

AG BRIEFS

Worthington FFA Chapter begins fruit sale Monday

WORTHINGTON — The Worthington FFA will begin its annual Fruit Sale on Monday.

All orders must be placed by Nov. 17, and product should arrive around Dec. 5. Fruit can be ordered through any high school FFA member or in the WHS Ag office.

There is a variety of products to pick from, including grapefruit, oranges, apples and beef stix. The chapter fundraiser helps pay for competitions and activities for the membership.

Minnesota Beef Ambassadors sought

MAPLE PLAIN — The Minnesota Beef Ambassador program seeks individuals in grades 7-12 to serve as spokespersons for the state's beef industry.

The Beef Ambassador will help emcee at two Farmer's Market events, help with Celebrate Ag & Food Day at University of Minnesota, share stories with classrooms throughout the year by email as well as sending short one- to five-minute videos once a month to the teacher, attend the Young Leaders in Agriculture Conference, attend and help with the Minnesota State Cattleman's Association annual convention, help with Meet a Farmer events

at Hy-Vees and work with the Minnesota Beef Council to blog, conduct media interviews and use social media throughout the year.

For more information, contact Royalee Rhoads, Director of Industry Relations, Minnesota Beef Council, at (763) 479-1011 or (952) 693-8116; Email: royalee@mnbeef.org or visit mnbeef.org. Applications are due Wednesday.

Minnesota Farmers Union President announces retirement

ST. PAUL — Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) President Doug Peterson has announced he is retiring on Dec. 31.

Peterson has been MFU president since 2002 and is the second longest-serving president in MFU history.

"I have had the honor and privilege of leading the best farm organization in Minnesota," Peterson said in his announcement to his board. "Together we have made major differences for family farmers."

Peterson reflected on his beliefs that he has taken Minnesota Farmers Union forward and has elevated its standing among the family farmers of Minnesota and the nation.

He plans to stay active in politics and policy, and will continue to live on his family farm near Madison.

New SDSU Swine Unit opens with dedication

Facility marks new era for industry

By Michelle Rook
Forum News Service

BROOKINGS, S.D. — The new \$7.4 million Swine Education and Research Facility at South Dakota State University will mark a new era for the swine industry.

Pork producers, allied industry and various commodity groups gathered Oct. 1 in Brookings, S.D., for the dedication ceremony and to tour the state-of-the-art facility.

"We've got three facilities. The first includes a sow intensive research classroom and live viewing area," said Bob Thaler, SDSU Extension swine specialist. "We have both gestation pens and gestation crates. (We have) our boar room, semen processing, a physiology room, two 24-crate farrowing rooms and then a surgery room."

Another building is a wean to finish unit.

"It's actually a four room, 300-head per room wean-to-finish barn," Thaler said. "Two of the rooms are set aside for intensive nutrition work and the other two rooms are for ag engineering."

The third is a 1,200-head commercial wean-to-finish barn, located 12 miles south of Brookings.

"Its 25 pigs per pen, a deep pit, but we do have a FeedLogic system, and we do have a pen scale so we'll be able to do production style research as well as training our students in swine production," he said.

Hannah Walkes, of Pipestone (Minn.) Veterinary Clinic, said the new facility will be an incubator for the next generation of pork professionals.

"This unit allows stu-



Michelle Rook / Special to AgWeek

The new \$7.4 million Swine Education and Research Facility at South Dakota State University will mark a new era for the swine industry.

dents to be better prepared, better trained and better aligned to come back to the farm, or allied industries," she said.

The cutting-edge research is something Alcester pork producer and National Pork Board Treasurer, Steve Rommereim, said he needs to advance his operation.

"We're all trying to get some research out that will help improve and create efficiencies within our own systems at home," he said.

That research is one of the main reasons the South Dakota Pork Producers Council stepped up early with seed money for the project according to President Ryan Storm, "The technology we have in these facilities is state-of-the-art, so we can do all kinds of different research from genetics, to feed to anything you can possibly think of."

The research will also improve pork quality and safety, which benefits consumers and increases demand.

"The more of these kind of facilities there are the more work we can do to try to prove to the consumer that what we're

doing is the best," Rommereim said.

At the dedication, SDSU President Barry Dunn told supporters the research conducted at the unit and the ability to grow swine production will add value to both swine and grain production in the state and region.

"We can export our grain or we can also add value to it right here in South Dakota, in local communities that we all love, and we can keep young people in those communities on the farms," he said. "It is economic development, its value added agriculture at its very best and we can do it in a safe, environmentally sound way."

The President said he's also excited about the public education and outreach SDSU and the industry can do through the live observation area at the facility. This is especially important in light of the recent livestock zoning issues that the state has been facing while trying to grow livestock production.

"I challenged the leadership that we needed to demystify it for policy makers and consumers,"

Dunn said. "So we have a, the ability to walk people through this facility to allow people to see how well we take care of pigs in a modern facility."

The new unit was supported financially by farm groups from several states in the region, not just South Dakota. Both Iowa and Minnesota pork producers made large donations.

