



Scholarships keep talent — and opportunity — at home

A precision technology scholarship program at Jaycox Implement, Luverne, provides opportunities for students to explore careers in agriculture. It also encourages skilled workers to stay here.

... Page 9B

First-year ag teacher seeks to spark passion in her students

As a teacher and FFA chapter adviser, Anderson wants her students to receive a wide variety of ag experiences.

... Page 5B

Fall nitrogen application is prohibited in some local soils

Fall nitrogen application poses risks to soil and groundwater, and it will be prohibited in some vulnerable Rock County soils.

... Page 12B

Do you have this invasive weed on your farm?

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is encouraging farmers and agronomists to scout fields now for the invasive weed, palmer amaranth.

... Page 7B

‘Discover the Cover’

Rock County Annual Cover Crop Tour goes virtual

Virtual tour of four local cover crops experts goes live this week on YouTube

Farmers are increasingly seeing the benefits of cover crops in improving the soil health of their land. Meanwhile, they’re seeing a side benefit of improved financial health of their operations.

For these reasons, cover crops are becoming more common and more farmers are working them into their planting rotations.

But how?

And when?

And can I afford it?

Where do I go for help?

Uncertainty alone can be a stumbling block for farmers interested in changing their ways.

That’s why a local group of cover crop experts has been leading the way in helping others get involved.

The Rock County Cover Crop Planning Group hosts annual field days to showcase area fields and to share information.

The soil health experts find creative ways to bring important science updates to local farmers dabbling in new methods and to those starting from scratch.

Rock County’s 2020 Cover Crops Field Day should have been earlier this month, but because it’s a hands-on event that brings dozens of people together, the exercise was moved online.

Some of the same cover crop growers who would have shared information at the field day are now featured in a “Virtual Cover Crops Field Day” that is now available online.

A link on the Rock County Soil and Water Conservation District website brings viewers to a YouTube video featuring cover crop farmers Tom Fick, Brent Fluit, Terry Aukes and Brad Peterson.

Soil Health Specialist Dawn Madison, also a cover crop farmer, interviewed the local experts for the series. “By telling their stories, we can educate others,” she said.

“We want to give farmers something to lean on so they’re not out on their own.”

‘Discover the Cover’ tour/continued on page 2



Soil Health Specialist Dawn Madison (left), also a cover crop farmer, interviews local cover crop expert Tom Fick, Luverne, (center) earlier this month for the video series that allows viewers to participate in the annual Rock County Cover Crop Tour online. “By telling their stories, we can educate others,” Madison said. “We want to give farmers something to lean on so they’re not out on their own.” Rock County Land Management Engineering Technician Michael Walgrave (in foreground) recorded the interviews and compiled the video series online under the title, “Discover the Cover.” He said the videos are the next-best thing to a live tour, but they’ll never replace in-person cover crop tours in actual Rock County fields.

Covering cover crops

Star Herald poses questions for interviewer in cover crop video series

Why should we care about cover crops?

Cover crops can be used to improve soil erosion, provide weed suppression, feed biology, cover the soil to stabilize soil temps, scavenge nutrients like nitrogen, build organic matter, increase forage options, and the list goes on.

Across the country farmers are learning how to employ cover crops to build their farms’ resiliency. It is becoming more and more a part of the planning consideration, and we want our local producers to be just as knowledgeable as the rest of the farming world.

As you were working on the series, what did you learn from the interviews?

Every one of the guys I spoke to has a vision, but we all need to make a profit. No one is doing this without thinking about how the covers can help us.

But each one of us has found benefits that we never focused on when we started down this road. I was struck by how each one of the farmers has changed over time. We have learned so much from each other.

Do we think we’ll see a day when cover crops are fully implemented in Rock County?

It is unlikely we will ever see a 100-percent use of covers in the county. I think over time you will see it as a common practice that is a part of the farming system we use but not all sites and owners will fit with covers.

In compiling the video series, Madison noted what each farmer brought to the table in terms of their own unique experiences with cover crops.

“Each farmer brings a different management style to the conversation,” she said. “They all are God-fearing, family-focused guys that truly want to see their farm succeed as well as their neighbors and friends.”

‘Discover the Cover’ virtual tour brings annual county soil health field day to life online/

Online Q&A
tells cover crop story

With each interview, Madison asked:

- which cover crops are being used,
- how the farmer started in it, which mixtures are used,
- which chemicals are incorporated.

Engineering Technician Michael Walgrave of the Rock County Land Management Office recorded the interviews over the past several weeks and edited them into a video series that was posted online this week.

Walgrave has filmed and edited farmer interviews before, but this project posed challenges with wind, dust, farmer schedules, data management and more.

But he said he’s proud of the end result.

“This has been a fun and interesting project,” he said. “Most of the editing was done on my phone.”

He said a virtual field day has advantages, such as a lasting video that can be shared. But he said it’s not the preferred way to run the event.

“Walking the land helps you better understand the land. I don’t think virtual days should replace actual field days,” Walgrave said.

“They can both be done. Having ‘boots-on-ground’ at a field day is important for understanding the whole picture and networking with other farmers. There are also aspects of learning and understanding soil through touch and smell that a video can’t simulate.”

Madison is with the Southwest Prairie Technical Service Area and works with 11 counties helping with the soil health component.

She has been working in soil health for 20 years and said she’s enjoyed working with Nobles and Rock County farmers to improve soil health.

“We’re farmers, too, and we use cover crops and no-till in our operations. We do this in our office and at home,” she said.

“This is something I enjoy working on with this group. ... I really feel like it gives our farmers another avenue that we can help them sustain long term.”



Engineering Technician Michael Walgrave (left) of the Rock County Land Management Office recorded the interviews over the past several weeks and edited them into a video series that was posted online this week. He’s pictured earlier this month recording Soil Health Specialist Dawn Madison interviewing Luverne cover crop farmer Tom Fick. Walgrave has filmed and edited farmer interviews before, but this project posed challenges with wind, dust, farmer schedules, data management and more.

What are
cover crops?

In agriculture, cover crops are planted for the purpose of covering — or protecting — the soil rather than for the purpose of being harvested. They manage soil erosion, soil fertility, soil quality, water, weeds, pests, diseases, biodiversity and wildlife

Virtual isn’t actual, but
message lasts longer and
reaches broader audience

She said the virtual tour has the potential to reach a larger audience.

“Perhaps those that aren’t inclined to attend field days will listen in the comfort of their own homes,” she said.

“So reaching those folks is a big positive.”

However, she said online meetings can’t replace human interaction and connections of in-person field days.

“But for this year and this moment it is the best way we can connect with our local audience,” Madison said.

