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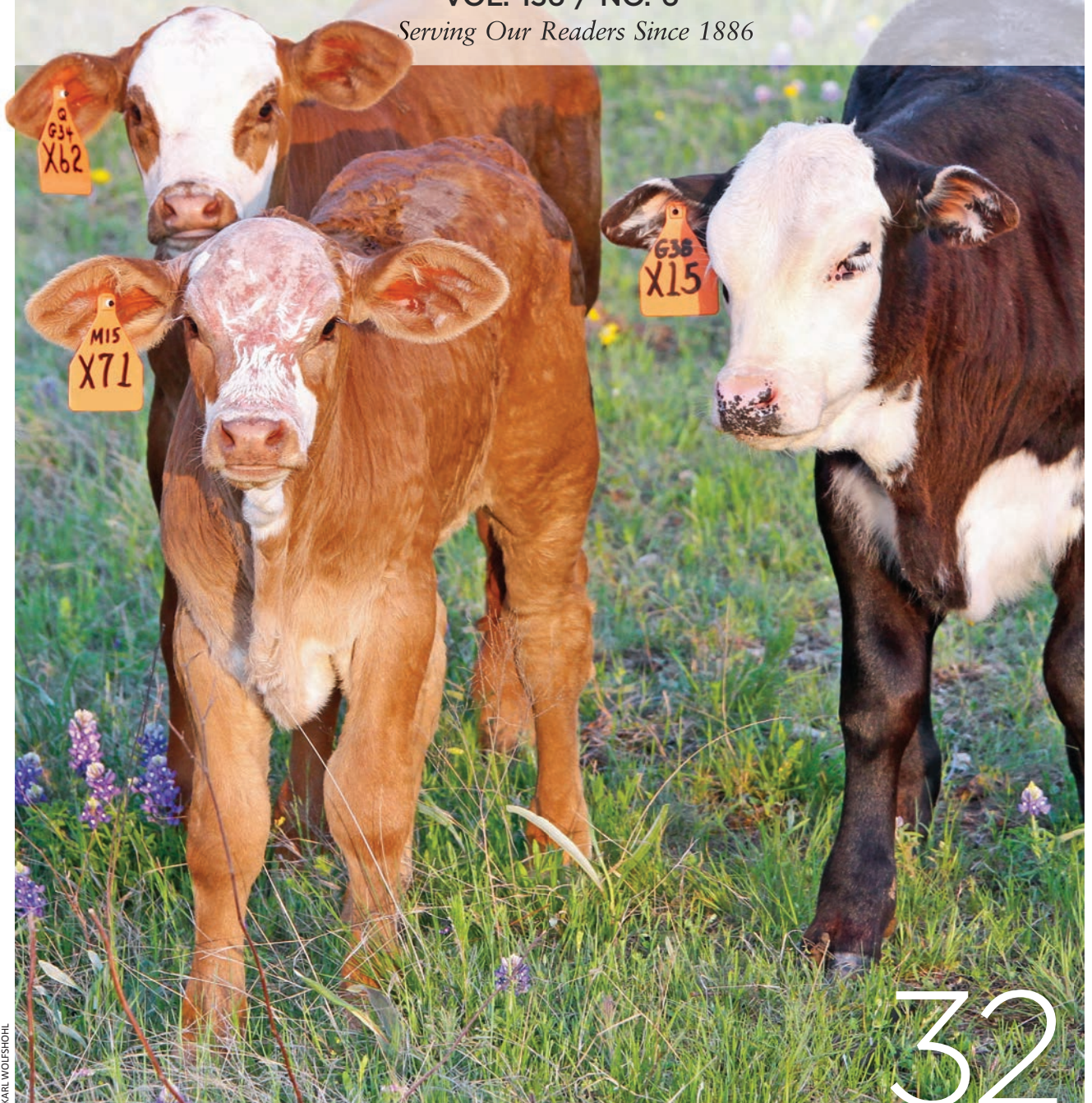
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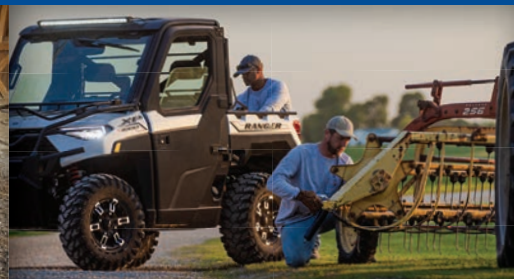
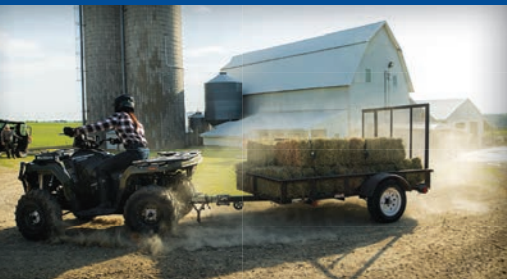
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Ag Confidence Index

Optimism Today Turns to Caution Later



Gregg Hillyer
Editor In Chief

► Write Gregg Hillyer, 2204 Lakeshore Dr., Suite 415, Birmingham, AL 35209, or email gregg.hillyer@dtm.com.

The Roman poet Horace once said, “Seize the day, trusting as little as possible in the future.” That seems to be the philosophy of farmers who responded to the latest edition of the DTN/*The Progressive Farmer* Agriculture Confidence Index (ACI).

The overall index is an optimistic 124, up 30 points from spring 2020 but down 22 points from the December survey. The drop is somewhat puzzling given the strong corn and soybean prices, and the positive news of the growing number of Americans receiving the coronavirus vaccine. As DTN Editor In Chief Greg Horstmeier reports, the reason for that decline since December seems to be broad concern for the future.

During the telephone survey period (March 17 through 31), farmers felt very optimistic about current conditions. The present situation score was 186, up from December’s positive 177 and a whopping 131 points above spring 2020. However, for the future-expectations

score, farmers rated their hopes for the year ahead at a slightly pessimistic 90, down 39 points from December and up only slightly from the 73 of a year ago.

Index numbers above the baseline of 100 indicate optimism—the higher the number, the higher that optimism. Scores below 100 are considered pessimistic.

The ACI is created by melding responses to how farmers feel about their present situation and what they expect a year from now.

What are farmers concerned about? Drought, no doubt, is on many growers’ minds. DTN long-range weather forecasts continue to point to a La Niña condition through the 2021 growing season. La Niña typically brings hotter, drier conditions to much of the central and western Corn Belt. Western and Northern Plains states are already in drought conditions.

Also likely weighing on farmers’ minds is the new Biden administration’s proposed national infrastructure overhaul and climate

change policies. Farmers applauded when former President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement in 2017. Biden has since reversed Trump’s action. Farmers as a group remain skeptical of climate science and fear increased regulations that could come with meeting world goals.

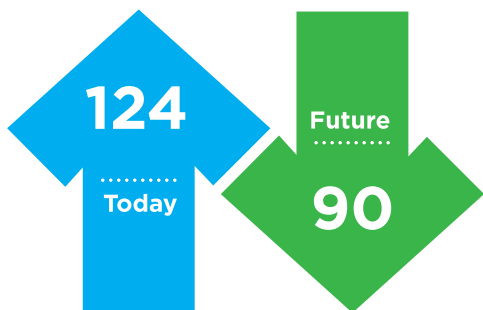
Regionally, Midwest farmers were slightly more positive, with an overall index of 139, stemming from a present-situation score of 196 and a future-expectations score of 98. Southwest farmers were the most pessimistic, with an ACI of a moderate 101, based on a current score of 157 and future of a very pessimistic 77.

Those surveyed who identified as crop farmers had a confidence index of 128, down 28 from December but up 62 from 2020. Their present-situation score was the highest of any segment, 193, up 18 from December, with their future-expectations score coming in at the same 90 as the broader group. Livestock producers had an index of 116, a present-situation score of 175 and a future-expectations score of 89.

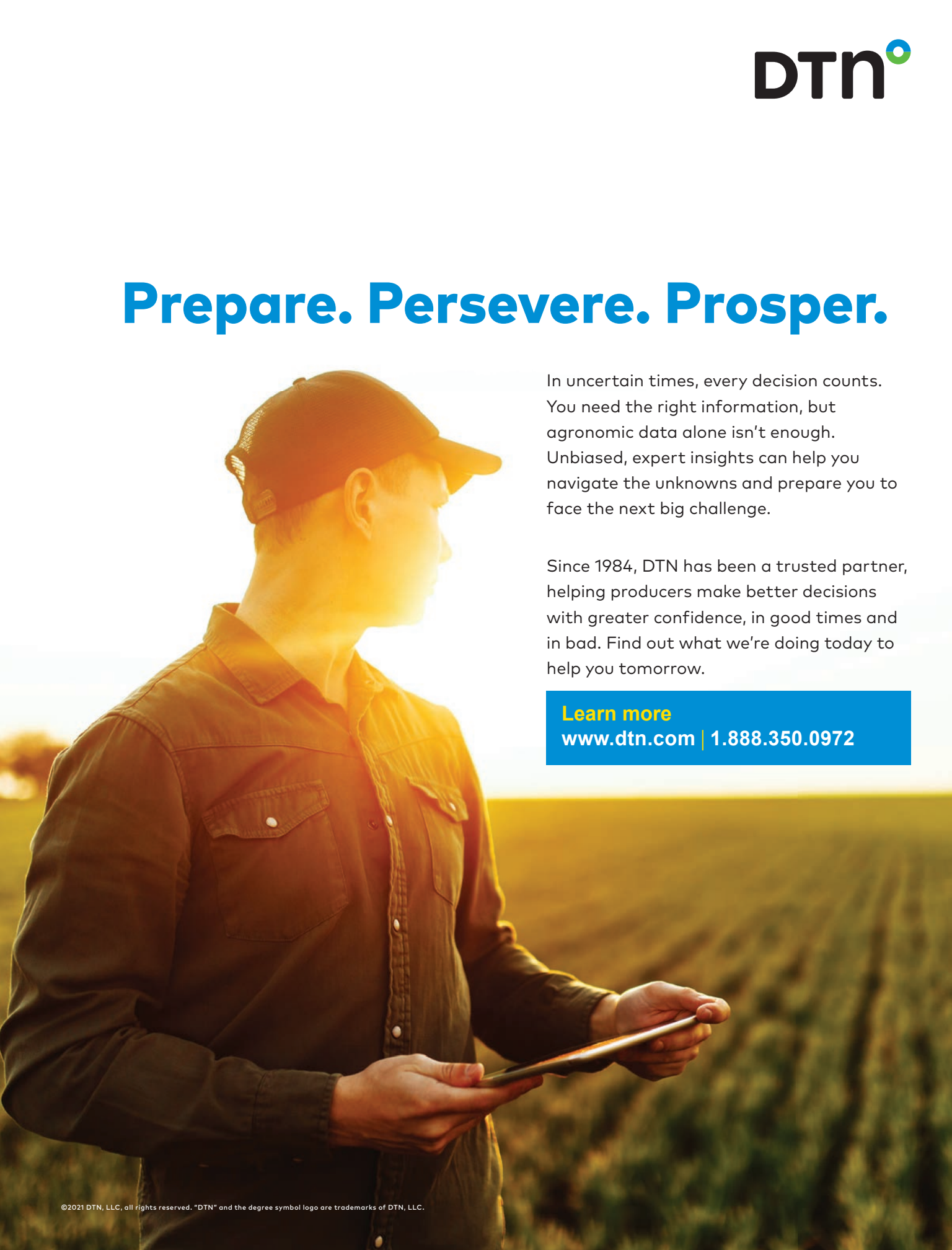
A key feature of the current mood in agriculture is the difference between farmers and the agribusinesses that serve them. DTN also surveys 100 agribusinesses to create the DTN/*The Progressive Farmer* Agribusiness Index.

The overall agribusiness index is 123, a record, up 13 points from December and 19 points from spring 2020. The previous record, 119, was in the farmer buying-spree days of spring 2011. Agribusinesses also are much more optimistic about the future, turning in a 122 for expectations a year from now, also a record. Farm-equipment companies have been reporting increased sales, which, along with higher fertilizer prices (see DTN’s weekly fertilizer price reports on our subscription products) and strong sales of seed and other inputs are likely fueling the agribusiness optimism. ///

Gregg Hillyer
EDITOR IN CHIEF



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Stop the Tax Roller Coaster



Rod Mauszycki

DTN Tax Columnist Rod Mauszycki, J.D., MBT, is a tax principal with CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen) in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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► You may email Rod at **taxman@dtm.com**.

As we work through an extended tax season, I wanted to throw out a few thoughts on 2021. To say it's been a wild ride is an understatement.

We have numerous last-minute changes to the 2020 tax law that impact tax returns. It seems like every day, we see more spending and more taxes coming from Congress.

It's hard enough to farm, even harder when Congress keeps changing the rules.

Let's go over a few tax items you should be aware of.

► **Congress passed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP).** The ARP Act benefits farmers who participate in Affordable Care Act Marketplace insurance.

With good crop yields and prices in 2020, many farmers had income in excess of the threshold, which would have required them to pay back the subsidy. Under the ARP Act, farmers have one-time relief. No payment is required in 2020 if your adjusted gross income triggered repayment of the subsidy.

For those who missed this, don't rush to file an amended return. The IRS may recalculate your return and refund the repayment. The ARP Act also allows those with income greater than 400% poverty level to participate in Marketplace insurance in 2021 and 2022.

It may be beneficial to look into Marketplace health insurance.

► **The Employee Retention Credit has been extended through Dec. 31, 2020.** You are potentially eligible if you can show a reduction in gross receipts for any quarter in 2020 compared to 2019.

► **Families First Coronavirus Response Act was extended through Sept. 30, 2021.** If an employee is unable to work for various COVID-19-related reasons, the employer can claim a credit.

There have been some concerning tax and economic issues that may be coming around the corner. Many farmers have seen a significant increase in the cost of lumber and steel. This has added significant cost to building projects such as barns and grain bins.

We are also noticing an increase in input costs. Many farmers only focus

on commodity prices—maybe the strategy should be looking at the expense side.

The most concerning thing, in my opinion, is Congress is making a serious push to institute a wealth tax.

Democratic Sens. Chris Van Hollen, Md., Cory Booker, N.J., Bernie Sanders, Vt., Sheldon Whitehouse, R.I., and Elizabeth Warren, Mass., introduced the Sensible Taxation and Equity Promotion Act (STEP). The STEP Act calls for a tax on property transfers during lifetime (gifts) or death if there is a net capital gain associated with the transfer. During life, the first \$100,000 of cumulative gain would be tax-free (transfer other than to spouse). At death, the first \$1 million of unrealized capital gain would be excluded and the rest subject to tax. For those with illiquid assets such as farms, you can pay the tax over a 15-year period.

