Farewell my Friends

Wow! After 26 years, this is my last Jefferson County Ag News! As you may have heard, I’m retiring from Extension on August 15th.

It has been a great career and I can’t thank you enough for all your support through the years. My favorite part of the Ag News was the Short Rows section. So, I decided to write the entire newsletter in the Short Rows style. At first, I thought I would arrange the Short Rows entries by subject, however, that’s not how we’ve done it for 26 years, so why start now! Through the years I’ve tried to always base the articles on information from the University of Missouri and less on my own experiences and opinions. However, for what it is worth, a lot of the information here is based on what I think. Also, you will find some of my favorite jokes and stories from the past 26 years. Hope you enjoy it!

Dean Wilson
Retiring Agriculture & Rural Development Specialist

World Famous

Short Rows

I’m really proud of my new daughter-in-law Andi. She is a hard worker and she and Dallas have built a good business with their veterinary practice. However, she is a blonde! She recently posted an entry on her Facebook page about her Ford car which she is selling. She closed the entry by asking, “Does anyone out there need an Escort? Some of her Facebook friends suggested that could be a poor choice of words?!?! @?

There is not much good to say about the dry weather this summer. Unfortunately, most of the remedies rely on getting rain. My dad always had two sayings about drought:

1) All signs fail in dry weather, (which I never did quite understand), and
2) All droughts end in a rain!?!?

I never remember a time when there wasn’t hay available from somewhere. It might be too high, but you could always buy it. As it stands today, there is practically no hay available locally, and very few options for getting hay trucked in. As I understand it, most producers with hay to sell are waiting to see how high the price might get. Others won’t sell hay until they see how long the drought continues and what their own needs might be. Looks like it will be fall before we really know what will be available and how much it will cost.
Farm kids have a different perspective on things. When Dallas and Lacey were little, at Christmas, they sang “Away in a Manger”. For the verse, “The cattle are lowing”, Dallas sang “The cattle are growing”, and Lacey sang, “The cattle are loading!”?!?

After years of telling Patti that the house really wasn’t that hot and that the window AC unit was plenty good enough, she finally talked me into getting central air. My good buddy Jim Stewart told me a story about a cowboy who had to buy an air conditioner for his wife. Even though Wednesday is my last day, I still don’t think I can but put it in the newsletter. But if you see me, I’d be glad to share the story. It is a good one!

The corn crop in Jefferson County and across the state is nearly a tragedy. Many fields won’t even make ears. Silage is probably the best option, but for most folks silage choppers, wagons, and silos are a thing of the past. Making round bales out of corn is possible, but can be tricky. If you have a round baler which is designed for making silage bales, then it may be easier. The problem is getting the bales baled tight enough to keep moisture out. Also, if you plan to wrap with plastic, stalks can poke holes in the plastic. If you plan to dry the corn and then bale it, then getting the stalks dry is an issue. There seems to be no consensus on what is the best way to cut the corn if you plan to bale it. Some farmers plan to use their haybine, while others think that a bush hog might provide the best method.

Another story about my kids ..........We were riding in the truck and Lacey said, “Aren’t the stars in the sky pretty.” I agreed. She went on to say, “Wouldn’t be great to just be a little star up in the sky!” Dallas was pretty small at the time and we drove several miles down the road. Finally Dallas spoke up, “I want to be a big moon!” He has pretty much tried to do that ever since then!?!?

What is the biggest mistake that Jefferson County Cattlemen make? Poor working facilities. It is just not fair to the cattle or to you to try and work cattle in dangerous or difficult working facilities. All the practices that bring you more money when you sell cattle or increase your cattle’s performance begin with a good head chute and pens. They don’t have to be expensive, just effective. And don’t forget that a good way to get the cattle into the working pens is just as important.

It would take a pickup truck bed to hold all the inappropriate stories that folks have told me and suggested that I put them in the newsletter. Now, that would be a Short Rows that no one would ever forget!