“Plus they can pause and re-listen to anything that they may want to emulate so that is a positive as well. ... I am happy that the public gets a taste of the conversations that our group has every time we meet.”

She thanked the farmer experts for being part of the video series.

“They are really awesome producers,” she said.

“They have so much to offer and share, and it was a true opportunity to get to record them.”

Ultimately she hopes the information will reach the right people and help the farmer or farmers.

“Soil health is something hopeful, and it’s something that all farmers, large and small, can use,” Madison said.

“It doesn’t matter who you are, you can always improve your soil for future generations.”

‘Discover the Cover’/see next page

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‘Discover the Cover’ virtual tour brings annual county soil health field day to life online/from page 2B

Four Rock County producers with cover crop experience agreed to be interviewed for the 2020 virtual Rock County Cover Crop Tour.

They shared information about their goals and successes, and they also offered specific examples of seed mixes, rates of application and chemicals used.

Following are highlights of the interviews, recorded in YouTube videos that can be linked to through the Rock County Land Management website, www.rockswcd.org/cover-crop.

Tom Fick

Tom Fick began more as a traditional tiller who started out adding clover into his oats to build nitrogen and forage options. With time he has moved toward rotational no till.

“He is an ‘outside the box’ thinker when it comes to crops, not just having corn and soybeans but also oats and alfalfa as part of his normal crop rotation,” Madison said.

Since starting with covers, he has grown rye for seed, added an air drill for his own and custom drilling, and changed tillage to try planting soybeans green into rye. “I wished I’d started sooner so I could realize more of the benefits by now,” Fick said.

“We just take it one step at a time.”

He keeps trying new methods, with profit in mind. His latest addition is v4-v6 interseeding of cover crops between rows of planted corn in the spring.

As a member of the Minnesota Soil Health Coalition Board, Fick said his goal is to continue sharing the message of cover crop benefits and continuing to offer advice and education to fellow farmers.

“The days of putting a crop in the ground and spraying everything with glyphosate and going fishing after that, those days are gone,” Fick said.

“We’ve got too many

“Two years ago I grazed 87 pairs on 32 acres for 35 days. That’s a savings in feed of about \$6,700 to \$6,800 and you divide that by 30 acres. Now it starts to make a whole lot more sense.”

— Brad Petersen, cover crop farmer



Tom Fick, rural Luverne, keeps trying new methods of improving his operation using cover crops. He said he’s increasingly finding ways to boost profit by saving money on chemicals and improving yields. His latest addition is v4-v6 interseeding of cover crops between rows of planted corn in the spring. As a member of the Soil Health Coalition Board, Fick said his goal is to continue sharing the message of cover crop benefits and continuing to offer education to fellow farmers. “The days of putting a crop in the ground and spraying everything with glyphosate and going fishing after that, those days are gone.”

Justin Kemp
Owner

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“It really breaks our hearts to see those gullies and that soil erode. Once it’s gone, it’s gone. You can try to put a price tag on that, because you can try to buy dump trucks of soil. But that’s heartbreaking.”

— Terry Aukes, cover crop farmer

problems with that system. We need to think ahead. We might as well be doing some of these things that will benefit us.”

Fick’s advice for those thinking about cover crops:

“Start out small,” he said.

“Anyone who knows me knows I have all these 20- to 25-acre fields.”

Fick can be reached at TomsHayGrain@gmail.com.

Brad Petersen

Brad Petersen, a livestock farmer, began adding covers for extra forage. On the video, he explained how it works on his farm in northwestern Rock County.

“After the oats is off and manure is spread, we’ll come back and broadcast cover crop mix and lightly work that in.

“Once that’s up to where we can graze it, we start cross fencing it and rotational graze however many acres we have for that year.”

He started with turnips, radishes and canola and whatever oats grew back, and grazed that in the fall. This allows the cows to come off the pastures earlier and give the pastures the chance to grow back.

“Plus the cows and calves really seem to blossom when they get on that,” Petersen said.

Along the way he found extra benefits like weed suppression and food for the soils.

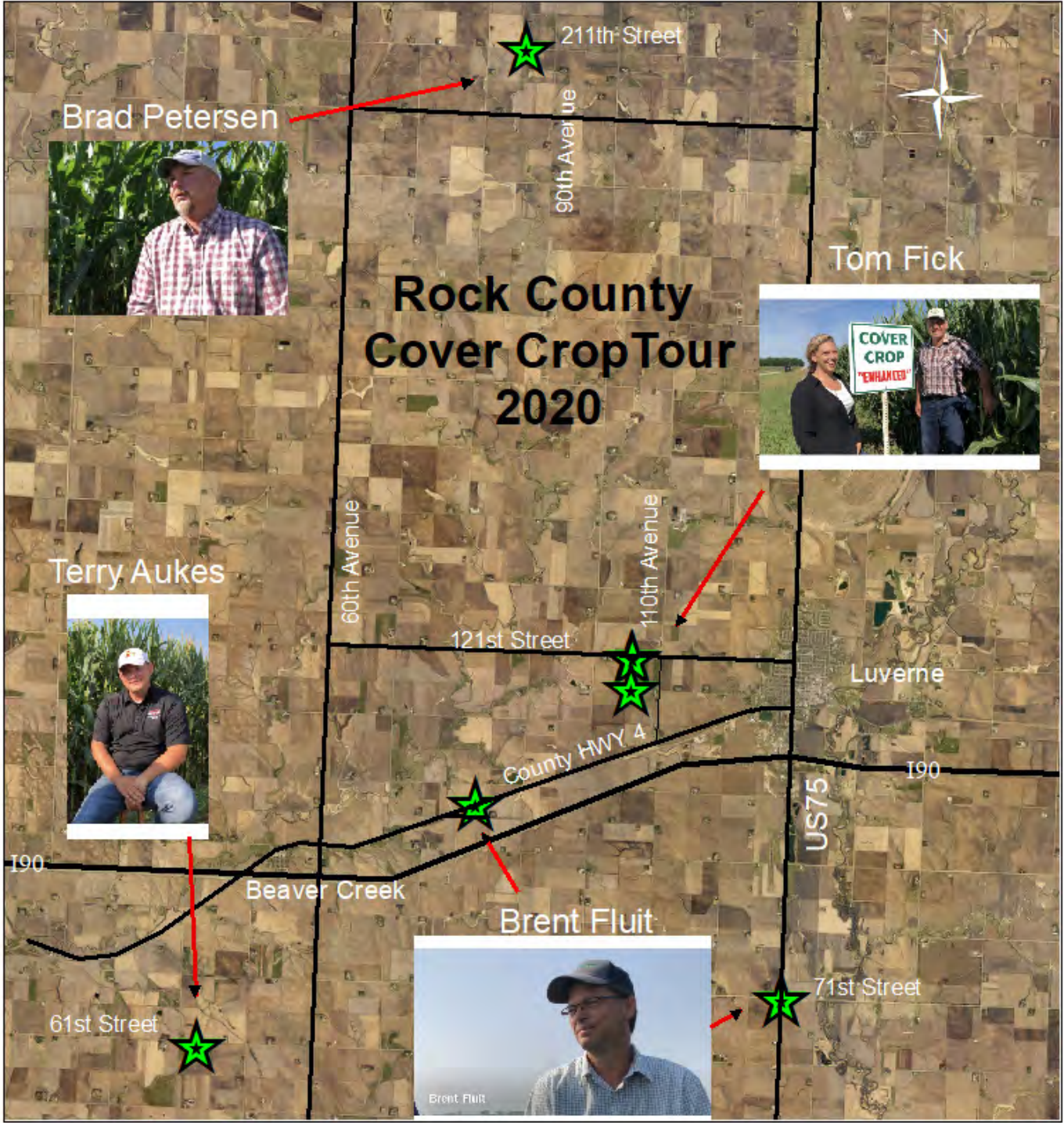
“Our soybean yields, with adding another crop and diversifying our crop rotation, we’ve seen increase of 5 to 8 bushels on any of the bean fields that have had oats in the rotation,” Petersen said.