Dave Preisler, executive director of the Minnesota Pork Producers Association, said it was a great investment for them. "With this year's freshman animal science class at SDSU, Minnesota is the source for the largest number of students," he said. "We've watched that trend go on for the last several years and the other thing we've really been impressed with is really the applied approach to education and research here at SDSU and we think that's what's drawing students. So for us it's been a really good thing to invest in."

The unit was also financially supported by the South Dakota and Minnesota Soybean Councils, and a long list of businesses and individuals.

Absentee ballot requests for Iowa beef checkoff vote

DES MOINES, Iowa — The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and the Iowa Cattlemen's Association has announced that eligible beef producers can request an absentee ballot to participate in the referendum on whether the \$0.50 per head Iowa beef checkoff should be reinstated. The referendum will be on Nov. 30.

Any individual, firm, corporation, partnership or association that has owned or acquired cattle during year prior to the referendum (Dec. 1, 2015 through Nov. 30, 2016) is an "Eligible Beef Producer" for the purposes of this referendum.

A person shall not be considered a producer if: 1) the person's only share in the proceeds of a sale of cattle or beef is a sales commission, handling fee or other service fee; or 2) the person acquired ownership of cattle to facilitate the transfer of ownership of such cattle from the seller to a third party; resold such cattle no later than 10 days from the date on which the person acquired ownership; and certified as required by rules adopted by the council.

Producers who wish to vote by absentee ballot may do so by contacting

the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. Producers may call (515) 281-5321, email beefvote@IowaAgriculture.gov or visit www.IowaAgriculture.gov and download the form located in "Hot Topics." They may also visit the Henry Wallace Building, 502 E. Ninth St., Des Moines 50319 to solicit an Absentee Ballot Request Form.

The Absentee Ballot Request Form must be signed and returned to the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. The producer will then be mailed an absentee ballot. Absentee Ballot Request Forms should be received by the Department by Nov. 23, and absentee ballots must be postmarked by Nov. 30..

If the referendum passes, collection will begin March 1, 2017. The Iowa beef checkoff will be mandatory, but refunds will be available to interested producers. The federal beef checkoff of \$1 per head remains in place and would not be affected by the Iowa vote.

For more information on how checkoff dollars are used, contact the Iowa Cattlemen's Association at (515) 296-2266 or find out more online at www.iacattlemen.org/.

Jackson County farmers tout cover crops

HERON LAKE — Jackson County farmers Jerry and Nancy Ackermann and Dave Christoffer continue to tout the benefits of including cover crops in their crop rotation.

The Ackermanns, who have experimented with cover crops for several years, note improved water infiltration because of the cover crops they plant. The greatest benefits to using cover crops are the absence of wet spots in the field and reduced compaction on the end rows.

The Ackermanns have farmed near Lakefield for more than 38 years and are active with on-farm research and test plots. They have a crop rotation of corn, soybeans and alfalfa; they are also distributors for LaCrosse Seeds.

"The greatest benefit I see from the use of cover crops is that the porosity of the soil increases," said Dave Christoffer, who has farmed for more than 43 years and now uses strip-till and cover crops on his corn and beans acres.

"Better water infiltration benefits are faster return to soil conditions

that are favorable to the crops being grown, and moisture is stored in the soil for use later by the crops rather than running off the land or evaporating," Christoffer said. "A more oxygenated soil allows for the microbial population in the soil to multiply and increase its activity, which mineralizes nutrients that are tied up and not shown by a soil test. This can result in a lower requirement for fertilizer."

"A better earth worm population also helps to mineralize the tied up nutrients. Earthworms also improve water infiltration and create channels for roots to follow so that they can reach moisture during periods of low rainfall."

Both Christoffer and the Ackermanns have experimented with various mixes of cover crop seed over the years. These mixes include cereal rye, radishes, clover, purple top turnip, rape seed and oats. After many years of experimenting, they have decided to seed cover crops on all their fields.

In 2016, Jerry Ackermann sold seed for more than 5,800 acres of

cover crops in Nobles and Jackson counties. Just like any crop, cover crops also have their challenges.

"My greatest challenge in using cover crops has been getting the it established with a sufficient stand and early enough to get enough growth to increase the benefits of using cover crops," Christoffer said.

To overcome these challenges, he offers advice from his own experiences.

"Interseeding the cover crop at about the V-6 stage in corn, I think, will become the norm for our latitude," Christoffer said. "In soybeans, using more cover crops that over-winter may be something I will be looking for — especially when the bean crop is maturing later, thereby not allowing for a long growth period before a freeze terminates the cover crop."

The Ackermanns say herbicide selection is also a challenge with cover crops. They believe working with an agronomist and researching residuals can be beneficial when selecting products.

GET IN LINE!

8 a.m. - Doors Open at Memorial Auditorium
Breakfast, Coffee & Juice served, Sponsored by Sanford Worthington

9 a.m. - Style Show at Memorial Auditorium
First 200 shoppers receive a necklace and reusable Sassy Saturday bag filled with goodies from local businesses

11 a.m. - 2 p.m. - Lunch at Local Harvest
Featuring food from The Beach House
Free lunch coupon in the first 200 goodies bags.
Lunch sponsored by Avera Medical Group

Sassy Saturday, October 15
At 27 participating businesses!

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