As Bernie Sanders said, "It is absurd that our tax code allows many of our country's wealthiest people to get away with never paying a cent in taxes on millions or even billions in capital gains income, while working people pay taxes on every check they receive." I guess most of my farm clients aren't "working people." ///

TOOLS FROM THE PAST

QUESTION:

Reading. Writing. Arithmetic. What is it?



ANSWER:

This is a schoolbook carrier. Slip the books between the two wood paddles, then turn the handle to tighten the string to hold them securely in place.

 FARMERS ON TWITTER



Wife: Can you please till up my garden for me?
Me: I could get a few rows of corn in here...
 @RyanLoseke



Me: I'd hate to run into a badger out in a field. @zjhunn
The south: Everyone on the farm is ready to chomp some corn.
 @caseymco

Is there a support group for people who can't keep track of work gloves?
 Hi, my name is Jent, and I lose work gloves. @plowwife

My primary reason for waking up and going to work every morning is to someday have enough money to buy a grill that's actually level so my wieners don't roll to one side.
 @jsreinecker

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Are Seasonal Influences Still Important?



Todd Hultman
DTN Lead
Analyst

► Read Todd's blog at **ABOUT.DTNPF.COM/ MARKETS**.

► You may email Todd at **todd.hultman@dtn.com**, or call 402-255-8489.

For corn and soybeans, understanding the seasonal patterns of each has been a helpful tool guiding risk-management decisions for decades. During the years, cash corn prices have shown a tendency to trade lower from the end of May to harvest time. Soybeans have generally traded lower from the end of June to harvest.

In 2020, those traditional patterns were turned upside down as the spread of COVID-19 sent both corn and soybean prices plummeting earlier than usual. DTN's national index of cash corn prices bottomed on April 28, roughly a month before seasonal highs are usually made. DTN's National Soybean Index posted its low of the year on March 16, roughly six months ahead of the time harvest lows would normally be expected.

CONSISTENT PATTERN

There is always give and take as to when the year's highs and lows are actually made, but the general pattern has been remarkably consistent. Corn's 58-cent decline from the end of November 2019 to the end of May 2020 was the largest loss and only the eighth decline for that period in the past 28 years. The \$2.85 gain in cash soybeans from June 30 to November 30 was the largest contraseasonal gain on record for that span in the past 28 years.

We can now see the unusual combination of a global pandemic early in 2020 followed by a late stretch of dry weather and much-larger-than-expected sales of corn and soybeans to China were the primary

disruptors of seasonal patterns in 2020. These unusual circumstances are not reasons to give up on seasonal tendencies, but it is fair to wonder if seasonal reliability will return in 2021.

The first concern I have is seasonal tendencies of corn and soybean prices have largely been rooted in markets that had comfortable surpluses. Expecting low prices at harvest time is a no-brainer and is never more true than when supplies are plentiful. In early summer, it makes sense that highs are often made when the uncertainty of a new season is high, and weather factors can be threatening.



NICK SCALISE

TIGHT SUPPLIES

In the current market, corn and soybean supplies are much tighter than usual at the start of a new season. Cash corn and soybeans are near their highest prices in more than six years, which is already tempting for making forward sales.

Weather is always a potential disruptor to seasonal influences, but in 2021, I'm also concerned about China's ability to surprise and influence market prices in ways that are difficult to predict.

Seasonal tendencies will continue to be an important part of DTN's Six Factors Marketing Strategies. As is always true, they will need to be considered in the context of the market's other clues. Forcing us to look at the market from different angles has always been one of Six Factors' strengths and will be again in 2021. ///

Late Spring Brings Dryness Concerns

As we go into late spring, many of the top crop-growing regions of the world have favorable weather conditions.

Europe had a wet fall and winter, followed by good rain in early spring to boost the yield potential of winter grains and soil moisture for summer crops.

Russia saw a turnaround in moisture patterns from a concerning dry stretch at the end of 2020 to frequent snow and rain during the first quarter of 2021. It has improved soil moisture for both the final stages of winter wheat, as well as summer crops.

Plains north into the Canadian Prairies and west to the Pacific Coast.

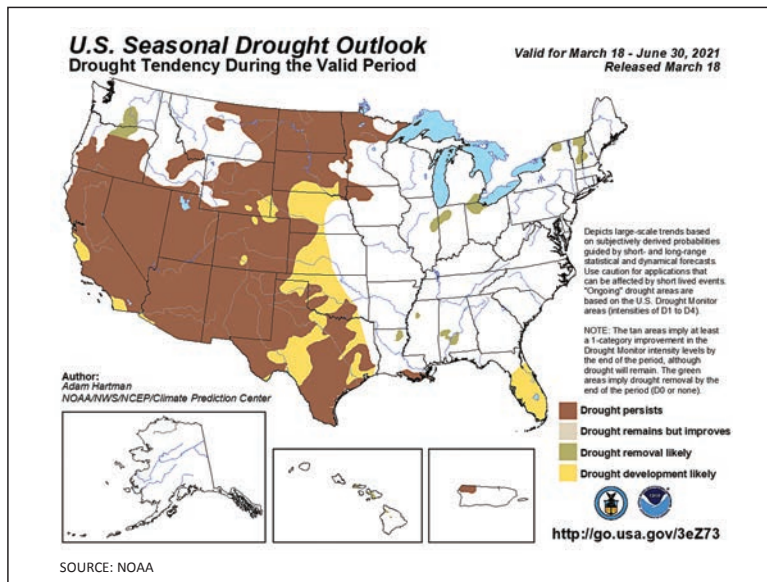
In North Dakota, the 2020–21 winter season was the third driest on record. (Weather recordkeeping uses December, January and February for the winter season.) Also, the six-month period of September 2020 through February 2021 was the state's driest on record going back 127 years to 1894. This sets up the possibility for crop-moisture concern through the 2021 growing season, because soil-moisture recharge is hard to accomplish during the warm-season months.



Bryce Anderson
DTN Senior Ag Meteorologist

► Read Bryce's weather blog at **ABOUT.DTNPF.COM/WEATHER.**

► You may email Bryce at **bryce.anderson@dtn.com**, or call 402-399-6419.



Farther west, drought is at extreme or exceptional levels according to the U.S. Drought Monitor and is likely to be a feature through the rest of the year.

Crop acreage will be affected. For example, even before planting season, prospects for reduced acreage of extralong staple (ELS) cotton from 10% to more than 25% were noted in California and Texas because of concerns about

Australia has had periods of heavy rain in eastern crop areas, causing flooding and damage to the southern hemisphere summer crops but also boosting moisture for the next winter wheat crop.

In the U.S., record early-spring precipitation in the Central and Southern Plains, and heavy amounts in the Midwest offer improved moisture for row-crop planting and winter wheat development.

DRY REGIONS

Not everyone is sharing in this moisture trend. In North America, drought has been a primary feature from the U.S. Northern

water availability. Besides crop-moisture issues, moisture for pasture and hay, along with livestock water could force ranchers to sell cattle because of a lack of forage and available water. We already saw that occurrence a few years ago in the Southern Rockies-Intermountain West cattle business.

One other large area of dryness potential is in central Brazil, as its second-crop corn (safrinha) season winds down. Central Brazil has two seasons: wet and dry. The second-crop corn needs an extended rainy season this year to reach full yield potential. Production could be notably crimped if the dry season does not hold off. ///

Keys to Moving On

BY Katie Pratt

This April, we celebrated independence! Our farm boy turned 16, which meant I got to retire as my kids' chauffeur. Most country-dwelling families appreciate the gravity of adding another driver to the taxi-cab roster. Multiple trips from farm to school and back again each day aren't unusual.

Farm Boy pulled out of the drive that first morning, heading to school with his sister perched in the passenger

seat of his new-to-him pickup truck. They both had goofy grins on their faces, and my heart lurched.

I knew he was more than prepared. Our farm boy grew up in a tractor, and like many farm kids, he learned the responsibility that

comes with operating machinery early.

The farm's Gator quickly became his "vehicle." He knew the countryside between our families' farmsteads like the back of his hand, traveling waterways and forgotten dirt roads to get from one place to another. He and his sister would take off at dawn: "We're going to check corn!" or "Going to see Grandma!"

I'd holler after them about watching for cars, wearing safety belts and being home before dark. As their comfort level in driving farm equipment grew, so has mine. It is not unusual for both kids to roll onto the farm behind the wheel of a tractor. Still, I catch myself in an audible exhale, unaware I'd been holding my breath. A mother will always worry.

I've realized the bittersweet part of this rite of passage is the road time we will no longer share. Those mundane trips to and from school activities bore witness to insightful conversations, laughter and occasionally, a few tears.

So, I've given Farm Boy fair warning: Every so often, Mom may call shotgun so she can stay in the loop of what's going on.



KATIE PRATT



Katie Pratt writes, tweets and farms from north-central Illinois. Find her blog at theillinoisfarmgirl.com, and follow her on Twitter [@KatiePratt4](https://twitter.com/KatiePratt4).

May Flowers Bring Warm Reminders

BY Tiffany Dowell Lashmet

Flower power may be a phrase dedicated to the hippie era, but I witnessed the real thing in 2020.

Last year, as we found ourselves in the midst of the COVID lockdown, I scrambled to find ways to entertain two preschoolers while still doing my other full-time job.

Who would have thought that a rangeland plant identification book would turn out to be better than tickets to Disney World for my youngsters?

I quickly realized this book might allow us to learn about science and force us outside for some great exercise, and to help expend pent-up energy—the all-important mom goal.

We spent hours walking around the pastures with our book in hand, finding all kinds of different forbs and grasses to identify. The kids took samples and collected flowering plants to put in a vase to decorate the house. They learned which plants were most palatable to cattle and deer. By the end of the summer, they could spot an antelope horn milkweed a mile away.

As the calendar turns, and we approach May once more, I find myself so grateful for the friend who gifted us that book and the lessons it offered. No, I don't just mean the different plants I can now identify on command, although I do enjoy my newfound expertise.

I'll forever treasure the joy of spending hours together uninterrupted by trips or meetings. There's nothing quite like seeing a child's face light up when they learn something new. The pride my kids have about our land and the understanding it belongs to them, too, rests easy on my heart.

Yes, we've endured some hard times in 2020, but there were beautiful times, too. May those May flowers serve as lifelong reminders of how simple things bloom when we are together.



TIFFANY DOWELL LASHMET



Tiffany Dowell Lashmet balances ranching, children and a career in ag law from the Texas Panhandle. Follow her blog at alwaysafarmkid.com, on Instagram [alwaysafarmkid](https://www.instagram.com/alwaysafarmkid) and on Twitter [@TiffDowell](https://twitter.com/TiffDowell).

Start-Ups Offer New Way To Invest in Farmland

Farmers and ranchers have understood the value of farmland since the U.S. opened wide swaths of the plains for homesteading. But, in the last century, and truly within the past couple of decades, farmland has transformed into an investment.

While farmers remain the top bidders and buyers at auctions and sales across the country, investors are still a part of the picture. Most recently, Bill Gates may come to mind, but newer, more creative approaches make farmland investments more accessible to young urban professionals and other retail investors.

Unlike real estate investment trusts, which offer more diversified portfolios and are often traded on an exchange, several start-up companies have begun buying farms and offering retail investors the opportunity to buy a share of an operation. While many focus on specialty crops, they're in the commodity space, too.

For example, a company called FarmTogether closed what it called the "largest single-asset crowdfunded farmland investment to date" in March. It's a 201-acre organic apple orchard in Washington state for \$22 million. It plans to replant the orchard with two organic apple varieties and includes an operating deal with Stemilt Growers, one of the largest tree fruit growing, packing and shipping companies in the state.

Another company, AcreTrader, recently advertised a 270-acre farm in the Missouri Bootheel that historically grows soybeans and cotton. It requires a minimum investment of \$23,250 that must be held for a certain amount of time. According to a University of Missouri Extension survey, the average price for average-quality farmland in the Bootheel is \$5,835.

While I doubt this business model will revolutionize the farmland market, especially with corn and soybean prices where they are, I think it bears watching. It appeals to the growing number of sustainability-conscious investors, as well as those who would love to own a piece of what they can't afford to own outright. After a volatile year in the stock market, I'm sure there are plenty who'd welcome farmland's relative stability. By removing the high cost of entry and management responsibilities, it makes investing in farmland easier and more accessible, which is often the first step toward popularity. ///



GREG LANZA



Katie Dehlinger
DTN Farm Business Editor

- Read Katie's business blog at ABOUT.DTNPF.COM/BUSINESS.
- You may email Katie at katie.dehlinger@dtn.com, or visit [@KatieD_DTN](https://twitter.com/KatieD_DTN) on Twitter.

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Patch Burns Heal the Prairie

Rotating the management tool on small sections of pastures boosts ranch efficiency and restores diverse wildlife and native plant populations.

For nearly 50 years, Ed Koger has practiced land-management principles he learned from his grandparents on his family's historic ranch in south-central Kansas. During that time, he has developed an "almost genetic," deeply instilled sense of responsibility to protect the prairie.

His work is obvious, even on a dry, late-August drive through the Hashknife Ranch, eight by 10 miles of unbroken native tallgrass pastures. Koger's Ram pickup travels familiar trails, flushing quail ahead of it. As the trail leads to high ground, one can gaze the landscape in nearly any direction and see pastures of varying shades of green, dotted with Koger's 1,100 high-quality Angus cows, and up to 1,500 yearlings.

Not as obvious is a diverse population of wildlife, a resource with an important role in the ranch's economics. "When I first moved here from the Flint Hills in 1974, 30% or more of this ranch was covered with Eastern red cedar and other brush," Koger explains.

BURNING BRUSH

As a member of a Kansas ranching family with roots in the Flint Hills region since the 1850s, Koger was no stranger to burning pastures. "My grandfather taught me fire was the best tool we have for the natural regeneration of the prairie and various species that live there," he explains.

The prairie ecosystem depends upon the climate, grazing and fire to remain vital and sustain life. "You cannot eliminate any of the three and preserve the prairie," he says. The climate provides sunlight and rain. Grazing has always been a part of the prairie,

as various ruminants—bison, elk, deer, antelope and, more recently, cattle—depended upon the grasses, and through their migration and foot traffic, they recycled nutrients. "Fire is a disrupter that complements the grazing by removing invasive woody species, speeds nutrient recycling and provides for lush new growth," Koger adds.

He prefers the "patch burn" method that involves only specific parts of a given pasture within the ranch on a rotational basis, although he still tries to get fire on every acre at least every five years, if possible. "Our biggest pastures are about 4,000 acres, and the smallest is 1,200 acres, which we split into a pair of 600s and rotate burns there," he explains. "We usually start burning in April and continue through early summer. I want some green growth started before we burn."