“Organic matter is starting to go up and our corn fields are not requiring as much fertilizer because we’re pulling up and storing more of that unused fertilizer for next year’s crop.”

In terms of dollars and cents, he said livestock producers can’t go wrong with cover crops.

“Plus, it gives us a chance to get manure out instead of being in the middle of that fall rush, and it gives you that extra feed.”

“With the prices the way they’ve been the past couple of years, just oats by itself you’re looking at a return on investment of the 50 to 60 per acre range after you sell the



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straw and the oats.

In terms of saving pasture and providing forage, he estimates a return on investment of more than \$220 per acre.

“Two years ago I grazed 87 pairs on 32 acres for 35 days. That’s a savings in feed of about \$6,700 to \$6,800 and you divide that by 30 acres. Now it starts to make a whole lot more sense.”

Petersen can be reached at BHPete5@yahoo.com.

Brent Fluit

After more than 15 years of strip tilling, Brent Fluit added cover crops to capture nutrients and found extra forage and soil building were bonus impacts.

“I’m trying to improve the soil health, prevent erosion, retain nitrogen from manure application from livestock and control weeds,” he says in the video.

“University studies show that rye will reduce nitrogen loss by 40 percent and up to 50 percent in some cases. I don’t have my own scientific studies to

prove that, but if it’s true to point, that will pay for the application and seed alone after your manure.”

Considering Fluit’s ground is part of a wellhead protection area, it’s all the more important to prevent nitrogen from leaving the soil and escaping into drinking water supplies.

After adding rye, Fluit said he found a significant benefit for weed suppression and said that the organic matter has improved on his farms.

“If you get a nice cover, you’ll have excellent suppression of water hemp, everything,” Fluit said.

Plus, he’s noticed a decrease in erosion with improved water retention, and less soil compaction.

His sons now have cattle feedlots and need the added forage, so cover crops provide that benefit to the operation as well.

Fluit’s advice: “Take a piece of ground and jump in and try it. Not the whole thing, but if you don’t try you’ll never learn.”

He can be reached at BrentFluit@gmail.com.

Terry Aukes

Terry Aukes and his family have been rotationally no-tilling their soybeans for 30 years and

have incorporated cover crops for additional soil erosion control.

“About 10 years ago there was a farm that my brother and I installed about 7,000 feet of farmable terraces. There was a fair amount of compaction from the bulldozers putting those in,” Aukes says in the video.

“We had heard that cover crop helped alleviate some compaction, so we decided to seed a multi-species mix, under an EQIP program (Environmental Quality Incentive Program), and that’s really what pushed us over the edge.”

After three years, he said they started seeing benefits ... better water filtration, some weed suppression, and less erosion.

“Obviously with the terraces it slopes 6 -9 percent. So it has pretty steep slope. And we saw some benefits from not having water erode the soil,” Aukes said.

“So then we started looking at can we move cover crops to other farms that have sensitive issues too.”

The results were rewarding.

“In our family, we try to fight erosion with a passion. It really breaks our hearts to see those gullies and that soil erode. Once it’s gone, it’s gone. You can try to put a price tag on that, because you can try to buy dump trucks of soil. But that’s heartbreaking,” Aukes said.

“So that in itself, we said, in our family, even if we broke even from that standpoint. To eliminate that. That was our goal, but we see all these other benefits with it.”

He said they also saw the benefits of weed suppression and improved organic matter.

“We started see fertility go up. I did not expect to see that,” Aukes said.

“I always thought of soil as a bank. You apply nutrients, you grow a crop, you draw the bank down. And you reapply nutrients. I come to find out that cover crops unlock

‘Discover the Cover’/see page 10B

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Perspective

Farming is tough lately, but with the right perspective, we can see there are plenty of good things going on

When I was asked to talk about current issues and problems facing the ag community today, my trouble was deciding which ones?!

You can't go too far with any form of media on in your vehicle or turn the TV on without hearing about all the troubles facing and affecting everyone.

We are bombarded with negative views on climate change, poor market prices, lack of rain, too much rain, politics and, of course, COVID-19, among others. I feel like most of those things are already beat to death, and I'd rather NOT add to that seemingly constant noise.

Instead, I'd like to offer this – maybe we shift our own perspective. So many of the things that are the topics of conversation and tend to be such a negative anchor are things we can't really control anyway.

What I mean is that we tend to get sucked into the vortex of negativity that seems to flood our ears almost constantly, and we let it drag down our entire attitude. It's easy to do. What's that old adage – a bad story travels faster and is “funner” to tell than a good one? And who wants to be the upbeat guy when those around you are struggling and down?

It has been tough going for a few years here. You all know that, no doubt. However, one thing I hope we've all had the opportunity to notice, especially this year, is the heightened awareness and genuine concern shown by all in



“... one thing I hope we've all had the opportunity to notice, especially this year, is the heightened awareness and genuine concern shown by all in our rural communities.”

— Justin Decker, seed and agronomy sales, Nutrien Ag Solutions

our rural communities.

Main Street businesses, amid their own struggles, are concerned about those on the farm, and those who make their living on the farm are hoping those in town are able to stay afloat. And it seems both parties are making a conscious effort to help where they can. That impresses me and is why I love living in the rural Midwest.

This season started out fantastic overall, and most were very optimistic, thanks to awesome spring weather that gave us great planting conditions – no rush to mud in the crops or sense of being forced to make poor decisions because we had to try and beat the next rain, etc.