Although I am retiring, I’m still excited about the possibilities of folks taking advantage of the demand for local foods. I know it is hard work, but for the first time in my life time, you can take an acre or less and actually make money on it by growing food.

A Ware cowboy and his wife of 45 years were going to marriage counseling. No sooner than they walked into the office, his wife started to complain about every incident that had happened since they were married. The counselor got out of his chair, embraced the cowboy’s wife and give her a long passionate kiss on the lips. The woman sat down dazed and confused. The counselor turned to the husband and said, “This is what your wife needs three times a week.” Do you think that you can do it?” The cowboy thought for a minute and said, “Well, I can bring her back in on Monday’s and Wednesday’s, but I go hunting on weekends!?!?@!”
Back to cattle working facilities............if you are putting in a crowding tub, I think a straight through design works much better than those where the cattle must make a right hand turn out of the tub into the alley.

In my estimation, ninety per cent of the issues with lawns are caused by the homeowner or their lawn maintenance company. Too much fertilizer early in the spring results in top growth at the expense of root growth. I think that NO nitrogen fertilizer should be put on in the spring in Jefferson County. Make those applications on Labor Day and Halloween instead.

The worst I ever got in trouble over Short Rows was over this story that Bob Stovesand told me: It was customary in the early days of gas stations for the attendants to pump gas and as a courtesy, take a whisk broom and sweep out the floor board of the car. A car load of ladies stopped at the gas station in Cedar Hill to get gas. One of the ladies asked the attendant if they had a restroom. He misunderstood the lady and thought she had asked for a whisk broom. He answered, No, but I have an air hose and I can blow it out if you want me to!?!?! (It was a hit in the Ste Gen. County Ag News as well!)

I very much admire organic vegetable producers. It is certainly harder to produce vegetables and other crops without the use of commercial pesticides and fertilizer. I admire their understanding of soil and use of organic matter to produce crops. There is a lesson there for all of us to study even if we don’t grow organically.

What I don’t understand is why consumers and new organic producers are so quick to accept any bit of information as gospel even without any research or proof. In fact, research based information seems to be less widely accepted as does hearsay. Unfortunately, Universities have really failed in supporting organic producers with research on best organic practices. I applaud Lincoln University’s efforts to develop some organic production research.

Some of the best stories came from Ken Bolte, like this one. Two cattlemen were talking about their bulls. “How’s that new bull working out”, asked the first. The cattleman answered, “Well, I had trouble with that bull. When I turned him out, he just didn’t seem interested in the cows.” “What did you do?” asked the first guy. “Why, I called the veterinarian,” he answered, “He gave me a feed additive that he suggested that I mix into his feed.” “Did it work?” asked the first guy. “You bet it worked! The bull ate the feed, jumped out of the pen, jumped the fence and settled all of my cows, then jumped the fence and bred all the neighbor’s cows. In fact, the bull was three farms away when I finally caught him.” The first cattlemen asked, “What do you think was in that feed?” “I don’t know,” answered the second cattlemen, “but it tasted like licorice!”?!?

Long time cattle buyer Charlie Sutton told a story about a cattle feeder that went to heaven. When he got there, St. Peter told him that he could choose any activity he wanted to do in heaven. The cattle feeder said, “Well, I’ve fed cattle all my life, so I guess I just want to keep on feeding cattle in heaven.” So, St. Peter set him up in a cattle feeding operation in heaven. A few months went by and the cattle feeder had a pen ready to sell. He called St. Peter and asked, “Can you put me in touch with a good cattle buyer here in heaven?” St. Peter answered, “There aren’t any good cattle buyers in heaven!”/!?
How small of a corn yield is still worth combining? MU Extension says that at $7.50 per bushel, 4 bushels would pay for the combining cost, 4 bu. X $7.50 = $30 per acre. However, modern combines are not designed to efficiently harvest small ears and very low yields. In fact, most combines will not efficiently harvest 30 bushel per acre corn. Therefore, the harvest loss could be very high in low yielding corn. It sounds like harvesting 10, 15, 20 bushel corn may not be hardly worth the effort.