BURNING STRATEGY

By burning smaller sections of pastures, Koger says the "rested" areas develop a higher level of plant diversity and populations. Grasses two to three years after a burn grow thicker and provide more cover for wildlife and winter forage for cattle. "When you burn whole pastures, you can do some harm to wildlife," he says. "When we did that, we'd find a number of turtle shells in the aftermath of a fire. Now that we're burning smaller areas at a time, we seldom see that kind of thing.

"When you leave an adjacent pasture to rest, quail, prairie chickens and turkey have access to cover from predators where you stopped burning. Like the cattle, they also prefer to feed on nearby burned areas as the grasses begin their flush of growth. With that growth comes populations of insects, feed for upland birds."

Koger says he's learning more about patch-burn tactics and how to use smaller fires in stocking his pastures. "Through the years, we noticed after a fire, leadplant, a prairie legume, flourished. We also noticed yearling cattle wouldn't touch it, but mature cows would eat it readily," he explains. "So, now we coordinate fire plans and stocking decisions to ensure the leadplant gets several years of rest between grazing and burning."

THE RESULTS

Koger's prescribed burning has been a management mainstay on the Hashknife since 1977. The results include many things besides improved cattle performance. "We have seen better breedback percentages and better weaning weights as we've progressed. And, a pen of 300 of our cattle in the feedlot will grade 100% Prime or Choice consistently, so we're doing something right," he says. "One telltale sign the cattle prefer burned pastures is we'll typically find them on burned acres 80% of the time."

Not so obvious are the lack of windmills and watering tanks on the Hashknife Ranch.

"This ranch used to have a lot of windmills," Koger explains. "We don't need them now that we got rid of the cedars. We gradually noticed more running water on the ranch as the springs reappeared with the restored natural water table. The ranch has lots of draws now with stands of cattails and wet spots that didn't exist before we started burning."

Diversity in plants and bird populations has benefited from Koger's rotational patch-burning practices. In a recent Kansas State University inventory of the ranch in conjunction with the Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative, the Hashknife Ranch is home to 125 bird species, 58 grass species and nearly 150 species of forbs, which also account for 30 to 40% of the cattle's diet.

Quail numbers, too, benefit from Koger's management. Overall numbers on the ranch have remained stable, with a 50-50 mix of carryover versus "new hatch" birds during the past 10 years. "I think the habitat of older pastures next to burned pastures is responsible for our consistent quail numbers," he says. "I clean a lot of quail for customers, and even well into the cold-weather part of quail season, we see they are still eating lots of insects."



PROVIDED BY HASHKNIFE RANCH

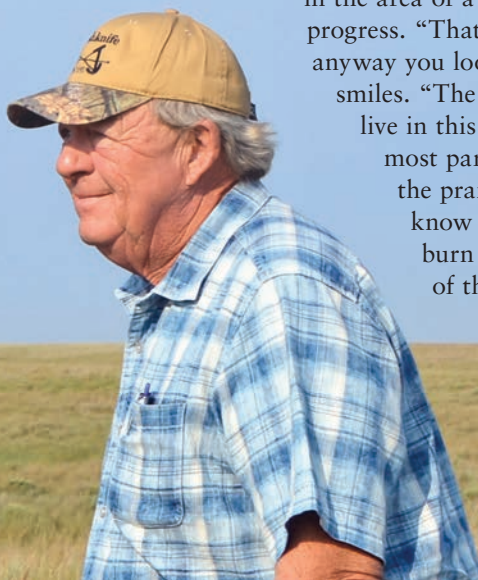
More than 47 years of burning, Ed Koger has noticed better weaning weights and faster breedback for his 1,100-head Angus cow herd. The Hashknife Ranch also hosts up to 1,500 yearlings each year to harvest the invigorated prairie grasses.

The Hashknife Ranch has been hosting deer, quail and wild turkey hunters for 19 years. Hundreds of Rio Grande turkeys thrive on the patch-burn pastures, and Koger estimates the ranch is home to more than 300 Lesser Prairie-Chickens—up from a few birds in the mid-1980s. "We've found land management that's good for our cattle business is also very good for wildlife. We have cultivated an enviable presence of well-nourished and developed white-tail deer."

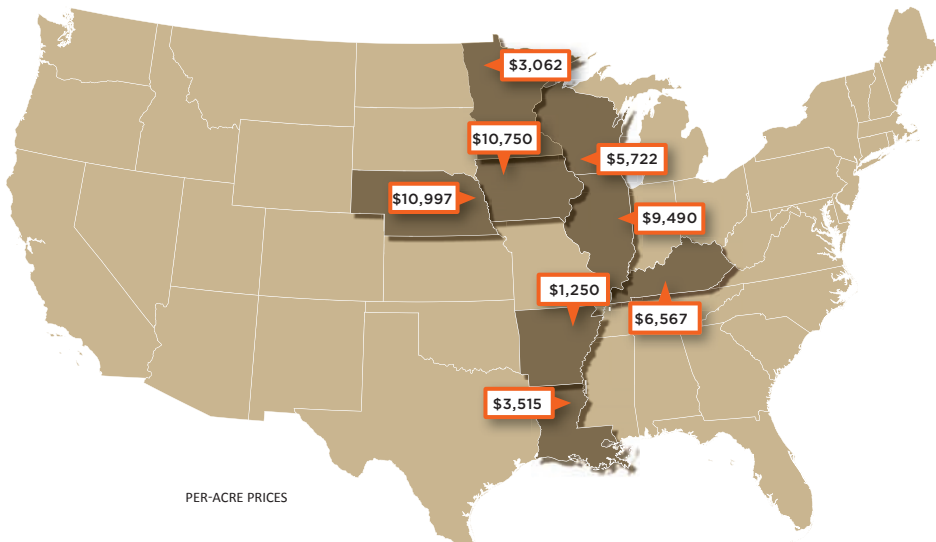
Through the years, several of Koger's neighbors have begun managing their ranches with fire across Kiowa, Comanche and Barber counties southwest of Pratt, Kansas. Last year, the area saw 28,000 acres of prairie treated with controlled burns. The widespread use of controlled burns also has slowed the spread of wildfires.

Asked about local public perception of frequent controlled burns, Koger took out his smartphone and played a recording of a local emergency dispatcher calling to alert his crews of an impending wind change

in the area of a burn in progress. "That's good PR anyway you look at it," he smiles. "The people who live in this area for the most part respect the prairies and know we have to burn to take care of them." ///



Recent Farmland Sales



ARKANSAS, Sharp County. A 200-acre property comprised of two wooded parcels sold for \$250,000. The property is described as recreational, with hunting areas and home or cabin sites. Average price per acre was \$1,250. **CONTACT:** Joel King, Peoples Co.; joel@peoplescompany.com; **870-847-0945**
www.peoplescompany.com

ILLINOIS, Champaign and Ford Counties. A 432-acre farmland property sold for \$4.1 million at auction. Average price per acre was \$9,490, with average per tillable acre at \$10,490. The farm was made up of high-quality silt loam soils and had a weighted Productivity Index of 140.9. At the time of auction, the lease was open for 2021. The farm had a history of corn and soybean production. Weighted yield average for corn was 191.7 bushels per acre, soybeans, 61.1 bushels. **CONTACT:** Eric Sarf, Murray Wise Associates LLC; eric@mwallc.com; **217-840-0454**
www.murraywiseassociates.com

LOUISIANA, Franklin and Gill Parishes. Farmland totaling 320 acres sold for \$1.12 million, or \$3,515 per

acre. The property was described as all farmland, with sandy loam soils and irrigation across the operation. **CONTACT:** Tracey Weems, Brown Realty Co.; tweems@brownrealty.com; **318-728-9544**
www.brownrealtyco.com

KENTUCKY, McLean County. Three noncontiguous tracts totaling about 95 acres sold at auction for \$623,900, or an average price of \$6,567 per acre. The 92-acre tract, which was almost all cropland, averaged \$5,700 per acre. Some land was tilled; otherwise, there were no structures on the 92-acre tract. **CONTACT:** Amy Whistle, Kurtz Auction and Realty Co.; amy@kurtzauction.com; **800-264-1204**
www.kurtzauction.com

IOWA, Pocahontas County. An 80-acre tillable tract of farmland sold at auction for \$860,000, or \$10,750 per acre. The property included a wind turbine and held a 77.5 CSR2 rating. It sold to an investor, with the buyer assuming the current crop share lease for 2021. **CONTACT:** John Kirkpatrick, Murray Wise Associates LLC; john@mwallc.com; **515-532-2878**
www.murraywiseassociates.com

MINNESOTA, Marshall County. A 160-acre farm sold in one tract at auction for about \$490,000, or \$3,062 per acre. All cropland, the acreage had a Soil Productivity Index of 86.5 and included bases in corn and soybeans. Average corn yield was 86 bushels per acre, soybeans, 28 bushels per acre. **CONTACT:** Steve Dalen, Pifer's Land Auctions; sdalen@pifers.com; **701-893-8517**
www.pifers.com

NEBRASKA, Dodge County. Irrigated farmland totaling about 240 acres sold in two tracts in a sealed-bid auction for about \$2.64 million, or \$10,997 per acre. Two pivots were on the property, one staying and one going with the tenant. **CONTACT:** Ed Olson, Olson Pearson Auction and Realty; ed.olsonpearson@gmail.com; **800-820-3934**
www.olsonpearson.com

WISCONSIN, Grant County. The Kirschbaum Land and Cattle Co. auctioned 830 acres in six tracts. Total sales price was \$4.75 million, or \$5,722 per acre. Average acre price by parcel ranged from \$3,100 to \$9,900. The property, which sold to five buyers, was a mixture of cropland, hunting ground and pasture. Crops produced on the property included corn, soybeans and oats. Outbuildings included a shop, grain storage, a farmstead, hog barn and cattle-working areas. **CONTACT:** Dwight Hofland, dhofland@pifers.com, or Bob Pifer, bob@pifers.com, Pifer's Auction and Realty; **877-477-3105**
www.pifers.com

These sales figures are provided by the sources and may not be exact because of rounding.

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THE SKINNY ON **20s**

Two decades of shaving row widths serves up lessons in Indiana.

Scott Wallis didn't get narrow-minded overnight. The Princeton, Indiana, farmer studied the idea of moving to 20-inch rows for three years before making the switch in both corn and soybeans.

Narrow-row beans were a no-brainer. It was corn that required the numbers crunching. While Wallis was convinced reducing row width would result in a more efficient corn factory, the need for both a specialized planter and a 20-inch corn head made the decision more than an impulse buy.

The question of how to supply additional groceries to a hungry corn crop without tearing it up was another piece of the puzzle.

"It's difficult to dip your toe in and just try 20-inch rows without making a financial commitment," Wallis

says. It's not like you can easily hire or rent everything it takes to try the practice on for size.

"The planter and fertilizer rig could be changed back to 30-inch rows, but we faced a financial hit on a 20-inch corn head if things didn't work out," he adds.

That was 20 years ago. This spring, Wallis Farms, which includes Scott's father, Bob; his son, J.R.; and son-in-law, Brad Winter, will plant 1,850 acres of corn and 1,550 acres of soybeans on 20-inch spacings. In 2019, they bought into the system further with the addition of a second 20-inch-row planter (John Deere 1795 24Row20) to allow simultaneous planting of both crops.

And, they've learned a lot along the way analyzing and tweaking the agronomics, while weighing how each change influences timeliness and labor requirements.



A narrow-row corn crop gets hungry, and Wallis Farms uses sidedressing to meet the yield goals of each field.

TAP THE SUN

Indiana-based Advanced Agrilytics, an agronomic consulting firm that helps link precision with production in eight Midwestern states, notes that Wallis Farms is on track with the thinking of many of its customers.

Narrow rows first became popular in northerly climates, as farmers reached to capture more sunlight and gain an edge on weed control as rows canopy more quickly, observes Aaron Gault, Advanced Agrilytics lead agronomist.

“Early on, farmers in areas with shorter day lengths tended to see a bigger yield response to the practice,” Gault explains. “Over the past decade, we’ve seen the practice move south as growers seek ways to build a bigger plant, harvest more sunlight and more intensely manage their crop.”

Advanced Analytics research confirms anecdotal reports that better plant-to-plant spacing in 20-inch rows makes a difference. “Several years ago, we took plants back to the lab and dried them down, and found that we were producing 25% more biomass in 20-inch rows compared to 30s,” Gault reports.

USE THE SHADE

Row spacing and seeding rate both change the spatial arrangement of plants in the field, which further enhances the ability of the plant to capture sunlight, nutrients and water. Wallis has found the population sweet spot for 20-inch corn to be 36,000 to 38,000 plants per acre. “We probably plant 10 to 15% more than the 30-inch-row guys in this area,” he says.

“In 2020, we had a big 80-acre test plot split between 38,000, 40,000 and 42,000 population with different foliar feeding programs. It was the first time we’ve seen those higher populations be economic. We’re continuing to test population rates and look at hybrid differences and how they respond to both seeding rate and narrow rows,” Wallis continues.

Hybrids with good agronomic characteristics, such as stalk strength, standability and disease tolerances, are another must, he notes. Beyond doing a better job of collecting sunlight to convert to energy, the thick canopy in 20-inch rows is the equivalent of lowering the shades in your house when the sun is beating down.

“It will be about 3 to 5° cooler inside a 20-inch row compared to 30s. When you get to really hot days when the crop starts hurting, maybe you can withstand just a little bit more before the straw breaks the camel’s back,” he says.

At the same time, air movement changes in narrower spacings. Field interiors don’t dry as quickly in higher rainfall periods, and the humid conditions are perfect for disease development.

“Fungicides aren’t even a question for us anymore, especially since Southern rust is a frequent problem,” Wallis says. A generic azoxystrobin [Gold Rush] goes out at V5, followed by an aerial application of Trivapro or Veltyma at brown silk.

Gault sees the benefit of two fungicide passes, because narrow rows often experience an earlier onset of gray leafspot. “Two passes have been huge as we try to keep photosynthesis working with all this extra biomass and also take advantage of extended grain fill,” he says.

FEED THE FACTORY

For Wallis Farms, the most tinkering in 20s has come with the need to feed a demanding crop. “I wasn’t sure we’d ever be able to sidedress our whole crop in a timely manner,” Wallis confesses.

They had been weaning themselves from preplant anhydrous applications when a late planting situation in 2015 forced the issue. Wallis sold the anhydrous applicator and never looked back.

Moving to a 60-foot corn planter also opened up the opportunity to widen two rows to 24 inches to >



Wallis Farms includes four generations of family. (Left to right) Brad Winter and sons, Ben and Henry; Scott Wallis; J.R. Wallis and sons, Bobby and Brody; and Bob Wallis.

accommodate a tractor and sidedress rig outfitted with tracks. That leaves the two rows outside the track rows on 18-inch centers. Real-Time Kinematic (RTK) guidance helps thread the narrower widths.