In fact, most people commented that this spring was a pleasure and they finally enjoyed it compared to the last few years.

Now maybe this year hasn't finished quite as everyone had hoped it would early on, but we don't know that yet. One farmer I was visiting with last week put a refreshing perspective on things. He said, “You know, we got the crops in in great shape this year and it looks like we're going to have a real nice long fall to get things harvested ... and we probably aren't going to have a bunch of wet corn we have to try to manage.”

Plus, with an early fall hopefully that means you aren't slammed trying

to do all the things that have to get done.

Crops harvested, manure hauled, pits pumped, fertilizer put on, fields dug, dry stalks raked and baled, those bales hauled home, etc. The potentially longer fall window should relieve some pressure because all those fall jobs won't be so compressed and daunting due to wet, miserable weather.

Time will tell, I know – we've got a lot of fall left. But maybe you can get back to enjoying a few of those duties along with all the great things about fall on the farm – the cool weather, all the great scenes harvest brings to your cab, and especially the sometimes comical chatter on the CB radio (usually on those longer days) from family, neighbors and friends who are helping you.

And just the great feeling of working on YOUR farms!

And who knows, markets could take a nice uptick and yields aren't really known yet. And since we can't control either anyway, let's throw that on the back burner for now.

I hope this isn't coming off too “rose-colored” – everyone's got to be realistic and vent once in a while – just so we don't let it consume our day.

I hope you all have a safe, successful fall and are able to focus on and enjoy the good things we've all got going on!



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Finding passion

First-year ag teacher focuses on finding ‘sparks’ in students at H-BC

By Mavis Fodness

Cloey Anderson wants to ignite a passion in her Hills-Beaver Creek High School students to consider a career in agriculture.

“I hope to bring to the students of H-BC a sense of belonging and hopefully spark a passion in them, whether it’s in agriculture or not,” she said. “I believe that many of the concepts in agriculture are very lifelong, so I hope students can learn a thing or to and be successful people in society.”

Anderson’s early interest in agriculture involved helping her grandparents with their crop and beef cattle operation. Living in the town of Gaylord, Anderson said she was aware of agriculture all around her.

“I would love to help with chores and help with harvesting or planting with my grandpa,” she said.

When she was 12, her family moved to their own farm, and Anderson was exposed to the day-to-day operation of raising Boer goats and chickens.

“We sold our goats for meat and kept females to grow the herd. I always had so much fun with the goats and chickens.”

As an eighth-grader at Sibley East High School, Anderson was in the required Introduction to Ag class when her passion received the needed spark.

“I knew I wanted to be a teacher my whole life, and when I learned I could be an ag teacher, I was hooked,” she said.

Her ag teacher encouraged her to join FFA.

“I went to every FFA event I could, but I found my niche in the dairy products career development event.”



First-year Hills-Beaver Creek High School ag instructor Cloey Anderson will also lead the school’s FFA Chapter for 2020-21. Anderson (pictured working with one of her family meat goats) wants to expose students to a variety of ag experiences in order to ignite a passion for learning.

Raising livestock taught first-year ag teacher Cloey Anderson about meat production and the day-to-day management skills necessary to raise healthy goats and chickens.

Her love for cheese kept her interested in the event that took her to the state FFA competition twice.

“I really liked to practice for it, and it gave me an opportunity to learn about something I didn’t have a lot of experience in,” she said.

Anderson connected with friends, who shared a similar interest in dairy products, and now as a teacher and



H-BC FFA Chapter adviser, she wants her students to also receive that exposure to the wide variety of ag experiences through the FFA program.

“Making practices fun is a great way to get students to participate, and getting a group of friends together makes it that much more fun.”

This fall, however, many of the FFA experiences will start online due to the coronavirus pandemic.

At H-BC, however, Anderson may tap into her own experiences to expose students to hands-on activities promoting agriculture.

As a student at Sibley East High School, Anderson was vice president of her FFA chapter and assisted in piloting the “Book Buddies” program, where FFA students visited the elementary school to read agriculture books to kindergartners. For a supervised agricultural experience, she worked in the school’s garden, managing the plants and workers.

Anderson graduated from South Dakota State University in Brookings in May with a degree in agricultural education. H-BC High School is her first full-time teaching position.



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The Luverne Area Community Foundation can help you achieve your goals collaboratively with your financial advisor to ease your transition, save on taxes, build another retirement source and do something good through charity.

LACF will be hosting a live online Zoom event **Monday, November 9 at 7pm** on how a Charitable Remainder Trust works, specifically focused on farm operation exit strategies.

Contact Emily Crabtree, Executive Director at Emily@luvacf.org or 507-220-2424 to be sure you receive the information needed to register for this online information session.



**LUVERNE AREA
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

There will be a valuable information that you don't want to miss.

Rural America: Stand up and be counted in the 2020 Census

The 2020 Census is underway. Participation and leadership from farmers, ranchers and other agricultural leaders is critical and will have an impact on rural communities for the next 10 years.

Many farmers and ranchers complete other Census surveys, such as the Census of Agriculture, but the 2020 U.S. Census also is important.

The U.S. Constitution calls for a complete count every 10 years of everyone living in the United States and its territories, regardless of gender, age, race, ethnic origin or citizenship.

For your community, county and state, census participation is about

Data collection ends Sept. 30; there are many ways to participate

legislative representation and money. The 2020 Census will determine how the 435 members of the U.S. House of Representatives will be allocated to each state for the next 10 years.

Similarly, many states use Census data as part of legislative redistricting processes.

Each year \$675 billion in federal spending comes back to local communities, counties and states through programs that use census data in determining allocations.

They include things like health and medical programs, nutrition

Leadership from farmers, ranchers and ag businesses and rural families is essential for rural communities to benefit from the Census for the next 10 years.

assistance and the school lunch program, and energy assistance and housing programs.

Funds may come back through grants for schools, parks, education and library services, or fire and emergency services.

Of course, a big one

is funding for highway and road planning and construction.

Regardless of how you use the roads – foot, bicycle, motorcycle, car, truck or horse and buggy – federal money allocated based on the census affects you.

Census data are also factored into allocation of money through various farm bill and USDA programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Other rural programs that receive funding based on census data include:

- rural education.
- rural business enterprise grants.
- rural home rental assistance.
- water and waste disposal for rural communities.
- state wildlife grants.
- rural housing preservation grants.
- hunter education and safety.

Most people already received invitations to participate in the 2020 Census through mailings that began March 12.

They can continue to complete the census online at www.2020census.gov, by phone or by mail with a paper questionnaire.

To encourage more households to self-respond, the Census Bureau sent a seventh mailing, including a paper questionnaire, in late August to early September, to the lowest- responding communities. Some households also may be

contacted by phone or email.