Paul Fricke asked me about planting oats in the fall. I told him that I didn’t think it would work. Turns out that Rob Kahlenback, MU Agronomy Specialist, says that oats will out yield most anything in the fall. They will likely winterkill, but can produce lots of forage with some rain.

Lori Lowery was an Extension secretary for several years. She was working on embryology where students hatch chicks in the classroom. Lori was responsible for seeing that the right number of eggs and incubators got to the right classes. She was deep in thought when the phone rang and a lady asked about “ticks.” Unfortunately, Lori thought she said “chicks”. The next question from the woman was “what about diseases?” Lori grabbed the guide sheet and began to describe in detail the symptoms of bluecomb disease, fowl cholera, and limberneck.” The voice on the phone got really excited and said, “But my kids get them every time they go out in the yard!” Lori suddenly realized that there was a communication breakdown, and it took 20 minutes to convince the woman that her kids weren’t going to get bluecomb disease!?!?!?

Some of the bottom fields have lots of Johnsongrass. It is tempting to graze, but remember that Johnsongrass does have the potential for prussic acid poisoning when grazed less that 18 inches tall or under drought stress. Prussic acid dissipates during the curing process, so haying Johnsongrass is not an issue as far as prussic acid is concerned.

Maybe the worst story in 26 years...........Upon noticing that his bird was ill, a man took it to the veterinarian. The veterinarian examined the bird at length. Finally, the man asked, “Do you know what’s wrong, Doc?” After some thought, the vet answered, “Yes, the bird has Chirpes. It is a Canareal disease.?!?!

I’ve tested and talked to a lot of you about nitrates in corn for silage or hay. Nitrate levels go down by at least 25% during the ensiling process. Haying does not lower the nitrate levels. We have tested a few fields that have moderate nitrate levels, but nothing really high. I would highly suggest that you test silage and baled corn for nitrate before feeding. The Extension Center can send off samples for you. It takes about 4 days to get the results and costs about $25. I feel safe in saying that in most instances, limiting the nitrate containing feed to half the ration should be okay. But get a test to be sure.

Speaking of nitrates, if you are planning to harvest corn for silage or hay, wait about 10 days after a rain. Drought stressed corn will accumulate more nitrogen after a rain, but will grow and use that nitrogen in 10 days.

Another one from Bob Stovesand – A meteorologist was a man of few words, but his wife talked all the time. They went to dinner with another couple and the wife talked through the hors d’oeuvres, the main course, and finally dessert. Finally, the wives went to freshen their makeup and left the men alone. The other man said, “Boy, your wife is really a talker, isn’t she?” The meteorologist answered, “Sixty words a minute with gust up to ninety!?!?”
I tried baling soybeans one time. By the time the stems were dry, all the leaves had dried and fallen off. I think the problem is that soybeans to make good hay, they must be cut earlier. Most farmers wait too long, hoping for rain and the stems get too rank.

One time during the Desert Storm war, we sent out some information to the 4-H club asking them to support our troops in “Dessert Storm”?!?!?

There has been a lot of talk about selling cows because of the drought and evidently, quite a few sold. Certainly we have to find feed for them. But with such low cattle inventory numbers, the prospect for good markets in the next few years are high. The Semi Annual Cattle inventory report released in July shows the beef cow herd down nearly 3% from last year. Makes me wonder if we should try to hold on, (see the following story.)

To stay in the cattle business, you have to be an optimist, so I appreciate State Representative Ron Casey’s story about optimism. Two immigrants went out west seeking their fortune. After days of looking for work, they stopped in the town saloon and asked the bartender for a job. They informed the bartender that they had come west to get rich and were willing to do anything to get a grubstake. The bartender said that he didn’t have any jobs, but that they were paying $50 a piece for Indian scalps. The next day, the immigrants returned with two Sioux scalps. They collected their money and went back to their cabin. That night one of them heard a noise outside and went to the window. Outside, the whole Sioux nation dressed in war paint, was circling the cabin. The other immigrant asked, “What do you see?” He replied, “It is our lucky day! We are going to be millionaires!?!?”

