

AG NEWS

DEAR FRIEND,

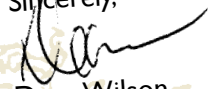
This is your personal invitation for you and your family to attend the **83rd Annual Jefferson County Soils and Crops Conference**. This year's Conference will be held on Saturday, March 17th at the Hillsboro High School, 123 Leon Hall Parkway, in Hillsboro. Registration is at 5:30 p.m. with the program beginning at 6:30 pm. Highlights of the 2007 Conference include:

- **NEW MINI-SESSIONS** – Perhaps the best mini-sessions ever!!!! Learn about dried distillers grain, biodiesels from a local candler, and learn all about soybean candles. **Also, get your blood pressure checked at the Jefferson County Health Department Display and receive a chance to win a new Stihl Chainsaw!!!!!!!**
- **GREAT DISPLAYS** - As always, many area businesses will show case their products and services.
- **Annual Meeting of the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District!!**
- **Simply unbelievable demonstration by 4-H groups that you won't want to miss!! Also, an auction of services provided by 4-H kids. Need a job done around your farm or home? Come bid high for help from the 4-H members!**
- **JEFFERSON COUNTY FARM FAMILY** – Meet the Jefferson County Farm Family for 2007, the Wade Roop Family, and see a slide presentation of their farming operation.

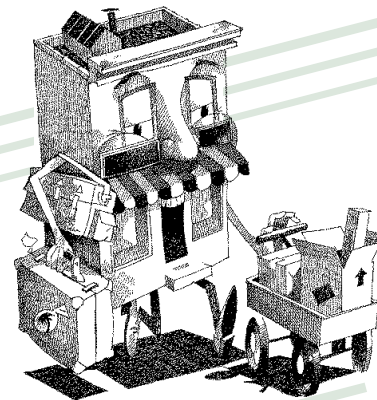
REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED by calling 797-5391 by **Thursday, March 15th**. Please call with the number attending to assist us with the meal count. This year we are asking for a donation of \$5.00 per head to help offset the cost of the Conference. Children under 12 will get in free.

For good food, interesting displays, useful information, and FUN, make plans to attend the Jefferson County Social Event of the Year, the 83rd Annual Jefferson County Soils and Crops Conference.

Sincerely,



Dean Wilson
Agriculture & Rural Development Specialist



Extension on the Move

The Extension Center is moving again! On, or about February 26th, the Extension Center will move to 301 Third Street in Hillsboro.

Jefferson County has purchased the old Comtrea Building and is renovating it. If you go north from BB and Highway 21, (Mexican Restaurant), one block and turn left, the building is just off 21 on Third Street.

We are extremely excited about the move. We will have our own entrance, (no security checks at the door), a nice meeting room, and kitchen. This is by far the best facility that we have had since I have worked in Extension. We want to thank the Jefferson County Commission for providing this space for us. We also want to thank the maintenance department led by Wayne Melkus for all their hard work in getting the building ready.

Come by and visit!

Assessing Storm Damaged Trees

Ice and wind have caused serious damage to many area trees this winter. So, how do we handle damaged trees? The answer to that question and more can be found in the new Guide, "First Aid for Storm-Damaged Trees" written by Hank Stelzer, MU School of Natural Resources. Of course, the first concern with damaged trees is safety. Be sure that the trees have not become a hazard to people, homes, or electric lines. Then the decision becomes what to do with the tree. These tips may help:



Keep it

If the damage is relatively slight, prune any broken branches and trim torn bark or rough edges. A mature shade tree can usually survive the loss of one main limb. Young trees can sustain quite a bit of damage and still survive as long as the main leader remains intact. Watch for signs of decay in damaged trees. Natural healing should take place over time. If the tree is basically healthy and structurally sound, it will likely survive.

Wait and see

While it may sound like the lazy man's way out, sometimes the best thing to do is actually nothing! After carefully pruning the damaged tree, it is often a great idea to just sit back and see what happens. Only prune out the area that absolutely must be cut out. The tree will need all the leaf area it can produce to survive.

Replace it

Some trees are just not worth saving. If a tree has over 50% of the crown damaged, it will be hard for it to survive. Also, if the trunk is split, as so to be structurally unsound, then you may decide to replace it. Sometimes damage to trees is more severe because of previous damage or disease. Of course these trees are definitely candidates for the chainsaw. Finally, take into account the location and the species of the tree. Trees that grow in less than ideal locations or those that are not particularly attractive might as well be cut down.

Remember that it is never a good idea to "top" a tree. Often the new growth on a topped tree is thin and prone to more storm damage. And while we are talking about pruning trees, be sure that you hire someone who is competent. There are a lot of folks who can run a chainsaw, but few who have had training as an arborist. For more information use this web link - <http://www.extension.missouri.edu/explore/agguides/hort/g06867.htm>

Artwork courtesy of the National Arbor Day Foundation

83rd Annual Soils & Crops Invitation

We appreciate your interest and support for the 83rd Annual Jefferson County Soils & Crops Conference. Please select one of the following registration choices and return to the Extension office by **March 15th, 2007**.

Name _____

Number Attending _____

Return the registration form and pay \$5.00 per person.

Call the Extension Center at (636) 797-5391 to reserve your place and pay \$5.00 per person at the door.

Remember, registration begins at 5:30 P.M. with the meal served promptly at 6:40 P.M. Once again, thank you for your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Dean Wilson".

Dean Wilson

Agriculture & Rural Development Specialist



January 1st Inventory Shows Fewer Beef Cows

Twice a year, USDA releases a report numbering the nation's cattle herd. The January 1st report showed that there are 97 million head of cattle in the US. This number is essentially steady with last year. This is a surprising figure as experts agree that the cattle industry should be in the expansion phase. In fact, beef cow numbers were actually down slightly from the year before. Dry weather, short forage supplies, and high feed costs have caused cattlemen to delay breeding more heifers and increasing the herd.