Many households in rural areas with no mail delivery to physical addresses, or those who receive mail at U.S. Post Office boxes or by other means, should have received census forms this summer using a non-contact process called “update leave,” where census staff verified the address and dropped off a census form at the door.

Those forms still can be mailed in, but even if the form was lost or misplaced, you can still complete the census online or by phone.

On Aug. 9 census workers began knocking on doors nationwide to follow up with those who had not yet self-responded by internet, phone or mail.

Census takers wear masks and other personal protective equipment and are trained in social distancing.

As of Aug. 30, about 64.4 percent of people self-responded nationwide and 82.4 percent of U.S. households have been counted in total. Yet, self-response rates in 13 states or territories remain below 60 percent.

There are rural areas in almost all states – including high-responding states – where response is much lower. To see daily updated self-response rates down

Rural Census/see page 16B

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Farmers and agronomists should scout fields for palmer amaranth

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is encouraging farmers and agronomists to scout fields now for the invasive weed Palmer amaranth.

Palmer amaranth is listed as a noxious weed in Minnesota and was first discovered in the state in 2016. All above and below ground parts of the plant must be destroyed, and it cannot be moved.

Left uncontrolled, a single female Palmer amaranth plant typically produces 100,000 to 500,000 seeds. It is resistant to multiple herbicides, can cause substantial yield losses, and greatly increase weed management costs in soybeans and corn.

Now is the time when Palmer amaranth is visible in agricultural fields.

The MDA is asking farmers and agronomists to pull out any suspicious plants and report them to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Arrest the Pest line at 1-888-545-6684 or arrest.the.pest@state.mn.us.

Palmer amaranth can be identified by the following characteristics:

- The green leaves are smooth and arranged in an alternate pattern that grows symmetrically around the stem. The leaves are oval to diamond or triangle shaped.
- The leaves of some Palmer amaranth plants have a whitish, V-shaped mark on them. Not all Palmer amaranth plants display this characteristic.
- Palmer amaranth looks similar to our native pigweeds such as waterhemp. Here are some distinguishing characteristics:
 - Pigweeds have fine hairs on their stems and leaves. Palmer amaranth and waterhemp do not have these hairs.
 - The petiole (stalk connecting a leaf to the stem) is longer than the length of the leaf. For waterhemp, the petiole will be only half the length of the leaf.
 - Seedhead spikes on female Palmer amaranth plants are much taller (up to three feet long) and pricklier than waterhemp or redroot and smooth pigweed spikes.
- The invasive weed is also listed as a prohibited weed seed in the state. This means no Palmer amaranth is allowed in any seed offered for sale in Minnesota.
- Palmer amaranth has been found in nine Minnesota counties; however, most of the sites have been successfully eradicated and the remaining are being closely monitored.



The MDA is asking farmers and agronomists to pull out any suspicious plants and report them to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Arrest the Pest line at 1-888-545-6684 or arrest.the.pest@state.mn.us.

The green leaves of the palmer amaranth (pictured at left) are smooth and arranged in an alternate pattern that grows symmetrically around the stem. The leaves are oval to diamond or triangle shaped. Some palmer amaranth leaves have a whitish, V-shaped mark on them.

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Life changes, so do your insurance needs

By Shirley Top,
Kozlowski Insurance

Life changes in a heartbeat without regular reviews of your insurance program.

It is possible for gaps to form. The result can be disastrous for a family. Nothing is more unfortunate than finding out after a loss that you weren't covered for a particular risk.

In order to ensure that your coverage stays current with your circumstances and needs, it is important to have annual reviews.

Many people assume their auto and farm coverage will provide all the liability insurance they need.

In the event you are underinsured, everything you have worked so hard to obtain can be taken away, leaving families exposed to financial ruin.

Scheduling an annual review of your insurance program can help identify gaps in your coverage or help additional discounts.

An hour of your time will make you feel more confident throughout the year so that you can focus on the things that are most important to you.

You could be spending less money and getting better coverage. Who wouldn't be happy with that?



What information should you discuss at your annual review?

- Is your coverage on your dwelling and outbuildings adequate? Cost of construction has gone up substantially.
- Do buildings have replacement cost coverage or will there be depreciation?
- Scheduled personal property such as cell phones, jewelry, computers etc.?
- Backup of sewer, drain, sump pump coverage?
- Service line coverage for water, sewer, power lines and geothermal pipes?
- Equipment breakdown for furnaces, air conditioning systems, generators?
- Have you formed different entities such as corporations or trust?
- Verify coverage on your machinery, livestock, grain, hay, corn stalk bales?
- Do you have livestock liability coverage? If not, you may qualify for a discount.
- Blizzard or suffocation coverage on livestock?
- Contract grower liability coverage in the event you are found negligent for the death of custom-fed livestock in your possession?
- Loss of income for confinement buildings or dairy farms?
- Ingestion of foreign objects, such as rocks, post, etc. for farm equipment?
- Debris removal?
- Farm extra expense, such as farm equipment rental?

- Cab glass equipment for farm equipment?
- Licensed trailers?
- Grain peak season?
- Livestock at additional locations?
- Additional set of farm buildings liability?
- Farm accident medical payments coverage for the insured, \$5,000 or \$10,000 coverage, \$100 deductible?
- ATV 4-wheeler, snowmobile, golf cart, boat?
- Custom farming liability coverage?
- Custom feeding livestock liability?
- Workers compensation?
- Is your life insurance adequate?
- Disability income protection?
- Nursing home long-term care coverage?
- Directors and officers coverage for board members?
- Any business activity?
- Equipment breakdown coverage for dwelling, outbuildings, hog confinements, dairy farms, grain systems, etc.?
- \$1,000,000 to \$5,000,000 liability umbrella policy?

Consider an umbrella liability policy that provides you with an extra layer of liability coverage – in addition to your underlying liability exposure on your farm, auto and recreational vehicles.



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Keeping opportunities and talent close to home

Area students explore ag careers through Jaycox scholarships

A scholarship program at Jaycox Implement, Luverne, provides opportunities for students to explore careers in agriculture.

Students shadow professionals and help with hands-on repairs, and ultimately gain experience for a job at one of the Jaycox locations in Luverne, Worthington or Lake Park, Iowa.

About a dozen young people have applied to the program in recent years, according to Mark Ommen, Luverne store manager.

“Bottom line is that we pay their tuition for two years and they get a starter tool kit,” he said. “(Farm implement repair) is a field and a position that’s tough to find talent for.”

As Ommen balances his future workforce with industry needs, the scholarship program cultivates potential workers through two career exploration paths: supervised occupational experiences and/or tuition assistance.

