Transferring the Family Farm or Business (and Other Near-Death Events)
By: Mark Jenner Ag. Business Specialist Bates County MU Extension Center

There is a lot of pressure these days to learn all we can about the best way to pass a parent’s assets on to the next generation. This may be more important to families with a long family history of farming with children that will not likely stay on the farm. Retirement, transferring a family business across generations, and estate planning are things that get put off because we don’t like to think about getting old and dying. Farmers tend to plan for retirement when knees and other body parts start wearing out. Successful navigation of our senior and end-of-life events, begins decades before.

I have the privilege of participating in an MU Extension curriculum development project on retirement, succession planning, and estate planning. We are racing toward a completion of the new program for classes this fall. It is very exciting to watch it all come together. While we finish preparing our class materials, I want to leave you with some ideas to get your thinking started.

**Start Planning Early.** Planning doesn’t just happen, it takes some initiative. Begin by taking an inventory of what one has, deciding what to do with it in the future, and then communicate it with all the people who need to know about it: family (parents and children), legal professionals, and financial planners. The sooner retirement saving begins the easier it is to be secure later in life. Succession Planning, or the transfer of the farm or family business from one generation to the next, can begin early when the children are young adults. Estate Planning should be done early and can always be modified later. We expect our parents to always be there, but the death of the first parent always comes too early. It is important to be ready for that event BEFORE it happens.

**Communication is Critical.** We all make plans as we work alone, drive, and attend meetings. But it isn’t enough to just do the planning in our heads. It is important for husbands and wives to share their visions, and also for the kids to understand their parent’s plans and explore what their own developing interests are. We all know of folks where the parent’s planned for one scenario and the kids actually had no interest in what the parents had planned. It works better to talk about your plans.

**Not Planning is a Choice.** The State of Missouri will provide for the distribution of our assets for us even if we do not do any planning. The Probate process is carried out through Probate Court. Estate Planning provides additional control over one’s property that Probate Court does not offer. Similar costs of choosing not to plan occur with succession planning or retirement. Planning allows control.

**Time is Money.** As an economist, this is more than just a cliché to me. Land prices keep going up. Even with the inflation and collapse of land prices in the 1980’s land prices have been increasing at an average or 6 percent a year for decades. Regardless of that history, our land in southwest Missouri is a bargain. Farmers in areas with much higher land values can sell that land and move to southwest Missouri and start again. If your son or daughter is buying into your operation, it can be more cost effective sooner than later. Saving for retirement also becomes more costly with fewer options the longer that process is postponed.

Our forthcoming class in retirement, succession planning, and estate planning will be a great tool for Missouri residents to plan for retirement, transfer of their family-owned businesses, and distribute their assets to their heirs. Planning for these events can be complicated and intimidating, but it is easier the earlier it begins. Our new program will get your thinking started.
The greatest number of livestock losses occur when grazing after a period of drought or a series of frosts. Also, young regrowth forage, especially sorghum and sudangrass crosses, can be very toxic. The young, dark green growth or regrowth is potentially dangerous to livestock. Shortly after frost, prussic acid release potential increases. However, they can be safely grazed a few weeks after freezing if there is no substantial regrowth.

As plants mature and plant height increases, the risk of prussic acid poisoning is reduced. Only during times of stress, such as drought or frost, will toxicity remain high in maturing plants.

Since prussic acid poisoning is very fast-acting on high-risk forage, death will occur quickly. Watch animals closely for any signs of toxicity. The active compound is hydrocyanic acid (HCN). Symptoms of HCN poisoning are gasping, staggering, trembling muscles, convulsions, and death resulting from respiratory failure. The mucus membranes of the mouth and eyes may have a blue coloration as evidence of cyanosis. In cases of recovery, there appears to be no permanent effects.

Hay maybe be dangerous when cut but becomes safe in time through volatilization of the HCN. Hay stored for two or more months gradually loses all its cyanide potential.

Another common source of cyanide poisoning for some producers is Wild Black Cherry trees (wild & cultivated) twigs and leaves. After a storm, it is a good idea to walk the perimeter of a pasture and throw the fallen branches from these trees back over the fence.

The following are suggested guidelines when grazing sorghum and sudangrass varieties, crosses and hybrids:

Because sudangrass and sudangrass hybrids pose the lowest prussic acid poisoning potential, they should be planted for pasture use, instead of sorghum and sorghum sudangrass hybrids.
- Do not graze sheep on sudangrass or hybrids until the plants are 12 to 15 inches tall, and for cattle do not graze them until they are 18 to 24 inches tall.
- Sorghum-sudangrass hybrids should be safe to graze at a height of 24 inches or more.
- Sorghum may not be safe to graze until fully headed. Regrowth forage, especially sorghum and sorghum sudangrass crosses, may have a blue coloration as evidence of cyanosis. In cases of toxicity, watch animals closely for any signs of moisture stress. Have the plants tested for toxicity levels.
- Do not graze hungry livestock on sorghum or sorghum-sudangrass hybrids. Poisoning potential increases with the amount of high-risk forage consumed.