“We tear out approximately 30% less corn with tracks than we did using a single-wheel system,” Wallis says. “I was

always fighting to keep the wheel machine on row, especially in hilly situations. Plus, we have 50% more coulters in the ground to help keep us anchored.”

This year, Wallis Farms is installing Precision Planting Conceal planter fertility attachments on its John Deere DB60 36row20 corn planter. A knife running beside the seed in the groove of the gauge wheel places liquid fertilizer in a 2 x 2 x 2 band. The plan is to run 42 units of nitrogen (N) and 8 units of sulfur (S) in this banded treatment. Another 3 units of N, 8 units of phosphorus (P) and 1 unit of potassium (K) will be applied in-furrow at planting.

The remaining nitrogen, between 190 to 220 units, and 26 to 31 units of S are applied at V3 to V5—a critical stage for ear shoot formation. “We adjust sidedress amounts for the yield goal of each individual field,” Wallis says.

Putting all the N out early doesn’t leave enough in the right form when the corn plant needs it most, he believes. “We like 32% for ease of handling and besides, anhydrous tank wheel spacings don’t fit 20-inch rows,” he says.

The guts of their FAST brand liquid fertilizer sidedress applicator is mostly standard issue, with the exception of the additional 20-inch coulters and some plumbing adjustments to adapt to 20-inch-row configuration.

The tank has a 2,600-gallon capacity, and tractor side tanks each carry 500 gallons. “We’re putting on 60 to 80 gallons of product per acre. That’s around 45 to 60 acres per complete fill. The fewer times we go into that standing crop, the less we tear up,” he says.

EVEN YIELD ADVANTAGES

Spread out over 30 miles and four counties, and the states of Illinois and Indiana, Wallis Farms embraces different growing environments. One thing Wallis has noticed is a consistency to his crop since adopting

the 20-inch configuration.

“I’ll be the first to admit that we’ve not seen huge yield jumps that I can attribute specifically to the row spacings,” Wallis says. “What we see is extreme consistency across the different classes of ground we’re farming.”

Since the farm moved to 20-inch rows two decades ago, whole field averages have risen from 200 bushels per acre (bpa) to 280 bpa. “Last year, our most-productive ground was 10 to 15 bushels under record yields, and our least-productive ground had record yields by 10 to 20 bushels,” he explains. “We’ve been able to raise yields on all ground, but the biggest improvement has been in the medium and poorer soil types.”

SQUEEZE THE WEEDS

Cheap weed control doesn’t enter into discussions very often these days, but early canopy closure is paying off for Wallis. A burndown application of glyphosate and atrazine, followed by a post application tank mix that includes mesotrione, brings the corn weed-control program in under \$20 per acre.

Advanced Agrilytics lead soybean agronomist AJ Woodyard also likes the way narrow-row beans close the row to preserve moisture and crowd out soybean weeds.

Tracks and RTK guidance help Scott Wallis (below) negotiate narrow-row spacings.

“The 20-inch row may canopy a day or two slower than a 15-inch, but significantly ahead of 30-inch rows. The benefits to yield and weed control are real,” Woodyard says. “Our data shows a 3- to 5-bushel increase in soybeans from switching to a narrow soybean row configuration such as 15- or 20-inch.”

The desire to plant early soybeans as fast as possible in recent years has caused some farmers to shy away from narrow rows as a matter of convenience. Going back to larger 30-inch-row planters has allowed for more planting progress in the spring.

“However, a challenge in 30-inch soybeans is the increased duration of weed control required, which has resulted in the need to add a residual product to the postemergence tank mix. Faster canopy closure from narrow rows is another tool farmers have to increase success in those situations,” Woodyard says. ///

► Follow Pamela Smith on Twitter @PamSmithDTN

Thoughts On Tight Rows

Like any practice, moving to 20-inch rows has trade-offs. Here are some thoughts from farmer Scott Wallis:

- **Weigh the investment.** A 20-inch-row planter can cost 50% more than a comparable 30-inch-row planter. Corn heads may cost the same, but you're covering less physical area. If you trade equipment frequently, the benefits may not offset the equipment cost.
- **Figure fertility logistics.** How will you negotiate that narrow row without tearing up crop?
- **Count weed control in the savings column.** But, don't count on canopy closure to do all the work. A strong herbicide program is still a must.

“It’s difficult to dip your toe in and just try 20-inch rows without making a financial commitment.”

—Scott Wallis





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Continuous Soybean Considerations

Here are five tips to counter the challenges of growing soybeans after soybeans.

Bailey Family Farm of Xenia, Illinois, thrives on planting continuous soybeans. This year, soybeans make up 80% of the family's acres.



Economics and market fundamentals may prompt some farmers to abandon traditional crop rotation in favor of more soybeans this spring.

But growing continuous soybeans can be risky. Disease, insect concerns and yield drag, among other reasons, are often a deterrent. A study published in 2017 in the *Agronomy Journal* indicates a 10.3% yield drag, on average, is associated with continuous soybeans.

However, growers can take steps to manage these and other agronomic challenges to get the most out of consecutive soybean crops.

“Some farmers see continuous soybeans as a viable option when prices are high,” says Clarke McGrath, an agronomist and on-farm research and Extension coordinator for the Iowa Soybean Research Center at Iowa State University. Soybean futures have soared more than \$5 per bushel since last August. The May contract neared \$14.30 per bushel on April 1 thanks to strong exports, especially from China, robust domestic use and supply concerns.

Planting soybeans after soybeans isn't an option for every farmer or every field, McGrath adds. But, many growers make it work. “Farmers can reduce the risk but not eliminate it with good management. It can set them up for success.”

Cole and Zach Bailey intend to plant more than 80% of the 12,000 acres they farm with their parents near Xenia, Illinois, to nongenetically modified soybeans this year. Corn and winter wheat are often part of the mix, but the family has long favored a soybean-centric rotation. Some years, they grow soybeans exclusively.

The Bailey brothers see less risk growing soybeans than corn on their heavy clay soils that are always “a week away from drought.” They believe intense management can overcome agronomic challenges of continuous production to make the system productive and profitable.

“People say you need to rotate crops, [but] they aren't paying [the farm's] bills,” Zach Bailey explains. “You need to put pencil to paper. With soybean prices now, [continuous] soybeans is a no-brainer for some farmers.

“If you stay on top of management, you can grow a heck of a soybean crop year after year,” he adds. The Baileys' soybean yields average 45 to 50 bushels per acre (bpa). In Clay County, where their farm is based, the average soybean yield was 40.5 bpa in 2019, according to USDA.

Here are five tips to increase your odds of success with planting soybeans after soybeans.

1 CHOOSE FIELDS CAREFULLY

“I would say the No. 1 thing for farmers to consider is land,” McGrath says.

Agronomists recommend choosing well-drained, productive fields. If possible, avoid ground with a history of heavy weed, disease and soybean cyst nematode (SCN) pressure. SCN is the top soybean pest yield-robber in the nation.

Pat Holloway, a field agronomist with Beck's Hybrids, says farmers should test fields for SCN if they haven't already. “This is a key step. If SCN populations are moderate to high, farmers run the risk of escalating SCN pressure with soybeans on soybeans and reducing yields.” >

Breakthrough From #1 U.S. Hospital Clears up Sinus and Nasal Problems - Fast!

New discovery targets infected throat mucus - to stop post nasal drip, congestion, runny noses, coughing, sneezing, ringing ears, and sore throats

By **Wayne B. Roberts**

Associated Health Press

Doctors at a medical center based in Minnesota have discovered the real cause of nearly all sinus and nasal infections. They were shocked to find it is infectious fungi you inhale through your nose.

Now, a breakthrough 100% natural formula, **Sinuprol**, can help get rid of chronic sinus infection, called "sinusitis" – an insidious condition that can lead to blood clots and brain infection, causing abscesses, meningitis, and even death!

The sinus infection can also spread to your facial bones, triggering headaches, fever, and swelling in the eye socket -- which in some cases can cause loss of vision.

How Sinuprol works

Sinuprol is the **FIRST** nasal treatment that can quickly flush infected mucus from your nose -- without surgery.

Antibiotics, antihistamines, and steroid-containing nasal sprays are no help in fighting sinus infection. In fact, over-the-counter decongestant sprays can actually harm the small hairs lining your nose, causing mucus to build up even more.

The result? Only Sinuprol can dry up runny noses, end constant coughing, and unclog your swollen nasal channels – safely, swiftly, and effectively.

"Up to now, the cause of chronic sinusitis has not been known," says Dr. David Sherris, ENT. "In fact, fungus is likely the cause of nearly all these problems."

Dr. Gary Bennett, MD says, "The root cause of fungal sinus infections is the exposure to fungus and mold spores in the air. Once inhaled, the fungi can become lodged in the mucosal lining of the sinuses."

Fungi triggers 96% of sinus problems

Top doctors have found that chronic sinus infection is caused by inhaling 40 differ-

ent types of infectious fungus in the air you breathe. The proof? In a study of 210 people with sinus infections, 96% of them had fungus in their mucus.

Did you know you take approximately 24,000 breaths daily, inhaling 90 percent of the infection-causing fungi in your body through your nose? Or that insulation with poor ventilation, plus indoor mold and air pollutants, have triggered a plague of sinus and nasal problems affecting millions?

How? These harmful fungi hide in your throat, where they infect your mucus, causing your nasal passages to swell up.

Result: Congestion, dripping mucus, runny nose, endless sneezing, constant coughing, ringing in your ears, sore throat, and tenderness of the face. No wonder millions of sinus sufferers are now rejoicing about this new solution!

The natural alternative to nasal sprays

Sinuprol is a unique drug-free formulation made from all-natural ingredients. These include *Urtica Dioica*, *Pinus Maritima*, *Petasites Hybridus*, and other herbs clinically proven to fight fungal infection.

For instance, a clinical study published in the *Journal of Phytotherapy Research* found that *pinus maritima* extract reduced nasal symptoms by 42% in just 8 weeks. In addition, Sinuprol also supports your upper respiratory system, so that you breathe more freely.

Dries up runny noses

A stuffed-up nose may be just a cold. Or, it may be something far worse: a sinus infection, otherwise known as "sinusitis."

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), about 37 million Americans suffer from sinusitis. Sinus infections are responsible for 16 million doctor visits and \$150 million annually spent on prescription medications.

Helps with allergies, too.

"Allergic rhinitis" is a chronic nose cold sparked by an allergy attack. Sinuprol can help end the sneezing, watery eyes, and congestion caused by allergic rhinitis. How? By blocking and sweeping out dust, mold, pollen, fungus, and animal hair before they cause bigger problems.

In a study appearing in *Advances in Therapy*, 580 patients took 16 mg of butterbur leaf extract,



STUNNING RESEARCH SHOWS that 38 different kinds of harmful fungus may be hidden in your mucus, causing sinus nightmares. Now a new doctor approved treatment dissolves infected mucus to help you breathe easier.

an active ingredient in Sinuprol, daily for 2 weeks. The symptoms of allergic rhinitis, which included sneezing and congestion, improved in 90% of the participants.

Keeps your nose fungus-free

Having sinus infection is not the norm: The National Institutes of Health reports that "healthy sinuses contain no bacteria or other germs. Mucus is able to drain out and air is able to circulate."

Whether your sinus discomfort is the result of an allergy, a fungus, virus, or from a bacterial infection, Sinuprol can help drain away infected mucus. The formula is manufactured in an FDA-registered facility. And no prescription is required.

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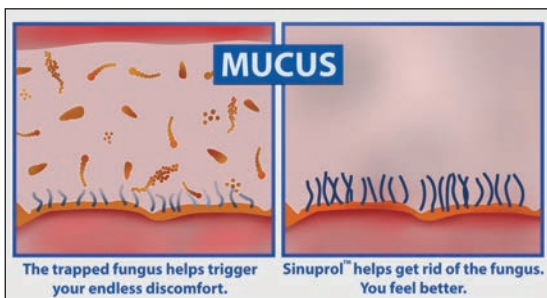
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2 PRACTICE DISEASE AND PEST MANAGEMENT

Seedling diseases such as Pythium, Phytophthora and Fusarium can pose enhanced challenges in continuous soybeans since the disease cycle isn't broken by a different crop. The same goes for foliar diseases such as frogeye leafspot and brown spot. SCN and sudden death syndrome (SDS) are also a concern.

Tony Lenz, a technical agronomist with Stine Seed, says good preplanting and in-season management is critical to continuous soybean success. Scout fields for disease and insect pressure during the growing season, and treat for both as needed.

"With any continuous crop, you have to up your management," Lenz says. "Make sure soybean seed treatments have a good disease package and pick varieties that are defensive [fend off diseases better]. Switch varieties, trait packages and chemistries to mitigate resistance issues in the future."

3 DEPLOY WEED CONTROL

Start with a clean field, if possible. Use multiple herbicide sites of action, use recommended rates and spray weeds in a timely fashion. Consider a layered residual program, and scout diligently.

The Baileys start with a clean, tilled field. A preemergent herbicide is applied. In-season applications are done, as needed, to prevent weeds from growing more than 1 inch tall, if possible. Multiple residual herbicides are layered during the growing season.

"Herbicide-resistant weeds and buildup of the weed seed bank are legitimate concerns," Zach Bailey says. "We rotate chemistries and traits. Next year, we'll switch to the Enlist platform."

4 FINE-TUNE FERTILITY

Pay close attention to soil fertility. Soil test, as needed.

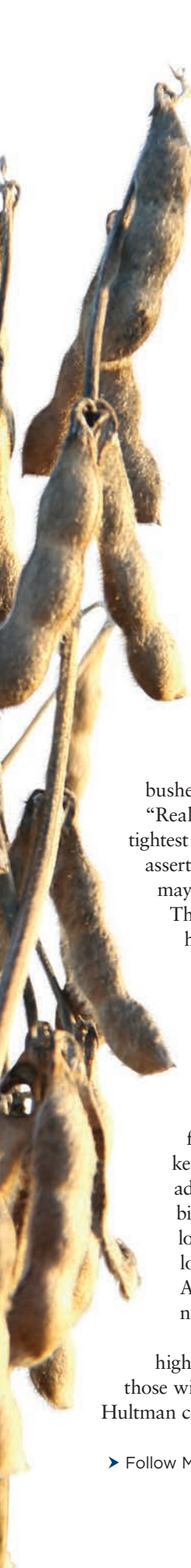
Potassium (K) is a key nutrient to watch. Soybeans remove about 1.4 pounds of K for every bushel of production. That's 98 pounds of K per acre for soybeans averaging 70 bpa. A preseason potash or K application may be needed to ensure soils are at the recommended level, which can vary among soils and regions.