Leah Wynia, a senior at Luverne High School, is interested in a career in agriculture and said she sees the occupational experiences at Jaycox as a benefit toward her goal of joining the family farm operation.

The daughter of Roger and Julie Wynia spent this past summer shadowing in the precision ag department at Jaycox. She’s tentatively decided to attend South Dakota State University in Brookings next year, joining the school’s growing precision ag program.

Precision ag is a broad career field that uses technology to improve farming practices.

“If I decide not to do precision ag as a technician ... I would have that knowledge (coming back to the farm),” she said.



Inside the combine cab, Leah Wynia powers up the precision ag equipment where she selects the diagnostics screen. In an internship with Jaycox Implement, the Luverne High School senior learned how to fix and recalibrate various technological equipment now included in today’s tractors and combines.

As an intern, Wynia was paid for her time, and the flexible schedule will allow her to continue the job shadowing during the school year. She will decide later whether or not to apply to the scholarship program.

Second-year scholarship student Tucker Madison of Adrian said he immediately knew the scholarship program was a good fit.

“Before I started at Jaycox, I had the mindset of becoming a diesel mechanic,” he said.

The past two years of hands-on experience next to seasoned Jaycox mechanics has only heightened his interest in repairing tractor and combine engines. He’s picked up plenty

of tips and advice in the field.

“Having that guidance from someone who has been wrenching a long time has been invaluable,” Madison said. “The biggest thing is I’ve gained confidence to start that big project, and I know I will be able to complete it.”

The 2019 graduate of Worthington High School is in his second year at Lake Area Technical College in Watertown, South Dakota.

He uses the Snap-On tools provided by the scholarship program at school as well as when he works at Jaycox during

“The biggest reason I do this — work with local families and local students and reward them — is to show them they don’t have to go to a big city for a good-paying job.”

— Mark Ommen
Jaycox Luverne
store manager

Photos and
text by
Mavis Fodness

Jacox precision ag internships/continued on page 10B

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Jacox precision technology internships/ continued from page 9B

breaks. After graduation, the son of Mark and Dawn Madison will work at Jaycox for two years as the scholarship program's final steps.

Ommen said when scholarship recipients return to fulfill the employment requirements, the learning doesn't stop with the hiring.

As a dealer for Case IH equipment, technicians complete continuing edu-

Jacox precision scholarship/see next page



Luverne High School graduate Leah Wynia participates in a paid supervised occupational experience at the Luverne location of Jaycox Implement. Wynia, daughter of Roger and Julie Wynia, has shadowed precision ag technicians and completed several trouble-shooting tasks related to the job.

At left, she powers up the precision ag equipment where she selects the diagnostics screen in a combine cab at Jaycox Implement, Luverne. She spent this past summer shadowing in the precision ag department at Jaycox.

Mavis Fodness photo/0924 Ag Tab Fall 2020 Jaycox Scholarships

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Cover crops/ from page 3B

or unleash those tied up nutrients, whether they're bringing nutrients that are deeper in the soil profile to the surface or you're decreasing wind and soil erosion where particles are leaving or just supercharging the soil bacteria to make nutrients more available."

That in turn, he said, puts dollars back in his pocket. However, the savings aren't always obvious.

"When we grid sample every four years, we're seeing organic matter increase 3- to 4-tenths of a percent every four years. And if you stick with it for 10, 12 years, it's gone up more than 1 percent," Aukes said.

"Now put a price tag on that in the environment we're in and how dry as it is. Not to mention the extra available phosphorus, potassium and micronutrients - and nitrogen for that matter, that comes along with that percent of organic matter.

As an agronomist, Aukes said he's noticing trends in cover crops and nutrient improvements in soil.

"... Every year I see it continue to grow. I see what our seed business does that I can gauge total acres and I see where the trend is moving toward continued covers. If you look back seven, eight, nine years ago, if a farmer would put a cover crop, neighbors wondered what was going on," he said.

"Now it's a culture that's made it just natural. There are enough growers that have done it and seen benefit from it. It's part of the total farm management decision, no different than if you would put a herbicide on. ... Once that silage is chopped, it's automatic, you're going to put that cover crop on to protect the soil."

He said new producers might feel overwhelmed by all the information, but he encourages them to consider their goals.

"Is it more from a forage standpoint or is from cover for decreasing erosion. It could be both or all the above," Aukes said.

"I just challenge the grower, if you don't take a start, you'll never dive in. If they feel comfortable splitting an 80 and see. ... Allow the agronomist to walk you through it. ... when to terminate it, when to plant into it, and the herbicide considerations."

Aukes can be reached at taukes@coopfe.com

Jacox precision technology internships keep talent and opportunity close to home/from page 10B



Tucker Madison rests against the chest of tools he received as a second-year participant in the Jaycox Implement Scholarship Program. The 2019 graduate of Worthington High School is in his second year at Lake Area Technical College in Watertown, South Dakota. He uses the Snap-On tools provided by the scholarship program at school as well as when he works at Jaycox during breaks.

cation hours through the manufacturer. Scholarship students can specialize in one area as the industry needs dictate.

"The biggest reason I do this — work with local families and local students and reward them — is to show them they don't have to go to a big city for a good-paying job," Ommen said.

Interest is the only requirement to be a Jaycox Implement intern or scholarship student.

"If the shoe fits for both of us, we'll try to make it fit," he said.

Ommen can be reached at 507-283-2319.

To inquire about the sholarship program at Jaycox Implement in Luverne, Mark Ommen can be reached at 507-283-2319

"Having that guidance from someone who has been wrenching a long time has been invaluable. ... The biggest thing is I've gained confidence to start that big project, and I know I will be able to complete it."

— Tucker Madison, Adrian Jaycox Implement precision technology intern

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Be prepared for changes to fall nitrogen application

By Doug Bos, Rock County Land Management Office

Fall application of nitrogen has been a practice that has been utilized for many years.

Benefits include reduced compaction compared to spring application, better availability of equipment in the fall, and saving time in the spring when there are too many things to accomplish before planting.

Fall application of nitrogen also comes with risks from the cost of lost nitrogen and possible nitrate leaching into groundwater.

This will be changing for some areas in Rock County this fall.

Starting Sept. 1, fall nitrogen application is prohibited on areas of coarse-textured soil and shallow bedrock.

These areas are susceptible to leaching of nitrates into the ground water.

For a map of these areas you can search for your property on the Minnesota Department of Ag's (MDA) Groundwater Protection Rule website <https://www.mda.state.mn.us/nfr> or call our office for more details.

The MDA is ultimately responsible for administering and enforcing the Groundwater Protection Rule to protect drinking water, but for the past five years Rock County SWCD/Land Management has been assisting farmers in the Drinking Water Supply Manage-

ment Areas (DWSMA) with implementing best management practices for nitrogen application.