To get a better feel for what is taking

place and why it is important, let's take a minute and examine the cattle cycle. As prices rise, cattlemen save more heifers for breeding, as cattle production is profitable. By saving back heifers, these heifers are not harvested for consumption. The result is even higher prices as the supply of fed cattle is reduced. This continues until enough heifers are bred, have calves and their calves are fed and harvested to increase the supply sufficiently to lower the price. When the price goes down, cattle production is unprofitable, and cattlemen quit saving heifers. These heifers go to harvest and increase the amount of beef produced. Cattlemen, discouraged with low prices, cull more cows, which further adds to the already overabundance of beef, which results in still lower prices. Finally the nation's cow herd is reduced

to the level where supply is less than demand and the market goes back up, starting the cycle over again. Cattle cycles vary in length, but usually last about 10 years. As you can see these extreme peaks and valleys in the market make the cattle business exciting to say the least!

The odd thing is that 2006 was slated to be a rebuilding year because of good feeder calf prices in recent years. The extreme weather and shortages of hay appear to be causing increased cow culling and herd liquidation to be carried over into early 2007. Chances are good that the June Inventory Report will also see a decline in beef cow numbers. It will be interesting to see how last year drought, high corn prices, and lower feeder cattle prices will affect expansion in 2007.

The Big News in Agriculture is Still Corn!

Just when farmers, livestock feeders, and ethanol producers were beginning to recover from the rapid rise in corn prices this fall, USDA dropped a bomb on the corn market with their January 12th production and carryover estimates. USDA lowered the estimate of the 2006 corn crop by 210 million bushels. Even more surprising was the estimate of carryover stocks at only 752 million bushels. This is the smallest carryover since 1995.

Let's go back and put the corn market in perspective. During the previous fall, 2005, it was not uncommon to find corn bringing from a \$1.50 to \$1.80 per bushel. As late as in August of 2006, the corn market was about \$2 per bushel. However, by December corn had nearly doubled in price. After flirting with the \$4 a bushel figure, the market had dropped back to about \$3.80. Then, after the January 12 report, corn futures surged. At this writing, January 23rd, May corn futures are at \$4.24. Cash corn in St. Louis is \$4.03. What is responsible for the recent advance in the corn market?

Farmers grew 10.5 billion bushels of corn last year. This is by no means a small crop, but the size was tempered somewhat by dry weather and acreage going to crops like soybeans with lower production costs last spring. The big news is the demand for corn to make ethanol. Melvin Brees, MU Extension Economist says that there are currently 113 ethanol plants in production in the U.S. Seventy new plants are under construction and will almost double ethanol production. USDA estimates that 2.2 billion bushels of corn will be needed for ethanol production in

2007. The number will climb to 3 billion bushels in 2008. That would approach near 30% of the 2006 crop just for ethanol production.

How high will the corn market go? Brees says that while it is anyone's guess, there are some indications. Certainly, making projections based on past history is not very reliable as demand from ethanol production makes it "a whole new ballgame". However, the March 31st USDA Prospective Planting report will give an idea as to how many acres of corn might be planted given the high price. Economics favor corn production and

most economists expect corn acres to increase at the expense of soybeans and wheat. High corn prices could slow ethanol production, as \$4.00 corn will cut the high returns recently seen by ethanol producers. Finally, all eyes will be on the 2007 growing season weather. A good growing season could result in some easing of the corn market. However, wide spread drought may drive prices to record levels not seen since the 1995-96 drought years when corn reached \$5.00.





Short Rows

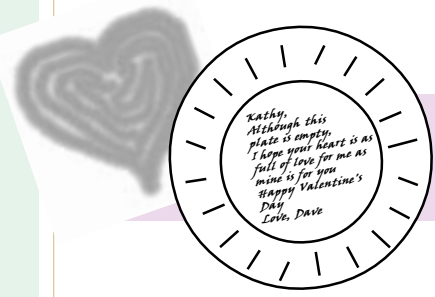
Got a chance to work with the Jefferson County Stormwater Department. They are working on a display for the fair in July. It should be lots of fun.



We plan to artificially breed heifers again this spring. The way this works is that I will come to your house and help you synchronize estrus in the heifers. A week before breeding, we will move all the heifers to one site, probably my house. Then we will AI the heifers using a timed breeding program. The cost last year was about \$45 per head. Don't worry if you only have a few. Last spring we bred 45 heifers owned by 6 different owners. One owner had two head. We ultra sounded most of the heifers and we got about 65% bred AI on the first service. We had a lot of fun doing it! These heifers are due to calve on February 25th.



The Southeast Missouri All-Breed Tested Bull Sale will be Friday, March 23rd. I haven't received catalogs yet, but will rely get some soon.



If you read the Ag News regularly, then you know that Jefferson County men are very romantic. They wouldn't settle for flowers or candy or something as superficial as diamond earrings for their sweetie on Valentine's Day. Jefferson County guys always strive to do something unique and personal for the one they love. Unfortunately, last year we lost our title as "most romantic" to a St. Francois County resident, Ben Davis, who bought his wife, Julie, a Billy goat for Valentine's Day. Well, this year, the title comes back to Jefferson County! A certain Extension secretary got up on Valentine's Day and found a special present on the kitchen table. There was a paper plate with these words written in pencil: "Kathy, although this plate is empty, I hope your heart is as full of love for me, as mine is for you"! As we say in Old Mines, "A man can't love a woman more than that!?!?!?"

Dean Wilson
Dean Wilson
 Agriculture & Rural Development Specialist