"Fields that are inherently low in potassium levels are



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not a good choice for continuous soybeans,” Holloway says. “Soybeans remove more than in a typical corn/soybean rotation.”

Soil pH is also important. Agronomists recommend pH levels of 6.0 and above for soybeans. Anything lower could affect plant nutrient uptake.

Chicken litter is key to the Bailey fertility program. They typically variable-rate 3 to 10 tons per acre to provide necessary K, phosphorus, nitrogen and micronutrients.

5 GATHER MARKET CLUES

The nation’s farmers intend to plant 87.6 million acres of soybeans this year, according to the USDA “Prospective Planting Report” released March 31. That’s 5% higher than 2020.

DTN Lead Analyst Todd Hultman says numbers may entice more farmers to plant continuous soybeans. USDA estimates U.S. soybean ending stocks for the 2020–21 marketing year at 120 million bushels, a seven-year low.

“Realistically, the U.S. is on track for having the tightest supply situation in U.S. history,” Hultman asserts. “This is the main reason many farmers may want to increase soybean acres in 2021. The tight carry is apt to keep harvest prices higher than normal for new-crop soybeans.”

The current soybean-corn price ratio based on new-crop futures prices is 2.61 to 1, which slightly favors soybean plantings, Hultman continues. That’s above the 10-year average of 2.46 to 1.

December corn prices have tracked fairly close with soybeans and are apt to keep competing for acres this spring, Hultman adds. USDA’s ending stocks estimate of 1.5 billion bushels of corn in 2020–21 is also the lowest in seven years and has room to go lower by the end of the marketing year in August. However, he points out corn does not show the same risk of running out.

“For that reason, the expectation of much higher soybean prices is a strong incentive for those willing to plant more soybeans in 2021,” Hultman concludes. ///

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ROLE Changes



JOEL REICHENBERGER

Farm leadership transitions require careful review of stakeholder responsibilities.

Of the many challenges in handing the management of a farm or ranch business to the next generation, perhaps the greatest hurdle is psychological.

While the incoming generation's knowledge and skills are important in the succession process, just as critical is the senior generation's mindset, specifically the way its members conceive of their future identity and role.

If you have been a lifelong farmer or rancher, “who” you are has been embedded in “what” you do. In preparing and caring for fields, crops, equipment and animals, you wear the hat of agronomist, animal buyer and seller, veterinarian, mechanic, equipment operator, input purchaser, risk manager, commodity marketer—and that is just a portion of the list. When you prepare to stop doing those things, how do you begin to think about your purpose and your role?

That question has vexed a good many people over the years, and the inability to come up with a good answer often causes the senior generation to hold on to day-to-day decisions much longer than they should or ignore the important, long-term issues facing the business. The younger generation becomes increasingly frustrated, and conflict ensues.

Family members on the cusp of handing off the daily operation of the business should conceive of their roles differently. Consider the following two role changes.



Write Lance Woodbury at *Family Business Matters*, 2204 Lakeshore Dr., Suite 415, Birmingham, AL 35209, or email lance.woodbury@kcoe.com.

FROM PRODUCER TO PARTNER

This suggests a transition from doing the daily work to a role of protecting or improving your investment in the business. Instead of being in the middle of daily activities, you are—through ownership of land or equipment—rooted in the ownership system of the business. Your primary job changes from telling someone how to plant corn or work cattle (although you surely have some wisdom to offer), to how to achieve a good return on the capital invested.

Buying or trading land, determining appropriate rents, improving operating agreements, managing estate taxes or working on a strategy to gift or sell equipment to the next generation should become the focus.

FROM FOREMAN TO CHAIRMAN

A foreman is someone who directs and supervises workers. As you built your business over the years, you hired, supervised and rewarded your team for accomplishing goals, such as having equipment ready, timely planting, managing irrigation, working long hours to harvest the crop, feeding livestock or poultry, and trucking the product to market. As foreman, you guided the growth of the farm.

But, being involved in a multigenerational business eventually requires someone to act as a chairman. A chairman oversees the strategic communication of the organization, helps establish policies and fosters good long-term decisions for the business. Someone needs to pay attention to family-member entrance and exit policies, family compensation and benefits, strategic investments and good communication processes between those on and off the farm, especially if off-farm family members will own part of the land or business.

Our rural communities are full of estranged families who had trouble holding the farm together, in part because members of the senior generation did not address or allow the discussion of strategic, long-term family communication and governance. Those members expected or hoped “it would all work out,” and it didn’t. And, part of why it didn’t work out is because the necessary work of a chairman was neglected.

Changing your role is not easy. You have to watch others perform the work you spent decades perfecting. Your input in daily activities becomes less important. You even go through a grieving process. But, new roles are needed. Becoming a partner and chairman offers new challenges and rewards in the succession journey. ///



Write Dr. Ken McMillan at Ask The Vet, 2204 Lakeshore Dr., Suite 415, Birmingham, AL 35209, or email vet@progressivefarmer.com.

Puppies, Puppies Everywhere

We had a stray dog that had puppies in our barn. The puppies are all assorted colors and sizes, and look very different. I have heard that there can be more than one father to a litter. Is this true?

Dr. McMillan: Yes, there can be multiple sires to a litter of puppies. The same is true for litters of kittens. Unlike cows, dogs can stay in heat for several days. During this time, the female can, and often will, mate with more than one sire if they are not confined. Some recent research with dogs shows that litters from multiple sires are often larger, and the second sire often fathers more of the pups than the first sire.

Our beef cow recently threw up lots of rumen contents, including water and partially digested hay. She is eating again, but I would like to know what can cause this?

Dr. McMillan: This seems like a pretty straightforward question, but there can be several issues behind this kind of behavior.

Cows must “chew their cud” for the rumen to function properly. They regurgitate rumen contents while resting and chew this, known as “cud,” for several minutes before reswallowing it. This process is repeated over and over.

In fact, 70% or more of your cows at rest should be chewing their cud. This process grinds up grasses, hay and grains, making them more available for the rumen microbes to digest. Additionally, during this process, cows secrete large volumes of saliva, which has a high pH and is essential in preventing rumen acidosis. If the pH of the rumen gets too low, many of the microbes will die, and the rumen will not function properly.

To keep the rumen healthy and happy, cows need a lot of high-quality long-stem fiber from grasses, hay and silage. Overfeeding supplemental feed or feeding very finely ground feed can lead to rumen acidosis even with adequate long-stem fiber. Poor-quality hay with low energy and protein content can also reduce rumen microbes and lead to acidosis. This can lead to “throwing up” rumen contents as you describe.

Another consideration, although very rare in beef cows, is when the abomasum, or true stomach, becomes displaced or shifts. This most commonly occurs to the left side and is called a left-displaced abomasum (LDA). This can also lead to regurgitation.

Cows will often eat feed or commodities too fast, and become choked. Again, very fine feed is more of an issue. This will often cause them to forcefully cough and gag in an attempt to clear the material from the esophagus. This can occasionally occur with hay, especially poor-quality hay, and is often difficult for the cow to clear. If the cow cannot clear the esophagus, this becomes an emergency situation. Here, the cow will be unable to regurgitate gas produced by the rumen, will bloat and, without treatment, die.

Lastly, any type of irritation or swelling in or around the throat or esophagus can interfere with normal regurgitation. I have seen this caused by ulcers in the mouth or esophagus, or abscesses or tumors around the esophagus.

We raise calves off of dairy farms and sometimes we get a bull calf with a rupture that shows up by the naval at around 8 to 10 weeks. Why is this happening?

Dr. McMillan: These are most likely umbilical hernias. The umbilical cord carries nutrition and removes waste between the dam and the fetus. When the calf is born, that cord should wither away and the body wall seal. If that doesn't happen, there is a weakened area where organs can fall through, including intestines. This can become larger over time, and if the intestines become strangulated, the calf can die.

Another possibility based on what you describe is an infected naval (naval ill). In this case, the umbilical cord is infected and swells. This type of infection can actually lead to infection in other parts of the body, including the joints (joint ill).

If this is a hernia, hernias are soft and can usually be pushed back into the abdomen. If it is naval ill, it is usually hard and can be hot and painful. Umbilical hernias are a recognized genetic defect in cattle and have their highest documented incidence in Holsteins.

Hernias can be surgically repaired with a high rate of success. Naval ill is typically treated with antibiotics and anti-inflammatories.

Please contact your veterinarian with questions pertaining to the health of your herd. Every operation is unique, and the information in this column does not pertain to all situations. This is not intended as medical advice but is purely for informational purposes.



Cattle Market on a Good Run

As prices move in favor of producers, expect more upside the second half of the year.

Pretty much no matter who you ask, things are looking up for the cattle market. How much? As always, there is debate over prices; but few would dispute a 5% bump.

Veteran cattle marketing expert with Oklahoma State University Derrell Peel mixed his outlook with a note of caution during South Dakota State University's virtual Beef Day. It all seemed to be tied to a déjà vu kind of moment that went back to last year.

"We started 2020 saying we thought there would be modest improvements in cattle prices, maybe 5%. Then the pandemic hit, and we revised everything. We ended down 5% for the year," he said. "This year, we are back looking for modest improvement, whether it's calves, feeder cattle or fed cattle. There will be some seasonal volatility, but modest improvements are possible. Much of this happens in the second half of the year."

Peel stressed, however, the potential impact of drought and higher feed prices, or some other "black swan event" could flip the positive outlook overnight.

"Right now, the industry is really looking for the market to tell it where to go from here," he said at publication time. "After last year, we may actually be back into some mode of expansion. I don't see active liquidation, but we are poised to move either direction depending on what happens."

Peel noted during his outlook the trend he sees is one where cattle supplies are "drifting slowly" lower after peaking in 2019. He forecasts by the end of this year, beef cow numbers will drop about 0.6%, beef replacements will increase 0.1%; feeder supplies will drop 0.2%; and cattle on feed will climb 0.3%.

"In 2020, we saw the calf crop down 1.3%, so we are working toward fewer cattle as an industry. The

decline is expected to support prices from a supply standpoint," Peel adds.

AGENCY REPORTS CATCH UP

Corbitt Wall's outlook is also positive. He is a nationally recognized beef economist and livestock market analyst with DVAuction, and a former agricultural market reporter with USDA.

Wall notes the agency's inventory reports have been a source of frustration for many who felt they were late in showing a decline in cattle supplies.

"Finally, we are seeing evidence with a USDA stamp that shows we are in declining supplies, and that's good for markets," he said in late February.

He noted that entering the second quarter of 2021, producers would see significantly tighter numbers for market-ready fed cattle, giving them a gain in the market because of more demand for yearlings and calves.

There are also sharply higher input costs to contend with, he added, with corn over \$5 per bushel, beans at around \$13 per bushel and fuel costs rising. In addition, he said, many believe the U.S. will soon see higher interest rates.

"Money has been cheap, grains have been cheap. That is all changing," he cautioned, adding that between the impact of COVID and cheap corn, the beef industry trended toward carcasses in the 1,500- to 1,700-pound range. This is a market negative from a consumer point of view, even if it has been good for grading with over 80% Choice or better.

But, it is the rising cost of gain that will create opportunities for cattle producers, he stressed.

"Before, we saw cost of gain at 60 to 70 cents per pound. Feedlots could go another 200 or 300 pounds

easier than getting new animals and moving them through the cycle,” Wall explained. “Now, with lower supplies, feedlots will get rid of them sooner with a cost of gain at over \$1 per pound. Looking at efficiency, they will want to market at more reasonable weights, and that helps our market. We are moving those animals through faster.”

Looking at prices, he sees finished fed cattle getting into the \$1.20 range second and third quarter. Feeder steers (#800) should be up to the mid-\$1.50 range by mid-summer. Lightweight calves (#500) could hit the magical \$2-per-pound number at auction markets.

PRODUCTIVITY AND DEMAND

What do the CattleFax analysts have to say about these projections? At the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association’s annual February meeting, held virtually this year, the group painted a bullish picture.

Kevin Good, CattleFax vice president of industry relations and analysis, noted the cattle industry has seen gains in productivity, despite a smaller cow herd, at 31.2 million head—a 1% decline over 2020. Increased carcass weights are the main reason for improved productivity, but the analyst added gains in numbers of weaned calves

per cow exposed, as well as increases in the amount of beef the dairy industry is producing, have played important roles in where the numbers sit today.

Good’s projections indicate beef cow inventory will drop another 200,000 head this year, followed by another drop of 350,000 head in 2022. He expects U.S. steer and heifer slaughter up 2.4% for 2021, at 620,000 more head. But, cold carcass weights, which have been increasing about 5 pounds each year, are likely to drop 4 pounds for 2021, to 826 pounds. Those declines and subsequent pressure on supplies will be more apparent in the second half of the year.

All told, beef production adds up to some 27.6 billion pounds for 2021, an increase of 500 million pounds, or 1.7%. Compared to other proteins, beef production is up, while pork is down 1.5% and poultry up 0.1%. All together red meat and poultry production is flat for 2021.

Good notes beef exports and imports will change approximately the same percentage, with 2021 U.S. beef exports likely up 5%, and imports down 5%. The increased exports are expected to go to China, Japan and South Korea. Declines in imports are expected from Australia and New Zealand. Good notes through 2021 >



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beef export value per head will be at \$325, up from \$313 in 2020. He says 20% of the value of fed cattle has come from the export market since 2017, and the industry needs to continue to emphasize growth in this area.

Good believes that moving through 2021, a big story will be the shift in leverage between sectors throughout the U.S. cattle business. CattleFax analysts project the fed cattle price, as a percent of composite beef cutout price, will be at 49%—up from 43% last year.

“There are plenty of dollars in the system,” Good said. “Last year, the feeder received the lowest percentage [of fed cattle price as a percent of cutout] on record because they had no leverage. We think leverage in 2021 goes back to pre-COVID levels. Today, there are still record numbers on feed, so there are challenges short term; but it will be easier to get a bigger piece of the pie in the second half of the year.”

Looking at price projections, Good said fed steers will average \$108 per cwt to \$128 per cwt for the year. That’s up from \$109 per cwt in 2020. Values will trend up as the year progresses, with the fourth quarter bringing the market to its highest levels.

“We will still see lows in the fall run, but they will be less pronounced in the long-term average, and we will see a nice rally into the end of the year,” he said. “We can see 10 cents to 15 cents higher than a year ago in the fall run, depending on the back end of the fed board.”

Cow/calf producers are optimistically watching markets as they move into the second half of the year.



Good believes producers will see \$135 per cwt to \$160 per cwt on 800-pound steers—again with prices moving seasonally higher as the end of the year nears. On 550-pound steers, the average range will be \$160 to \$180 per cwt.

Utility cows will hold up well, he added, with average price ranges of \$52 to \$72 per cwt. He noted these animals will be a bigger part of the check moving forward. Bred cow values will also be good, with an average of \$1,200 to \$1,900.