Some of these best management practices included no fall nitrogen application, split application of nitrogen, use of nitrification inhibitors, reducing nitrogen rates, variable rate nitrogen application (based on soil type and yield maps) and installation of perennial grass plantings.

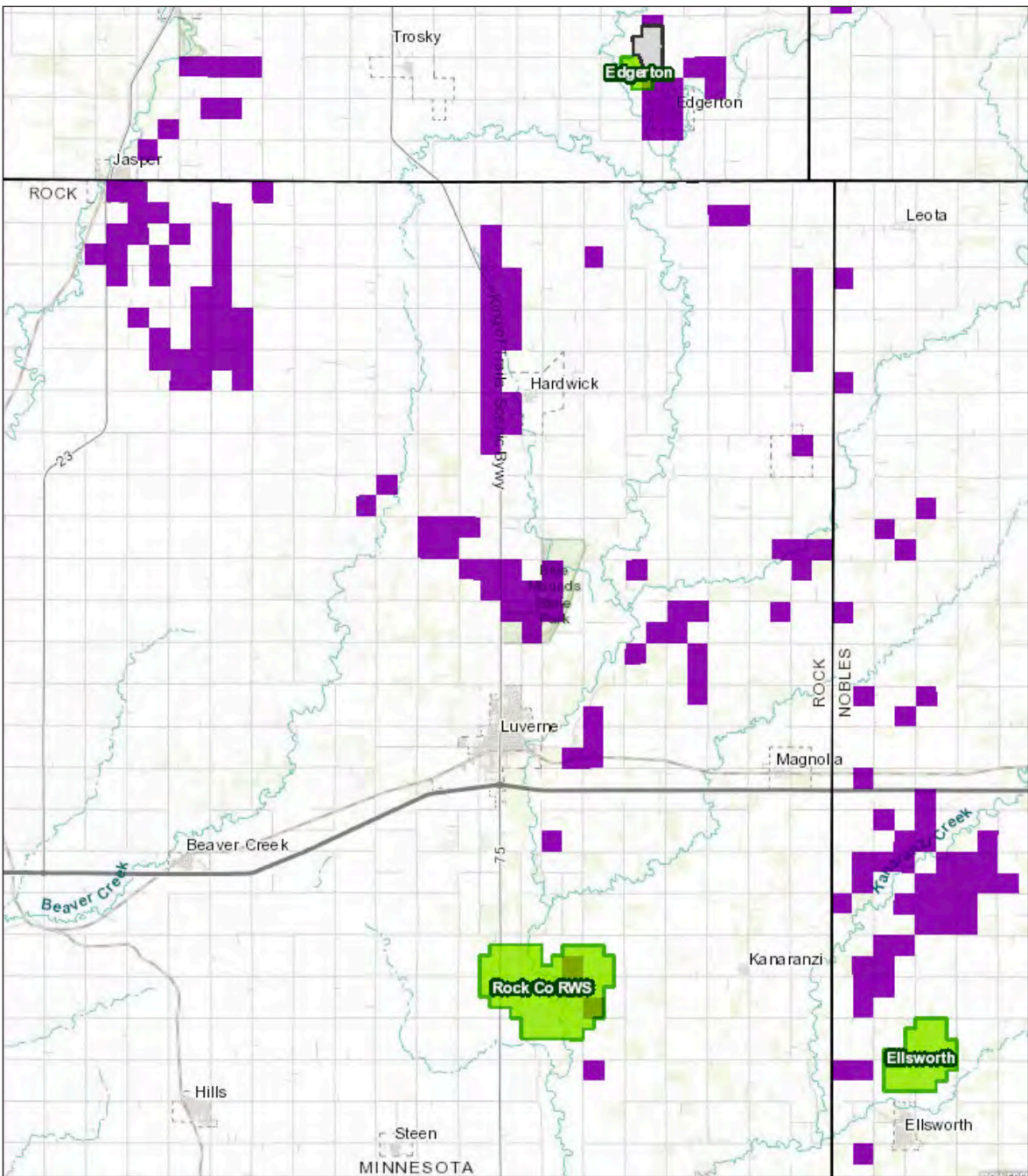
The Rock County Rural Water DWSMA has seen some success in reducing nitrates in their wells with the implementation of these best management practices.

Another plus for farmers implementing the best management practices has been improved profits through reductions in fertilizer costs and better yields.

Because of the improved profitability, these same farmers have been utilizing these best management practices for nitrogen application across all of their acres.

Utilizing perennial crops such as grass and alfalfa or small grains in crop rotations has shown to be more profitable than corn/soybean rotations as well as improved soil health.

If you are interested in these best management practices for nitrogen or have questions on the Groundwater Protection Rule, feel free to call our office at 507-283-8862.





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Restrictions by DWSMA (2020)
DWSMA Low Vulnerability Exemption (July 2020)
Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMAs) with Nitrate-N ≥5.4 mg/L (July 2020)
Restrictions By Quarter Section or Government Lot (2020)
Statewide Fall Restriction



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In a pandemic world where we've forgotten what's 'normal,' where do we go from here?

Who can describe 2020 as normal? Many boast that they survived the great toilet paper scare of 2020. School kids experienced a spring break that lasted into August. Baseball games now cater to a stadium full of cardboard cutouts. Major events such as graduations, proms and weddings canceled or postponed. 2020 was far from our "normal".

The crop year of 2020 was also vastly different from the prior year. Last year experienced widespread moisture leading to planting delays and acres upon acres of preventive plant. The high level of moisture continued the entire growing season, leaving a crop of below trend line yields.

This year began with an abundance of ground moisture, early planting, and above normal temperatures for most of the growing season. Rain was lacking in parts of the grain belt, yielding drought and stress across most of Iowa.

Strong storms, derecho (I had never heard of), blasted a large portion of Iowa and beyond, flattening crops, tumbling grain bins, power lines, buildings and trees. A crop that started off with high potential seems to be shrinking in size as portions of the grain belt struggled with recent rains.

Parts of western Iowa are ranked near the driest they have been in the past 128 years, while other portions of the grain belts remain above or near average. It truly will be a year of a wide variety of yields by area.

The recent hot and dry weather has pushed corn futures back near the summer highs after the July rally. This rally is happening at a very counter seasonal time.

As we have studied past years with similar weather patterns, it is surprising how these markets have rallied hard in later August, but still sold off seasonally into harvest. There continues to be downside risk to prices as we approach harvest.

The real question now is where do we go from here? The big but shrinking crops in the U.S. right now have helped rally these markets, along with a resurgence in Chinese buying. Multiple reasons lead us to believe we are in an opportunity. China buying has remained uncommonly strong over the past month.