We had a blueberry producer speak at the De Soto Farmers Market workshop last spring. I always thought that there was tremendous potential for profit with blueberries. What I found out was that blueberry production is very difficult.

Many of you have asked if my position will be filled. Right now an Extension Council committee is working on this issue. Times change and so has the emphasis in Extension. My title as Agriculture Specialist is a generalist title. Today, Extension is working to develop more focused, specialized positions. The Jefferson County Extension Council is developing a position description with this in mind. Creating a position to fill an existing, important need will be essential in getting funding for the position. Therefore, the Council is promoting a new position with local foods as the emphasis. This person’s primary efforts will be to help producers grow and market food and should work well with the four farmers markets in our county. The Extension Center will still do soil tests and answer questions like always, but the AG position will focus even more on training for farmer’s market vendors, the Grow Your Farm classes, marketing vegetables and other produce, and providing technical support for growers. At least that’s the way I understand it. There seems to be support in the Ag School on campus for the position and it appears that the chances are good that it will be filled.

I never was sure why we got away with putting this in the newsletter, but if it worked once……………………A cowboy and his wife were riding their horses out in the pasture. Suddenly, they realized that they had ridden over a rattlesnake. The cowboy remarked to his wife, “Did you see that rattlesnake that we just rode over? He didn’t even move or coil up or strike or anything. He must be suffering from reptile dysfunction!?!?”
I want to talk a minute about the Extension Council. I have been constantly amazed by the dedication, enthusiasm, and commitment of Jefferson County Extension Council members. While I am very proud of the success of the Jefferson County Extension Center, a large amount of the credit goes to the council. I’ve watched Council members grow from shy, uninvolved people, to leaders in their communities. When an important issue arises, the Council never gets it wrong! If you haven’t served on the Extension Council, please consider it.

Also, please support the staff here at the Extension Center. They are good people who really care about the programs. Wanda and Kathy are the best in the state at what they do. They are the Michael Jordan, the Babe Ruth, and the Dale Earnhardt of Extension administrative staff.

I wrote all this so that I could put off saying goodbye! I desperately needed a job 26 years ago. I can’t express how much I appreciate the opportunity to serve you. I am very proud of my Extension career and what we accomplished together. Thanks to the University of Missouri and specifically University of Missouri Extension for all the support and help. And more than

**anything thanks to the people of Jefferson County.** I worked a lot places in my career, but the people in Jefferson County were by far the best people to work for. Jefferson County folks expect you to work hard, but when you do they always appreciate it. Thanks so much and may God bless you.

Now it wouldn’t be right unless we ended the newsletter with a story and for some reason this is my favorite newsletter joke. An Extension specialist went on a farm visit and began to talk with the farm family. He noticed a pig in the front yard with three legs. He asked, “What happened to that pig?” The farmer answered with enthusiasm, “Oh, you won’t believe what a great pig that is! My son Little Johnny, fell into the pond and the pig ran over to the pond swam out and grabbed John by the collar and pulled him to safety!” “Wow,” said the specialist, “but what happened...............” Before the specialist could finish, the farmer interrupted. “One night the barn caught on fire. That pig broke out of his pen, led all the animals out to safety, came in the house and woke me up and believe it or not, used his snout to dial 911!” “Unbelievable, but what happened..............” Again the farmer interrupted, “Little Suzy fell into the well and the pig climbed down the rope put Suzy in the well bucket and pulled her up to safety!” The specialist replied, “That is some pig, but what happened to his leg?” The farmer answered, “With a good pig like that, you wouldn’t want to eat him all at once!?!?”

Thanks again!

Dean Wilson
Agriculture & Rural Development Specialist, Retired

Goodbye!