CAUTIONARY NOTES

As the industry moves into the second half of this year, DTN livestock analyst ShayLe Stewart offers a few cautionary notes to help maximize returns on the year.

“I believe the real market opportunity this year will be in the last half,” she says. “I realize it’s hard for a producer to sit and wait, and believe. We’ve seen such a sorry market for years, and now when we are flashed those bids from country buyers or at early spring sales, it is hard to hold back. But, we have to look at the big picture and realize every operation is different.”

Stewart points to higher feed costs, higher costs of grass leases and possible issues tied to drought moving through the summer months in some regions. Those areas will demand different marketing strategies.

The analyst says today, some 75% of cow/calf producers market calves in the fall; and this year, that trend isn’t likely to change. But, she stresses, more opportunity may well exist later for those who can economically justify holding back calves a little longer.

“I know it’s a hard matter to chew on,” she says. “If I can get some of my calf crop priced in the spring, why not cover my tail a little and hold back some to ride the market up? It all depends on the size of your operation. You’ll lose that advantage if you don’t have enough calves to make a truckload each time.”

What’s just as crucial, she adds, is knowing where you sit when it comes to cost.

“What does it take for you to see a positive balance sheet?” she asks. “You have to know exactly where you sit. What does it cost you to carry those calves into early 2022? Consider feed costs and availability of forages. Realistically, you can’t make the best decision if you aren’t sure about costs.”

Lastly, Stewart says fuel prices have been low for so long, many may not appreciate the impact higher prices at the pump will have on profits moving forward.

“It will affect everyone. Cow/calf producers, packers, feeders, backgrounders. No one will want to absorb any more costs and will look to push those increases to the next guy. Make a plan and have a couple of outlets lined up to give you some choices, and maybe more negotiating power.” ///

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The Ear Tag Advantage

High-risk calves lose value as feeders shift to less population-based management.

A lot happens to a calf from the time it leaves its dam until its hooves hit the feedlot. Every step of the way is a chance for viral or bacterial exposures that cost buyers time, money and lost gains.

West Texas A&M University's John Richeson says a study comparing treatments of high-risk calves from ranches in the area shows the positives of preconditioning, especially as it relates to bovine respiratory disease (BRD).

One indicator of preconditioning was whether a calf came in with a ranch ear tag. Researchers found calves with tags tended to be significantly better in terms of health and performance.

"If they have a tag in their ear, that tells me they've been handled at least once, and probably there is a higher likelihood they've been vaccinated, were on better nutrition and a mineral program. It's a proxy that shows some previous health management," Richeson notes. He adds one of the biggest challenges feeders need to get ahead of is BRD, a decades-old challenge influenced by an antiquated marketing system and, more recently, an industrywide focus on genetic selection for rapid growth as opposed to disease resistance.

While cow/calf operations are coast-to-coast, the feeding industry is more geographically concentrated, creating the necessity of moving and commingling calves, often over long distances. The journey many calves take from home to feedlot can be incredibly stressful. Richeson says it is not uncommon to see a calf separated from its dam on a Tuesday morning, go through the auction market, be commingled, go to an order buyer facility, be commingled again, spend a night being shipped and finally arrive at the feedlot on a Friday. Within 14 days, BRD outbreaks will often be seen under these conditions because of the chronic stress these calves endure and a lack of preconditioning.

GATHERING THE DATA

The Texas study looked at 479 bull and steer calves from auction markets in central and east Texas during a 56-day receiving period. It compared metaphylaxis with tulathromycin (META) and a modified live virus respiratory vaccine (MLV). The goal was to evaluate



how treatments influence health and growth. At its most basic, the study found health and performance of high-risk feedlot cattle was improved by the META treatment but not by administration of the MLV at the feedlot on arrival.

About 96% of newly arrived cattle are administered an MLV containing viral antigens commonly isolated from BRD-affected cattle, but the efficacy is not well-supported. Waiting to administer the MLV vaccine at 14 to 30 days postarrival, however, resulted in improved outcomes.

"If they came in with preconditioning titers, they had much greater resistance to BRD than the [high-risk] auction-market animals," Richeson explains. "Feedlots recognize the value of preconditioning. There aren't enough of these calves to meet the demand. It's a challenge, because a lot of small cow/calf producers are spread coast-to-coast, and they don't all manage their cow herds in similar ways. It's hard to implement a preconditioning program."

Metaphylaxis remains a highly effective treatment for high-risk calves, but Richeson questions how sustainable this is due to antimicrobial resistance and food-safety concerns. In addition, he points to animal-welfare concerns over high-risk calves.

Richeson says it's important cow/calf producers understand the feedlot industry is moving away from a population-based treatment protocol to one much more

targeted, in which calves are assessed and treated with metaphylaxis on an individual basis.

“We have always managed the population, but moving ahead, we have to manage the individual animal better. This means only those animals that really need and will benefit from treatment will receive it. There is concern about resistance, and we have to target treatment to preserve what we have.”

EARLY VACCINATIONS ARE BETTER

When it comes to cattle, Richeson says there’s acute stress, and there is chronic stress. Understanding the difference explains why it’s better to vaccinate calves as part of a preconditioning program on the ranch than to try to catch them up once they hit the feedlot.

“Acute stress is minimal and short term, and it is immunopriming, meaning it makes the immune system more ready to act,” he explains. “Chronic stress is when there are lots of different stressors added together over a longer time, and that causes immunosuppression. In the context of the beef business, branding would be an acute stress, but that long transport process from dam to the feedlot is a chronic stress. Calves tend to be immunosuppressed when they arrive at a feedlot.”

This suppressed immune system creates a perfect storm to support BRD, which Richeson says is probably the most complicated mammalian disease on the planet.

BRD vaccination aspect, Richeson adds, is not very effective once calves reach the feedlot and are stressed. It may even do more harm than good at that point. The report notes the timing of MLV administration relative to the natural viral challenge and stress-induced immunosuppression is questionable because of increased antigenicity of the vaccine, natural virus exposure and timing of BRD outbreak relative to immunization.

Richeson adds the most important aspect of preconditioning is keeping a calf on the ranch for 45 days or more. Next in importance is early castration and deworming, followed by getting calves bunk-broke and on a good nutritional program. Vaccinations and deworming round out a program that puts calves in the best position to weather transitions from ranch to feedlot. ///

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Effect of Cattle Health on Performance During the Stocker and Feedlot Periods: animal.ifas.ufl.edu/beef_extension/bcsc/2018/proceedings/richeson.pdf



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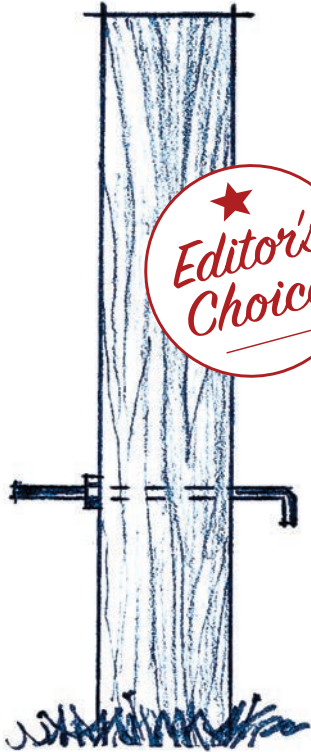
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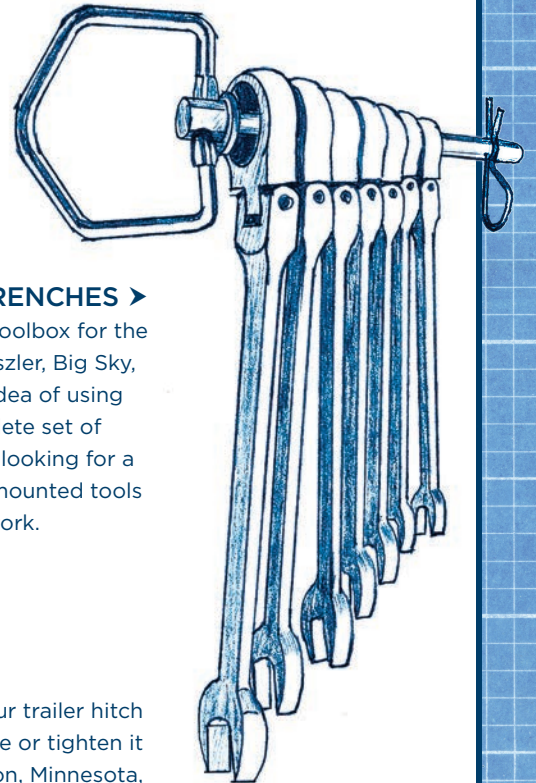
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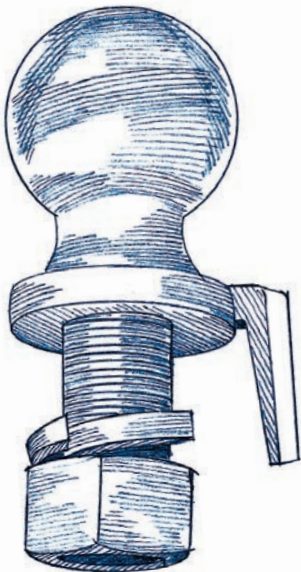
< CROSS THE FENCE

When Thomas Waters III, Damascus, Virginia, wants to cross one of his fences, he does it with a bolt. In this simple fence-crossing fix, Waters uses 12- or 16-inch bolts, depending on the diameter of the fencepost. About 2 feet off the ground, he drills a hole through the fencepost with a diameter slightly larger than the diameter of the bolt. He pushes the bolt through the hole and attaches a nut over the threaded end. When he wants to cross his fences, he equalizes the length of the bolt exposed on either side of the post. Then, he steps up onto the bolt on his side of the fence, puts a leg over the fence and puts his foot down onto the portion of bolt exposed on the other side of the fencepost.



PIN FOR WRENCHES >

After looking through his toolbox for the right-sized wrench, Elliot Iszler, Big Sky, Montana, came upon the idea of using a hitch pin to hold a complete set of wrenches. Now, when he's looking for a wrench, he grabs the pin-mounted tools and takes them all to his work.



< STEADY THE BALL

It is frustrating when the ball on your trailer hitch begins to turn as you try to remove or tighten it into place. Willis Wendland, Balaton, Minnesota, has a fix. He welded a piece of L-shaped flat bar to the bottom of the ball. The piece of steel needs to extend only slightly below the receiver. That length of bar prevents the ball from turning.

WINNING IDEAS: Win \$400 if your idea is chosen as the month's "Editor's Choice" Handy Device. Win \$200 for other ideas used on this page. To submit a Handy Device, please send clear photographs, detailed drawings and a complete explanation of your idea. With each entry, include your name, address and telephone number. Send Handy Device entries to Progressive Farmer Handy Devices, 2204 Lakeshore Dr., Suite 415, Birmingham, AL 35209. Sorry, but we cannot acknowledge submissions or return photographs, drawings or documentation.

Weird Herb Shocks Doctors With Relief of Leg and Feet Pain, Burning, Tingling, Numbness

6 clinical studies show it is effective. Lost but now re-discovered. Thousands of new users report amazing relief from leg and feet problems in just 30 to 90 days – with no side effects. Available in all 50 states without a prescription.

A re-discovery from the 1600s is causing a frenzy within the medical system. A weird herb has been shown in six clinical studies (and by thousands of users) to be very effective for leg and feet pain, burning and numbness – with no side effects – at low cost – and with no doctor visit or prescription needed.

This weird herb comes from a 12-foot tall tree that grows in Greece and other countries in Europe. In the old days, people noticed that when their horses who had leg and feet problems ate this herb – it was almost like magic how quickly their problems got much better. They called it the “horse herb”. Then somehow with Europe’s ongoing wars, this herbal secret got lost in time.

“It works for people who’ve tried many other treatments before with little or no success. Other doctors and I are shocked at how effective it is. It has created a lot of excitement” says Dr. Ryan Shelton, M.D.

Its active ingredient has been put into pill form and improved. It is being offered in the United States under the brand name Neuroflo.

WHY ALL THIS EXCITEMENT?

Researchers have found an herb originally from Greece that has been shown in six placebo-controlled medical studies (543 participants) to be effective and safe. This natural compound strengthens blood vessel walls and reduces swelling to stop the pain and suffering.

Poor blood flow in the legs and feet is one of the common problems that develops as we age. Millions of Americans suffer from neuropathy and chronic venous insufficiency (CVI), edema, and other leg/feet problems – millions have these but are undiagnosed.

Today’s treatments don’t work for a high percentage of people – and they have side effects that make them hard to tolerate or that people do not want to risk. This includes prescription drugs, over the counter pain pills, surgery and compression.

Already popular in Europe, this natural

herb is taking America by storm since it was announced last week.

HOW IT WORKS

Here’s why you have pain now: Your arteries have weakened. Your arteries can’t carry enough blood, nutrients and oxygen down to your legs and feet. This damages your nerves and causes your burning, tingling and numbness.

The herbs in the pill Neuroflo strengthen your arteries that carry blood, nutrients and oxygen to your feet and legs. It improves your circulation so oxygenated blood goes to the nerves and repairs them. This makes your nerves grow stronger so your pain fades away and your legs and feet feel much younger again.

Until now, scientists could not combine these herbs into one pill without losing their full potency, but finally, they have succeeded.

Katerina King from Murrieta, California says, “I had hands and feet tingling and snapping and burning feeling. It made my life very uncomfortable. I had a hard time walking, my legs felt like they each weighed 50 pounds. Once I got in my car and my feet felt so heavy I couldn’t even drive the car. With Neuroflo I have no more tingling, cold or burning painful legs and feet. It went away.”

WHAT DOCTORS ARE SAYING

“Now I finally have a natural solution I can recommend to my patients who suffer from leg and feet problems and pain. I’m delighted because previous treatments were not effective, but Neuroflo has worked for every one of my patients with no side effects” says Dr. Eric Wood, N.D.

Dr. Ryan Shelton, M.D. says “This is new and different. It works for people



who’ve tried many other things before. It is natural with no side effects. Don’t give up hope for your leg and feet pain, burning, tingling and numbing. This pill is working for countless



RE-DISCOVERED LEG AND FEET PROBLEM SOLUTION: In Greece in the 1600s, this herb was originally called “horse herb” because it was fed to horses with ailing legs. It has now been re-discovered and is giving soothing comfort to Americans who have leg and feet pain, burning, tingling and numbness.

people after other treatments have failed them. I highly recommend it.”

“Neuroflo is a terrific choice for people with leg and feet issues. The clinical trials in support of this herb show it is very effective for safe and fast relief,” said Dr. Wood, a Harvard trained doctor who has appeared on award winning TV shows.

