up to three years and should be replaced after 3 - 4 years with a new planting. While there are many diseases that affect strawberries, choosing resistant cultivars and maintaining appropriate cultural practices can help avoid some of disease issues.

Cover the plants with 2 - 3" of straw mulch after the plants have been exposed to a couple of freezes, but before December 15th. Strawberry blossoms are very sensitive to frost damage. When removing the mulch in the spring, keep the mulch close at hand in order to quickly re-cover the plants in the event of frost.

Refer to OSU Extension FactSheet HYG-1424-98 "Strawberries are an Excellent Fruit for the Home Garden" for more information. This factsheet can be accessed at: http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/1424.html or can be received by calling the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008.

Storing Hay With a Plan

John F. Grimes, OSU Extension Beef Coordinator

We are currently in the midst of first-cutting hay season in Ohio. The weather has been reasonably cooperative to allow timely harvest of forages so far this season. Reports of yields to this point have been mixed with several individuals that I have spoken with indicating that tonnage may be down slightly from last year due to freezing temperatures late in April and below average rainfall in May. An earlier harvest season in 2015 may have also impacted yields but should also allow for improved quality.

Much has changed over the years as to how we bale and store hay on the farm. I can recall (not necessarily fond memories!) of nearly all of our hay being made in small, rectangular bales that were stored under roof. The harvest
process has evolved over the years to the present where most hay today is harvested as large round or rectangular bales that can be stored in a variety of systems.

Earlier this month we covered the topic of hay storage in issue #934 of the Ohio BEEF Letter. In the video linked through that article, proper hay storage techniques that would minimize storage losses are covered. While it is never too soon to implement effective storage techniques, now is also the time to adjust your storage plans based on how the hay will be fed next winter.

When selecting the storage location for all cuttings of hay this season, think about how the hay will be fed next winter. Arrange the accessibility of the different types and cuttings of hay based on the various production groups and calving season of your herd. Obviously account for potential weather challenges and the probable location where animals will be fed next winter. Make sure to document location of the different types, cuttings, and quality of hay being stored. An evaluation of the quality of hay may include a visual appraisal but should absolutely include a forage analysis test through an accredited laboratory.

Why is a storage plan and documentation of your hay supply so important? The distribution of your hay supply to the various production groups in your herd can have a significant impact on the overall productivity of your herd. The most efficient use of your harvested forages is to match the quality of the forage to any given animal group based on the level of performance required at that stage of production. Of course, this philosophy applies to grazed forages as well.

Simply put, the highest quality hay should be earmarked for young, growing animals, females in the last trimester of pregnancy or females early in lactation. The lowest quality hay can be targeted for body condition score 5-6 females that are in the middle trimester of pregnancy as this would be the part of the reproductive cycle with the lowest nutritional demands. Lower quality forages can also be fed to animals carrying excess body condition or in situations where supplemental feeds are available.

I realize that it may be difficult to think about planning for the challenges of feeding hay next winter when we are currently experience beautiful springtime weather. However, a little planning now can provide a "sunnier" outlook for the economic bottom line for your operation.

**USDA Seeks Applications for Grants to Help Socially-Disadvantaged Producers**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced on May 26, 2015 that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is now accepting applications to provide technical assistance to socially-disadvantaged groups in rural areas.

"These grants will help socially-disadvantaged business owners develop the tools and skills they need to grow their enterprises and succeed at creating jobs and expanding economic opportunities in rural areas," Vilsack said. "American agriculture is becoming increasingly diverse in many ways, with more minorities and women seeking to enter the field, as well as greater diversity in the age of farmers, the size of operations, in production methods, and in the types of crops being grown. All of these forms of diversity help strengthen U.S. agriculture for the future."

Funding will be made available through USDA's Socially-Disadvantaged Groups Grant Program (formerly the Small, Socially-Disadvantaged Producer Grant Program), which assists organizations that provide technical assistance to socially-disadvantaged groups in rural areas. Examples of technical assistance are conducting feasibility studies, developing business and strategic plans, and providing leadership training.

USDA plans to make up to $3 million in grants available. The maximum award under this notice is $175,000. More information on how to apply can be found on page 28937 of the May 20 Federal Register. Applications submitted by

Eligible applicants include groups of cooperatives, cooperative development centers and individual cooperatives that serve socially-disadvantaged groups. The cooperatives or centers can be located in any area, but the groups assisted must be located in an eligible rural area. Also, the majority of the governing body of the organization must be compromised of individuals who are members of socially-disadvantaged groups.

USDA Rural Development is encouraging applications for projects in census tracts with poverty rates of 20 percent or higher. All grants are awarded through a national competition.

The program is making a difference in many rural areas. For example, in 2013, the Southern California Focus on Cooperation (SCFC) received a $200,000 Small, Socially-Disadvantaged Producer Grant to provide technical assistance to help 95 refugee immigrant and minority farmers improve their productive capacity, increase revenue, and strengthen their ability to govern and manage their cooperative businesses.

Many of the farmers benefiting from the project had little or no access to formal schooling and had been persecuted and oppressed for years in their native land. The International Rescue Committee (IRC), in concert with SCFC, developed marketing channels including various farmers markets and restaurants where the refugee farmers could sell their produce. Farmers have learned how to manage these marketing channels themselves, without assistance from IRC, and have gained new clients. They have also increased the level of cooperation among Hispanic, Korean and African farmer groups. These groups are working toward merging their efforts to form a single cooperative. The technical assistance provided by SCFC has enabled these farmers to build skills that have truly been life changing.

President Obama's historic investments in rural America have made our rural communities stronger. Under his leadership, these investments in housing, community facilities, businesses and infrastructure have empowered rural America to continue leading the way - strengthening America’s economy, small towns and rural communities.

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