Making the Most of Prevented Planted Acres with Cover Crops
By: Mark Jenner, Ag. Business Specialist Bates County

This very wet year keeps pushing back and delaying planting and haying activities. As far as crop insurance goes the final dates for soybean planting have come and gone. The last date to be fully insured for the initial planting of beans in the Ag News & Views area was June 30.

Crop insurance coverage after these final dates declined 1 percent per day for 25 days. And at this time, all the counties in area are beyond that reduced-coverage time period. I have been told that crop insurance is no longer available for soybeans that have not yet been planted.

Just to clarify, if the first crop was planted before the final dates, they can still be re-planted. If that’s the case in your prevented planted field, check with your crop insurance agent about re-planting. There are procedures in place to allow for some replanting. So what can be done with those unplanted acres? A bean crop can be grown on them, but it is too late for crop insurance to be available.

What about the winter wheat crop? I have been told that a fall wheat crop can be planted in the prevented planted acres, but it is important to wait until after the Hessian-fly free date, which is in mid-October.

One possible use for these prevented planting acres is cover crops. There is a lot of interest in cover crops these days. This may be a great time to ‘test the water’ with cover crops on your prevented planted acres.

With all the weed pressure this year, cover crops can help control fallow-field, weed growth. Other cover crop benefits include capturing applied nutrients, fixing nitrogen, building organic matter, and controlling erosion. Together these can build soil health and biology to increase yields for crops that follow.

Rob Myers, University of Missouri Extension agronomist reports that farmers who receive prevented planted payments from their crop insurance can still plant cover crops on those fields to improve soil health and biology.
Two exceptions to this rule are turnips and radishes. These two crops can be planted and grazed before November 1. In general other crops need to be left in the field until after the November 1 deadline. It is a good idea to check with your crop insurance agent and your USDA, Farm Service Agency folks before planting these crops on your prevented planted acres.

A challenge that is always present in these prevented planted situations is whether or not herbicide restrictions may have been created from the initial prevented planted crop. Planting a cover crop on a field intended for commodity crops can create herbicide labeling restrictions. This is particularly important if the cover crop is to be grazed.

There is always a cost involved for each trip across a field, but this year cover crops may help control weeds and other benefits that outweigh those costs in unplanted and fallow fields.

MU Extension is Ready, Weather or Not!

This incredibly wet Missouri spring and summer has created many problems for farmers. A broad pool of the best MU Extension specialists and scientists on campus have compiled answers to weather-related questions that have been created across Missouri from all this rain. For all your weather-related concerns check with your County Extension Office. We’ll find the answer for you, even if your question is not weather related!

Aug. 26 Workshops in Pineville to Address Energy Conservation and Solar Options

By: Bob Schultheis, Natural Resource Engineering Specialist / CPD Webster County

Investing in energy conservation is currently one of the best returns on your money. And taking advantage of the sun as an energy source can be a smart move for many homeowners, farmers and businesses.

Anyone wishing to learn more about these opportunities is invited to attend the Energy Conservation and Solar Energy Workshops, scheduled for Wednesday, Aug. 26, 2015, at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. at Pineville Community Center, 602 Jesse James Road, in Pineville, Missouri.

The 2-hour morning workshop will teach how to spend as little as $100 to cut home energy bills by 25 percent or more, by targeting air leaks, insulation, water heaters, lighting, and more. The 2-hour afternoon workshop, with a tour following, will explain the benefits and costs of solar energy for the farm, home and small business, what components are necessary, and how to use rebates and incentives to help pay for these solar systems.

Cost of each workshop is $20 per person, or $30 for both workshops. Each household will receive one energy efficiency kit valued at almost $50, along with resource materials valued at over $25. These workshops are sponsored by University of Missouri Extension and are partially grant-funded to make them more affordable.

Pre-Registration Form

Pre-registration must be received by Friday, Aug. 21, 2015 to assure adequate resource materials.

Fee is $20 per person per workshop or $30 for both workshops.
Make check payable to McDonald County Extension.

Fill out and return this form with payment to:

McDonald County Extension Center
306 Harmon St., P.O. Box 336
Pineville, MO  64856

Select your workshop (check your choice)

☐ Morning workshop  ($20)
☐ Afternoon workshop and tour ($20)
☐ Both workshops and tour ($30)

Name __________________________
Address ________________________
City __________________________
State _______ ZIP _______
Phone __________________________
e-mail address ____________________

Total number attending = _______
Amount enclosed = $__________