Now you can get a good night’s sleep – peaceful, restful sleep – with no pain, tingling, zinging, itching or zapping. Improve your balance and coordination. No side effects – safe to take with other medications. Enjoy your favorite activities and hobbies again. Be more active, have more fun, enjoy life more. Don’t risk irreversible damage to your feet and hands. Don’t get worse and wind up in the hospital or a nursing home.

Neuroflo is GUARANTEED to work for you – or you will get full refund with a 90-day unconditional money-back guarantee. It is NOT sold in stores or online. No prescription or doctor visit is required.

50% OFF FOR THE NEXT 10 DAYS

This is the official release of Neuroflo for Progressive Farmer readers. Therefore, everyone who calls within the next 10 days will receive 50% OFF their first order. A toll-free hotline number has been set up for local readers to call for this 50% OFF savings. The number will be open starting at 7:00 am today and only for the next 10 days.

All you have to do is CALL TOLL-FREE **1-888-994-9356** and provide the operator with the special 50% OFF discount approval code: **NEF158**.

Important: Due to Neuroflo’s popularity and recent media exposure on ABC, CBS and FOX NEWS, phone lines are often busy. If you call and do not get through immediately, please be patient and call back. Those who miss the 10 day deadline for 50% OFF will have to pay more for Neuroflo.



STEVE THOMPSON

Beat the Rust

I have trouble with fertilizer ruining the spreaders on our farm. It causes everything to rust and, in some cases, rust away. It does not matter whether it is liquid fertilizer, dry fertilizer, small spreader for the yard or large spreader that holds tons of fertilizer for the fields, it ruins everything that is not stainless steel, aluminum or titanium. I have two questions. First, why doesn't stainless steel rust? Second, what is the best way to help prevent rust when the spreaders are not in use?

STEVE: You are not alone in fighting rust around fertilizer. It can destroy an expensive fertilizer spreader if it is not maintained.

Many parts of a fertilizer spreader (see photo) are made of stainless steel and aluminum. However, it is not possible to make everything out of stainless steel. Many times, the frame of the machine, belt sheaves, some chains, spreading spinners and other parts are steel. Some fertilizer spreader manufacturers offer more components made of stainless steel, but the cost is higher.

Oxygen and water cause rust on steel, but with the ammonium nitrate, by far the most destructive item added to the formula, rust forms quickly with the added acid from the fertilizer. Ammonium nitrate begins to absorb moisture when the humidity is only 60%, while certain phosphates will not begin to absorb moisture until the humidity is 90%.

Stainless steel is blended with nickel and chromium to help protect it from rusting, thus its name. Actually, stainless steel does rust, but a microscopic film forms and keeps out the oxygen (just like a good paint job on your car).

Unlike paint, stainless steel has the ability to "heal" itself if scratched. Like your skin, it forms another



Write Steve Thompson at Ask The Mechanic, 2204 Lakeshore Dr., Suite 415, Birmingham, AL 35209, or email mechanic@progressivefarmer.com.

protective film. Stainless steel is really a marvel that can be polished (like on a firetruck) to shine like a mirror.

However, it is not made for the novice welder to work on. Stainless steel is for the guy who has worn that cap with the short bill for a while.

Without the use of stainless steel or aluminum, the best way to protect mild steel is with a good paint job, but that does not work for very long.

Each time I finish with my fertilizer spreader, I wash it down with water, and after it dries, I spray a mix of 4-to-1 diesel fuel and motor oil over all steel parts, including the frame. This blend, plus greasing all fittings, seems to work well to seal off the oxygen from the steel.

CONTROL WINTER MOISTURE

I have a Kubota utility tractor that I feed with all winter long. It really starts great in cold weather, but the tractor really never runs long enough to get warm enough to help keep moisture out of the engine. I was wondering if I should change the oil more frequently since it usually only runs long enough to condense moisture from temperature differences?

STEVE: I really like the idea of keeping the oil changed more often during cold weather use for short periods of time. Your tractor feels the cold, too, and a diesel engine really likes to run at operating temperature. Engine heat helps with condensation. Short running time also produces more soot.

Since I live in Texas, after the extreme winter that we had this year, I can relate to cold weather feeding with a truck or tractor. We were not prepared for those subzero temperatures. The fuel here gelled because we only have No. 2 diesel, and what little diesel additive was available quickly sold out even before the cold weather arrived.

Hay and cubes at the feed store? Forget it, none was available. Propane trucks could not make deliveries on ice. Electricity? Either none was available or rolled more off than on. The plumbing didn't always fare well, either.

SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

Never trust jacks on a piece of equipment to keep the implement tongue from falling when unhooking. It is common to place your feet under the tongue to get enough pull on the pin. We all know that sometimes the tongue will move off the tractor's drawbar when the pin comes out. Never trust a jack.

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Give Time Back

Deere looks to use autonomy to give managers time to focus on what matters most to them.

Margaux Ascherl spends days of her time riding in tractors, sprayers or combines—sometimes behind the wheel—trying to understand and trying to get her hosts to explain their decision-making processes as they move through the fields during the varying phases of the growing season. She and her John Deere team want to understand how the things a skilled operator sees and senses becomes an on-the-go command given to any of one of a machine's many management systems.

Ascherl is program delivery manager for autonomy for the Intelligent Solutions Group at John Deere. She grew up in California and Florida, and earned a Ph.D. in human factors psychology from Clemson University. She came to Deere in 2012. Her team leverages advanced technologies to improve farmers' lives by building products for customers that are easier to use, make farmers and managers more efficient, and make businesses more sustainable.

DTN/*Progressive Farmer* spoke with Ascherl about automation and the appropriate use of technology in modern farming practices.

PF: Tell us about your role at John Deere.

Ascherl: I lead the team that looks into autonomy programs. We make sure [Deere offers] products that work well within the space of autonomy. What opportunities are there for automation to help solve problems? I feel strongly that technology [brings] opportunities to help folks live better lives. We are not a technology company looking for a problem. We have lots of challenges and a lot of opportunity. Autonomy is one technology that can solve problems.

PF: What does that look like on the ground?

Ascherl: Autonomy doesn't look a lot different than the

rest of our product development. Customers are first. It's where we start. We look at problems that we either haven't solved yet because the technology hasn't been available or there is a connectivity [problem] for onboard computing—the speed at which we have to deliver an affordable product [that solves the problem].

PF: In relation to Deere customers, what does autonomy mean?

Ascherl: We can provide hours back to the farmers, help them decide what their priorities are in life. You can't control the weather; you can't control grain prices. But, [autonomy] can give them freedom of time to focus on what matters.

PF: Tell us about "giving back time."

Ascherl: We've been going out talking to farmers. Observing the farming operation, letting them point us to [certain practices]. That might be tillage, spraying, planting, harvesting. We want to understand what those tasks are and understand where this type of technology [offers] opportunities. It would, again, free them up from those boring, monotonous tasks just like guidance did 20 years ago. We are spending a lot of time on farms understanding what that means.

PF: Is there a dividing line between autonomy that benefits the farmer, gives him back time and autonomy that simply creates new tasks?

Ascherl: Human factor psychology is my background and is a huge passion for me. It is something that we have set out very clearly in our goals to understand. We bring these ideas and concepts back to the farm and make sure we are not [just creating new tasks]. It is absolutely a line we watch for. We might have things in the hopper that >

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have been there for years. But, if we don't have the right process for implementing them, if technology hasn't quite caught up to make that easy yet, we are going to focus on those pieces. When we launch that piece of autonomy, it will be usable for our farmers.

PF: Tell me about human factor psychology and how it fits into the work you do?

Ascherl: I started my career at Deere with the goal of understanding how people work, how they leverage technology and then, try to make it easier to use. It applies to pretty much every product I've ever worked on. I'm really glad that John Deere has embraced this; they always have. I thought I would be here about two years and now, I'm almost nine years into it. I love working with farmers. They are so open to helping you understand how their operation works and what problems they are trying to solve. I [see] how much they are doing, but they don't realize how much they are doing. They don't realize how much button-pushing or decision-making they are doing.

PF: What does this tell you?

Ascherl: I watch what they do to really understand the decisions they are trying to make and then [apply] technology that executes for them. Given all they are sensing in the cab, how do you bring that into something that is less hard, less fatiguing to monitor all the time, make that right decision, evaluate that decision and do something different [the next time]? How do I and my team take that knowledge and turn that into something that makes their job easier?

PF: What do you learn working with farmers in and around their equipment?

Ascherl: I ask them to describe a task. They can't always articulate it, how many decisions they have just made in a very short, five-second period of time. They use that expertise every moment of every day. We will never take the farmer out of the farm, [but we want to] provide tools that make that easier.

PF: What do you see in the cab?

Ascherl: Farmers are dealing with the same technology as is in transportation or aviation or health care. We are looking at the ergonomics and tasks people are doing and how they do those tasks, how they make decisions

and actually how they trust technology—that fine line, should I trust it or should I not? And then, how do I make that decision? That's what I studied at school, and I see that all over the farming world, especially under uncertainty. No farmer has control over every variable. Every step in the farming process is different—from planting to harvesting, you're dealing with different weather conditions, for example. It's an endless space for problem-solving. How do you measure trust and appropriate reliance on technology? How do we come in and not interrupt the farming process? [Farmers] have to use their time wisely and not be distracted. That's what we specialize in.



Margaux Ascherl works to define functions where autonomy can replace monotonous tasks that are fatiguing or boring, and that take away from other operations requiring farmer engagement.

JOHN DEERE

PF: So, you watch what they do, take it back to your shop and look for opportunities to automate it.

Ascherl: Yes. But with flexibility. I've never met two farmers who are exactly alike in terms of preferences or how they manage their farm, or how they manage their fleets, or how they solve problems. The machines are complex. Matching preferences for how they want to farm with the technology and making those connections easier to understand ... those are opportunities [for Deere].

PF: How does automation complement sustainable farming practices?

Ascherl: Every farmer cares about their ground, how every pass impacts the next. That's where advanced automation on the equipment, with data and our [John Deere] Operations Center, play together. That's where the opportunity is.

PF: How do you make complementary—and predictable—in-cab experiences over the range of operations performed in a given year on a farm in the various cab types found with tractors, sprayers and combines?

Ascherl: This is what we would call an intentional user experience. We focus on it; we try to understand what needs to be different, because the operation or task is truly different. There are different speeds, different inputs, different outcomes. You [try] to make those differences apparent and easy to understand, but also keep everything else that is common or that could be common as consistent as possible. We look at that with great intention. Every operation is different, yet there are opportunities to make [machinery functions] easier across the entire fleet. ///

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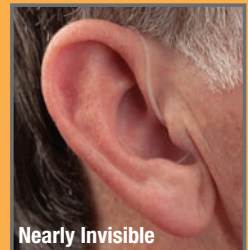
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Women Conservationists Build Ground

Organization provides assistance and accolades for women landowners and farm operators to embrace soil-saving practices.

Rachel Hopkins and her dad, Steve Yocom, run a commercial herd in Missouri. They've learned conservation is not a cookie-cutter plan, and sometimes that means learning from mistakes.

In the 21st century, the future of agriculture is increasingly in the hands of women. According to the American Farmland Trust (AFT) and its Women for the Land project, about 43% of U.S. farmland today (nearly 388 million acres) is farmed or co-farmed by women. Another 88 million acres are stewarded by women landowners. These women, the AFT notes, remain underrepresented in their use of USDA and state-based conservation practices.

Women in the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) work with AFT and a host of other groups to help bridge that gap. Known as WiN, the organization was founded in 2009 by female NRCS employees. The volunteer group initially focused on connections and building skills for NRCS employees.

Angela Biggs, 2014 president of WiN and a state conservationist for Wisconsin's NRCS since 2017, says WiN had a targeted goal of providing resources to women conservation professionals, whether in the form of mentoring, training or just professional development. That initial focus continues to evolve. Today, in addition to recognizing achievements within the profession of conservation, the group's work extends to producers embracing conservation methods in farming, ranching or overall land stewardship.

"Often, WiN members work with those efforts, and there are often opportunities to partner with projects around conservation," Biggs explains. "Our conferences have focused on training for conservation professionals, but more recently, we've included items to reach women landowners. As a group, it can be a challenge to balance out our priorities, helping both our members in their professional development and reaching outside of the organization to be sure landowners have the tools they need to make conservation a reality on their own land. Often, though, we find one helps the other."

UNEXPECTED PARTNERSHIPS

That was certainly the case for Rachel Hopkins, recognized in 2019 by WiN for her commitment to conservation in her home state of Missouri.

Hopkins and her dad, Steve Yocom, run a 125- to 150-head commercial cow herd in the Huzzah Valley of Crawford County. Hopkins also wears the hat of Washington County Extension agent, where she works with other specialists putting on educational workshops, including grazing and hay schools. Much of what she shares comes from firsthand experience.

Hopkins says her connection with the land goes back to a great-grandfather who bought the farm she and her dad live on and work today.

“After World War II, he came home and started a dairy that lasted from 1948 till 2000. After the dairy shut down, he went strictly to a beef herd. Today, we raise our own replacements, do a little stocker work and, sometimes, we custom-graze depending on the season and forage availability. We work hard to be sure what we are doing makes sense for the land.”

That means Hopkins and Yocom are focused on a lot more than cattle. They’ve worked hard to minimize soil loss from streambank erosion and to maximize the use of native forages across the operation.

Going back to 2009, Hopkins says they were seeing severe streambank erosion on a farm where they partnered with Ozark Land Trust (OLT) and the Missouri Department of Conservation. They beveled banks and planted trees trying to stop the erosion along Huzzah Creek. When that didn’t work, they looked for other solutions, which came in the form of a new alliance.

“The OLT came to us and said they had a new partnership with The Nature Conservancy, and they wanted to work in the Meramec Watershed. They thought we were a good fit,” she says. “That’s how our partnership came about with The Nature Conservancy. We really saw what collaboration was all about. There is always give and take, but as a result of that work, we have made great strides in water quality by fencing livestock out.”

Hopkins believes the upside from sustainability and their cattle business has far exceeded the ground cattle lost access to along the creek as renovation took place.

“Because we were willing to do that, we were able to get funding to help put in watering systems and

fencing. As a result, our land is more usable today than it was before.”

In addition, Hopkins says they continue to convert pastures and some forested areas to native warm-season grasses and silvopastures. They are trying to replicate what the Ozarks looked like 240 years ago. The shift has led to weight increases in calves, extended grazing days, reduced feeding expenses and improved soil health.

COOKIE-CUTTER CONSERVATION

Hopkins has spent a lot of time at grazing and land-management workshops, so she knows firsthand how overwhelming the subject of intensive grazing can be. Most producers are convinced there is a huge amount of work tied to the practice and for one reason or another, it won’t work on their home operation.