Their growing hog herd and flooding has helped wipe out reserves that have had to be auctioned off and replenished.

Continued strength in these markets will depend on China continuing to make uncharacteristic pur-

‘Normal’ -- (Webster) noun:
the usual, average, or typical state or condition

Rob Andringa, risk manager, Professional Ag Marketing, shares ideas

chases ... and we all know how dependable China is at living up to their agreed upon purchases. How long will this continue?

Unfortunately, one cannot just check off 2020 talking just about the weather. COVID-19! The impacts of

this continue to make waves. Crude oil traded negative for the first time in history back in April as demand was weak and storage was scarce.

The world was in lockdown at home, and travel stopped. Ethanol production was running at 50 percent of the prior

year, reducing the need for corn. Livestock plants struggled with labor issues due to the virus backing up livestock. Grocery shelves began to empty as products became unavail-

What's normal?/continued on 15B



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What's normal? Where do we go from here in pandemic world?/continued from page 13B

able. The impact infected every aspect of the ag industry.

While the virus and its effects remain, advancements have been made. Today crude oil is trading around \$40. Gas demand has increased.

Ethanol plants continue to increase production. Livestock slaughter rates have improved while adding larger weekend slaughters.

Most of the benchmarks the Ag industry uses have hit a short-term plateau at 80 to 90 percent of pre-Covid levels.

This continues to be a large concern for the Ag markets going forward. While there remains a lot of abnormality, the economy has picked up from its lows.

A benefit to all of the stimulus funds has been a decrease in the value of the dollar. This has allowed the U.S. to be more competitive in the export market.

We have seen a large increase in exports partially due to the Phase 1 trade commitment, but also due to the weakening of the dollar. This has benefited the Ag industry.

As we move forward, attempting to make decisions that make sense for our business, it is always important to use history as a guide.

While 2020 might just be that unexpected exceptional year that doesn't occur again, I am certain it has taught us that we need to always be prepared.

Use the right tools available to you to

While 2020 might just be that unexpected exceptional year that doesn't occur again, I am certain it has taught us that we need to always be prepared. Use the right tools available to you to make good informed decisions for your business today.

— Rob Andringa,
Professional Ag Marketing

make good informed decisions for your business today!

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Rock County Minnesota 2020

Need money for projects on the farm? Here are seven places to get it

Grants and cost-share programs can provide funding for your farming and conservation projects. There is a lot of money available to improve your community if you know where to look. Following are a few grants that can benefit Rock County:

1. Rock County Tree Program

All landowners in Rock County are eligible for 40-percent cost-share (up to \$800) for windbreaks and larger tree planting projects. Projects should be scheduled in the fall for planting next spring. Contact the Rock County Land Management Office (Rock SWCD) at 507-283-8862 for more information. Details can also be found online at RockSWCD.org/trees

2. 1-Watershed 1-Plan (1W1P)

One of the newest conservation programs for farmers/landowners is 1W1P. This program was created to help address soil and water quality issues on a watershed level instead of a county level. In Rock County this program is primarily used by farmers to stop erosion and fix gullies, but there are other conservation practices it will also fund. 1W1P takes ongoing signups; funds are renewed every two years. Cost share can cover up to 90 percent of the project cost. Contact your local Soil Water Conservation District for more information.

3. Environmental Quality Enhancement Programs (EQIP)

The USDA has many branches and grants. The USDA's National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provides EQIP cost share funding to conserve and improve water, soil and air quality.

By Michael Walgrave,
Rock-SWCD, Engineering Technician
Rock County Land Management Office, Luverne

Some of the practices that EQIP will provide cost share for include cover crops, agroforestry, grazing irrigation, high tunnels, on-farm energy efficiency, and even innovations in conservation. Contact your local USDA/NRCS office or check on their website at nrcs.usda.gov for more information.

4. Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)

SARE is another branch of the USDA. They offer cost share for project by region. Their objective is to fund research and education projects that advance sustainable agriculture. Farmers, researchers, extension agents, graduate students and other educators are eligible for this cost share. Projects can include on-farm energy, pest/weed management, pollinators and local/regional food systems. There is currently a grant deadline for Dec. 3, 2020. Check out SARE.org/grants for more information.

5. AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture also offers funding for projects that make state more sustainable. This program funds Minnesota farmers, nonprofits and educational organizations. Projects can include cover crops, conservation tillage, crop rotations, improving marketing opportunities, on-farm energy production and organic productions. Proposal deadline is Dec. 10, 2020. Check out MDA.state.mn.us for more information.

6. US Fish and Wildlife

'Partners for Fish and Wildlife' Program

This federal program provides funds and technical assistance to landowners for restoring and enhancing wildlife. Projects that improve rare, threatened, and endangered species, such as the local Topeka Shiner, are given priority. Federal, state and non-governmental organizations can also partner with this program and utilize these funds for projects on private lands. Information can be found at fws.gov/partners or by calling Sheldon Myerchin at 320-253-4682.

7. Department of Labor and Industry 'Minnesota Apprenticeship Initiative'

Minnesota employers are eligible for up to \$5,000 for each apprentice's training. The goal of this grant is to help employers develop programs that recruit and train apprentices in the industries of agriculture, advanced manufacturing, health care, information technology and transportation. Research dli.mn.gov/mai for more information.

Check out grants.gov

If these grants don't suit your project needs, Grants.gov is a good place to find information on a broad range of federal grants. This website also has educational videos on grants to help you apply and utilize grants. Grants and cost-share is one way to fund the improvement of your community, environment and business. Grants and funding can change yearly, so a regular grant search is important for finding up-to-date funding. Federal, regional, state, local governments, and even non-profit organizations have financial assistance for making Rock County an even better community.

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Census/ from page 6B

to the local level, visit <https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates.html>, and to see state totals, see <https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates/nrfu.html>. The goal of the 2020 Census is to get a complete and accurate count. Leadership from farmers, ranchers and ag businesses and rural families is essential for rural communities to benefit from the Census for the next 10 years. A few ways you can help are the following: •Spread the word to friends, neighbors, employees and others in your community that it is important to participate in the 2020 Census. •Remind others that their participation is essential. Some, especially immigrant farm workers, may be concerned about how information about them will be used. By law, the Census Bureau can't share or disclose anyone's individual data with any other organization or agency, including law enforcement and immigration enforcement. •Self-respond online at www.2020census.gov, by phone at 844-330-2020 (English) from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Eastern time, or by mail. Respond online in English or 12 other languages, or receive assistance through language guides and videos available in 59 languages. Or, if a census taker knocks at the door, answer. Data collection for the 202 Census ends Sept. 30. Now is the time to stand up and be counted. This column was provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

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