“People will tell you their pastures aren’t square, they can’t build this much fence or that for whatever reason, intensive grazing won’t work for them. I tell them that in 2012, my dad sent me to grazing school so we could participate in cost-sharing. He didn’t want to go. I sat through it, and all I could think was that it would never work for us.”

Given time, perseverance and a willingness to adapt, Hopkins came to understand there is no cookie-cutter solution when it comes to conservation.

“This takes practice. There are learning curves, with weather being a big one. Stocking density, the potential of your ground, forage quality. ... You have to weave all of this with whatever nature hands you. Sometimes, you get it right; sometimes, you get it terribly wrong. But, you can’t be afraid to make mistakes, because that’s when you learn the most if you will keep moving ahead.” ///

CONNECTING WOMEN THROUGH AGRICULTURE

There are a number of national organizations to help women who farm, ranch or own agricultural land connect and better manage their holdings. These groups include:

➤ **American Agri-Women.** The nation’s largest coalition of farm, ranch and agribusiness women with more than 50 state, commodity and agribusiness affiliate organizations
americanagriwomen.org

➤ **American Farmland Trust.** Focused on conservation with its Women for the Land project
farmland.org/project/women-for-the-land

➤ **Annie’s Project.** Offered in 33 states with a goal of helping farm women problem-solve, keep records and develop decision-making skills

www.anniesproject.org

➤ **Women in NRCS (WiN).** A professional organization and support network for women working in the NRCS
www.winnrcs.org

➤ **Women, Food and Agriculture Network.** Helps women become effective practitioners and supporters of sustainable ag and healthy localized food systems
wfan.org





Progressive Agriculture Safety Days

May Is Mental Health Awareness Month

It's the perfect time to focus on the importance of self-care.

Just like adults, children feel stress. Therefore, Progressive Agriculture Foundation recently developed a curriculum focusing on mental well-being and stress management for youth. From using balloons to simulate juggling stressors to creating their own stress ball, a total of eight hands-on activities and demonstrations were created to assist children in understanding stress and their emotions, helping them learn to adopt coping strategies and sharing resources to ensure conversations continue at home.

A special thank-you to our 4-star partner, Farm Credit, for providing initial funding to support this new chapter. Additional support was made possible through grant projects with the University of Nebraska Medical Center for Agricultural Safety and Health and the University of Illinois North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center, a 12-state, 15-partner collaborative to create and expand stress management and mental-health resources for agricultural producers and stakeholders in the North Central Region (financed by USDA-NIFA 2020-70028-32728).

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- 1. Adopt better sleep habits.** Prepare yourself for a restful night's sleep by securing a comfortable environment. Turn off electronics, lights and other distractions that may stimulate the brain.
- 2. Begin an exercise regimen.** Start with small changes by opting for the stairs over the elevator, and take stretch breaks during the workday. Go on a walk or a bike ride.
- 3. Find a hobby.** Don't be afraid to try something new or go back to doing something you enjoy.
- 4. Take a social media break.** Put down the smartphone or turn off the computer.
- 5. Utilize stress-management techniques.** Try yoga, meditation or breathing exercises to get you to a relaxed state.
- 6. Get organized.** Use a planner to set goals for yourself. You will feel a sense of accomplishment crossing things off your list.
- 7. Keep a journal.** Instead of dwelling over negative thoughts, put them down on paper. Then, "close the book on them" and enjoy your day.
- 8. Volunteer.** Not only does it feel good to help out a friend or give back to your community, but volunteering is also a great way to connect and cultivate relationships.
- 9. Strengthen your communication skills.** Make connections by reaching out and talking to someone, and also be good a listener.
- 10. Treat yourself, as well as others, with respect.** Remember, we are all human, we make mistakes, and we miss goals; but maintaining a positive outlook is key.

SUCCESS STORY

In a post-program survey of our 2020 Virtual Progressive Agriculture Safety Day participants, 90% of the youth identified the importance of finding a coping strategy to deal with stress or stressors.



Photos shown without masks were taken during virtual experiences or prior to COVID-19.

Find Us Online

Visit progressiveag.org or call us at **888-257-3529** for a complete list of all upcoming Safety Days or to see how you can host a Safety Day during 2022 or 2023.



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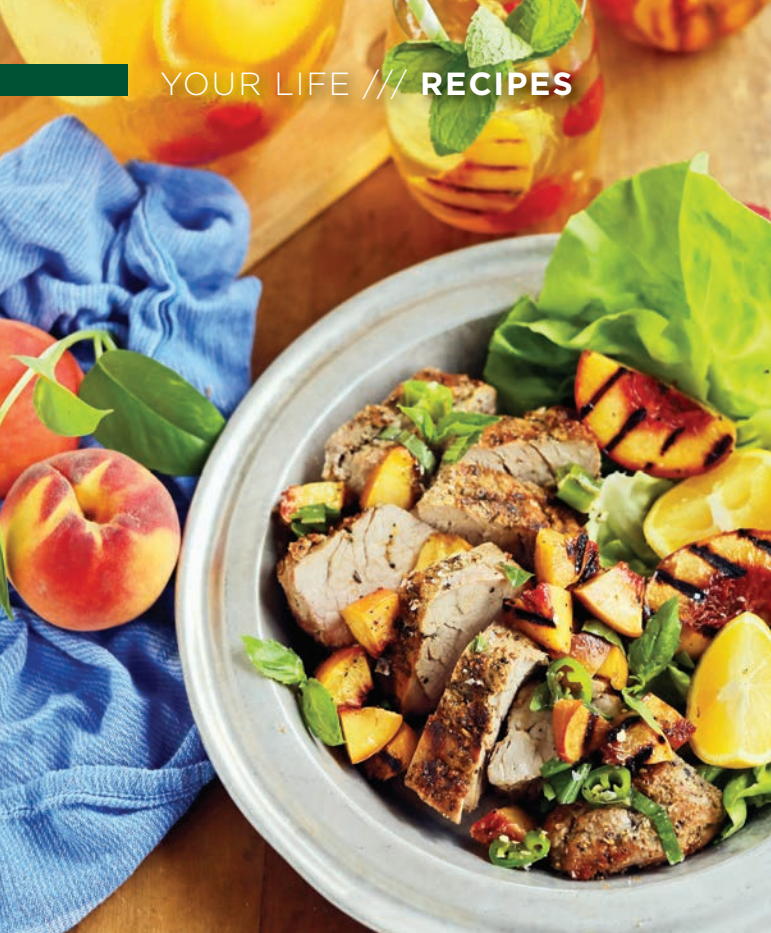


Farm Credit proudly supports Progressive Agriculture Safety Days and their mission to provide education, training and resources to make farm, ranch and rural life safer and healthier for children and their communities.



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Mother's Day Cookout

Put dinner on the grill and chill some sangria for Mom's special day.

Grilled Pork Tenderloin with Peaches

This easy, quick main course will receive rave reviews.

MAKES: 3-4 SERVINGS

TOTAL TIME: 35 MINUTES

- 1 pork tenderloin (about 1½ pounds)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 4 large, ripe (firm) peaches, halved with pits removed
- 1 jalapeño pepper, sliced (optional)
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- Fresh basil for serving

1. Preheat grill to medium-high heat, making sure to clean grates.
2. Trim tenderloin, if necessary, removing silver skin. Drizzle with 1 tablespoon olive oil; rub with salt, garlic powder, onion powder, Italian seasoning and pepper.

3. Grill 5 to 7 minutes on each side or until interior temperature reaches 145°F.
4. Transfer to a cutting board; allow to rest.
5. Brush peaches with remaining olive oil; grill, flesh side down, 4 to 5 minutes or until grill marks form. Flip; grill another 5 minutes.
6. Allow peaches to cool (about 5 minutes); cut into rough chunks. Toss with jalapeño pepper (optional) and fresh lemon juice; serve with the sliced pork and torn, fresh basil.

Peach Sangria

This cocktail pairs perfectly with the grilled tenderloin.

MAKES: 6-8 SERVINGS

TOTAL TIME: 10 MINUTES PLUS 2 HOURS TO CHILL

- 2 large, ripe (firm) peaches
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ⅓ cup sugar
- ⅓ cup water
- ¾ cup peach liqueur (or peach schnapps)
- 1 bottle (750 ml) white wine
- 8 ounces fresh raspberries
- 2 cups ginger ale (substitute club soda for a lighter drink)
- Fresh mint

1. Brush peaches with olive oil; grill, flesh side down, 4 to 5 minutes or until grill marks form. Flip; grill another 5 minutes. Allow to cool; slice into ½-inch pieces.
2. In a microwave-safe bowl, combine sugar and water; microwave about 3 minutes or until sugar completely dissolves. Allow to cool slightly.
3. In a pitcher, combine peach liqueur, sugar syrup from the microwave and white wine. Add peaches and raspberries; allow to chill at least 2 hours or overnight before serving.

4. To serve, top sangria with ginger ale. Fill glasses with ice and sangria, making sure some whole fruit drops into each glass. Garnish with fresh mint.



Recipes and photo by Rachel Johnson
www.stupidgoodrachel.com



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WARREN BUFFETT

I haven’t seen a tractor working all day. The country has gone sane and got back to horses. Farmers all look worse, but they feel better.

WILL ROGERS

I didn’t get much peace, but I heard in Norway that Russia might well become a huge market for tractors soon.

HENRY FORD

I have been afraid of putting air in a tire ever since I saw a tractor tire blow up and throw Newt Hardbine’s father over the top of the Standard Oil sign.

BARBARA KINGSOLVER

If I hadn’t become a golfer, I doubt I’d be wealthy, because I don’t have the sort of ego that drives a person all day long. I might have wound up driving a tractor.

FUZZY ZOELLER

His herding instinct is so strong that he confuses tractors on a baseball field for sheep. He was hospitalized twice. Once by a line drive and once for attacking a tractor tread.

TOM HAYDEN

There are only three things that can kill a farmer: lightning, rolling over in a tractor, and old age.

BILL BRYSON

That’s the great thing about a tractor. You can’t really hear the phone ring.

JEFF FOXWORTHY

When we went into World War II, I was a tractor driver then. I drove tractors on the plantation. So when they start calling people my age, 18, up, I was one they called.

B.B. KING

He’d be washing dishes, or riding a tractor mower. He got sweaty and dirty. He wasn’t afraid of manual labor. When you see your teacher do that, it’s a great inspiration.

JOHN NOONAN

I did as much as I could: raising chickens, pushing an ice-cream cart, bagging walnuts, driving a tractor on a beet farm, working on the railroad. I think this eclectic career helped me a lot in life.

CHARLES R. SCHWAB

My father kept me busy from dawn to dusk when I was a kid. When I wasn’t pitching hay, hauling corn or running a tractor, I was heaving a baseball into his mitt behind the barn ... If all the parents in the country followed his rule, juvenile delinquency would be cut in half in a year’s time.

BOB FELLER

The only difference between men and women is that women are able to create new little human beings in their bodies while simultaneously writing books, driving tractors, working in offices, planting crops—in general, doing everything men do.

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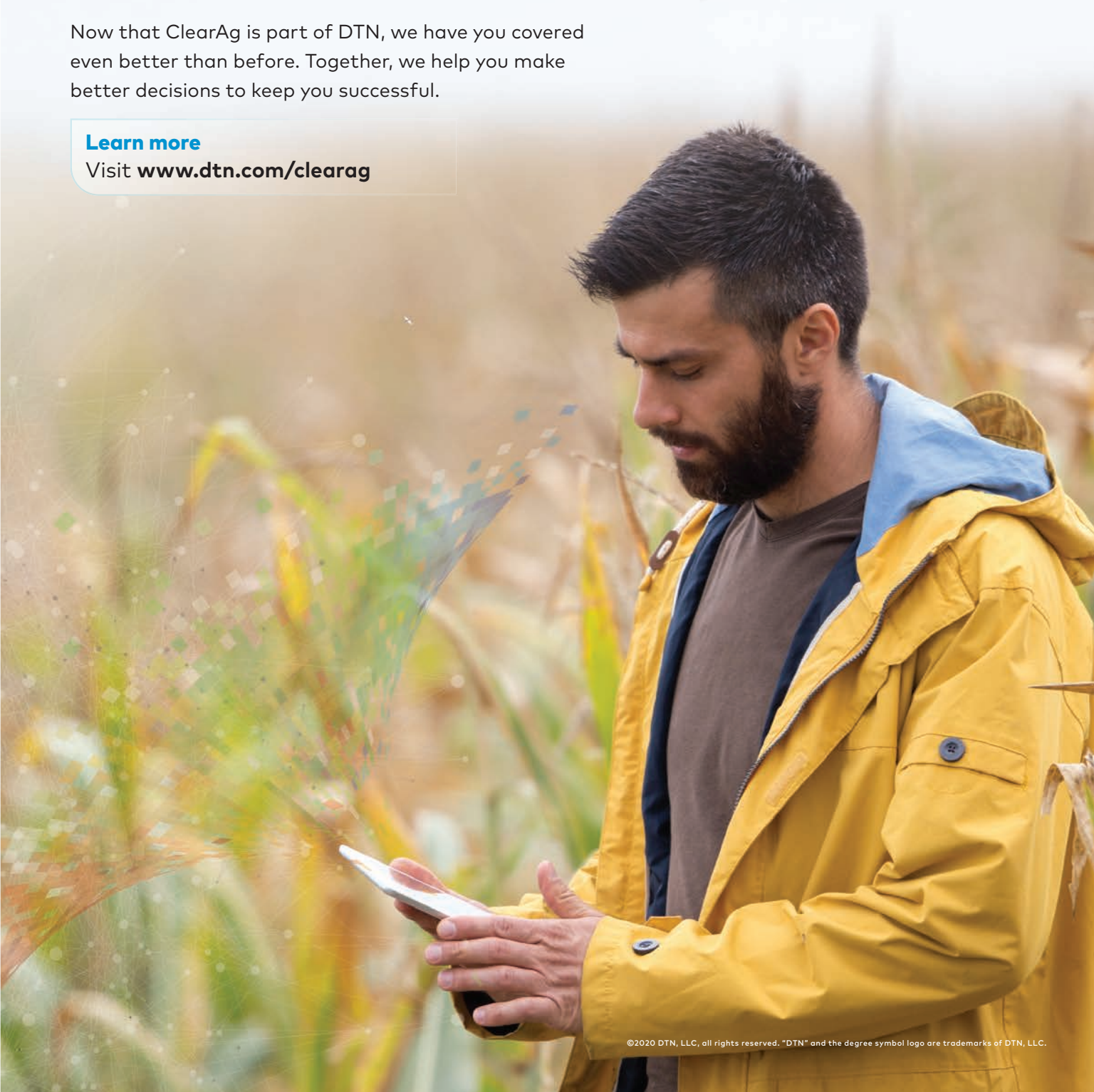
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