

Another Successful Year of Neighbor-to-Neighbor Meetings

Neighbor-to-Neighbor meetings, hosted by past AgrAbility clients, allow current clients and past clients to come together and discuss the AgrAbility program, farm modifications and any concerns or questions. Invitees are welcome to bring pictures of modifications as well as questions about the program's process and concerns regarding his or hers' operation. Staff members of AgrAbility and Easter Seals FARM Program attend to be available to answer any questions regarding the program.

Three Neighbor-to-Neighbor meetings were held in October. Hosts for these meetings included Bill Griesbach's family in Marathon County, Jerry Seeley's family in Clark County and Dan Beranek's family in Wood County. AgrAbility of Wisconsin

and Easter Seals Wisconsin FARM Program staff would like to thank these three farm families for volunteering their time and opening their farms to current clients. If anyone is interested in learning more about the Neighbor-to-Neighbor meetings or hosting a future meeting, please feel free to contact Cally

Ehle, Associate Outreach Specialist, at (608) 262-9336 or e-mail at aaw@mailplus.wisc.edu. ■




Current and former clients of the AgrAbility Program met for several hours to discuss questions and concerns about the AgrAbility of Wisconsin Program.

Plowing Ahead

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Non-Profit Org.
 U.S. Postage
 PAID
 Madison, WI
 Permit No. 658

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Promoting Success in Agriculture for People with Disabilities and Their Families

Fall 2006
 Volume 15 No. 2

FEATURING:
Pankratz Takes Matters into His Own Hands

The FARM Calf Project Progress Report

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ALSO LOOK FOR:
Partners...
by Brian Holmes,
Professor and Extension Specialist, Biological Systems Engineering

AgrAbility of Wisconsin is a partnership between the UW Cooperative Extension Service and Easter Seals Wisconsin.

Printing is donated by Rural Insurance Companies.

UW Extension



AgrAbility of Wisconsin

Plowing Ahead

Pankratz Takes Matters into His Own Hands

Someone once said, "the only constant in life is change." It's how a person responds to those changes that can often determine the course of their life. One man who has met life's changes willingly is Darrell Pankratz.

After high school, Pankratz came in contact with a high-voltage electric wire, resulting in severe burning to his left hand. He spent the next three months in the hospital and had several surgeries. Despite his new physical limitations, Pankratz wanted to continue farming with his father. A program available at the time helped him to purchase a small herd of cows. Pankratz was able to modify his tasks on the farm to accommodate the limited use of his hand by changing how he handled milkers and hiring help to climb silos.

However, three years ago he started experiencing significant pain in his right hand caused by the onset of osteoarthritis due to overuse for compensating for his left hand. He realized that if he did not make changes, he would not be able to continue farming. After reading an article in an agricultural magazine about a

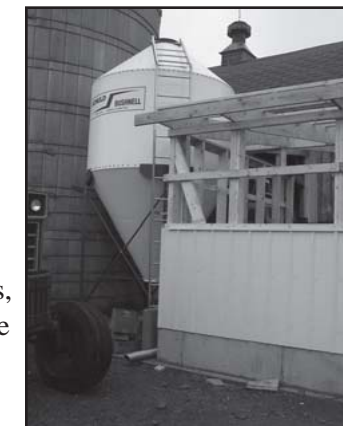
farmer who received help from AgrAbility of Wisconsin (AAW), Pankratz decided to contact the program. He was unsure of what to think about the program and admits that he was just hoping that AAW would be able to help. When he began

working with the program, he received information about the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and applied for DVR services. After he was found eligible, he started working with DVR rehabilitation counselor, Karla Miess, who later transferred his case to Shawn Savka, another DVR rehabilitation counselor. About a year later his case was activated for service. Holly Allen, a rehabilitation specialist for the Easter Seals FARM (Farm Assessment Rehabilitation Methods) program, and Savka visited his farm.

Pankratz presented a unique situation for Allen and Savka. Pankratz was very involved in finding new approaches to cope with his disability issues. He used his creativity to come up with different solutions. Allen, Savka and Pankratz worked together to devise an effective plan to meet his needs.

"He (Pankratz) came up with a lot of the plan on his own," explained Savka. "Holly and I stepped in with some of the framework of how to get it done."

Pankratz implemented an idea of his own several years ago that allowed him to discontinue the use of his silos by working out an agreement with his part-time employer of 15 years, Rick Nikolay, to purchase the forage needed for his farm



A bin and auger eliminates the need for Pankratz to use a wheelbarrow to deliver feed to the cattle and allows him to access the grain when needed.

"Darrell is real creative with what he worked out with Rick, his employer, being paid through forage allowed him to make the whole disability plan work."

-- Shawn Savka --

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to eliminate the need for the silos.

"Darrell is real creative with what he worked out with Rick, his employer," Savka said. "being paid through forage allowed him to make the whole disability plan work."

Allen suggested a small feed room added to his current barn for storage of the delivered forage and grain increasing ease of access to the bin, auger and TMR mixer to eliminate the need of using a wheelbarrow to feed the cattle. In order to fill the TMR mixer; Allen suggested a skid steer with an enclosed, heated cab to accommodate Pankratz's left hand cold sensitivity. DVR also purchased a John Deere Gator, based on his grazing operation needs to transport tools, repair fencing and feeding cattle outside.

"She (Allen) had ideas that I would have never thought of; so I have to give her a lot of credit," explained Pankratz. "Some of the stuff she came up with makes sense to me now."

Since Pankratz also incorporated rotational grazing into his operation during the summer, Allen



In order to fill the TMR mixer; Allen suggested a skid steer with an enclosed, heated cab to accommodate Pankratz's left hand cold sensitivity.

saw an additional need for a wire fence stretcher and a fence clamp stretcher. In addition to these items, Pankratz received a powered feed cart and a poly cart to allow him to reduce the amount of carrying and gripping with his hands.

According to Allen, Pankratz's acceptance of his limitations on the farm and willingness to try alternative methods allowed him to successfully adapt and easily implement these suggestions.

Even though Pankratz was successful as a dairy farmer with a disability, he plans to gradually phase out milking and switch to custom raising replacement heifers. Pankratz's creativity and openness to change his farming operation will allow him to continue to be successful in his future enterprises and goals. Sometimes, with the right attitude, ingenuity and a little help, change can be good. ■



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AgrAbility of Wisconsin is Stepping Out



AgrAbility of Wisconsin has a busy schedule of farm shows after January 1, 2007. Below is a list of the upcoming farm shows for 2007.

If you plan to attend a show, please feel free to stop by and say

hello. These shows are a great opportunity to pick up literature for friends or family members that may be interested in AgrAbility or to bring an interested farmer along to speak with a staff member in person.

If you have any questions regarding the shows, please feel free to contact Cally Ehle at 608.262.9336 or aaw@mailplus.wisc.edu. Additional shows and events will become known and

will be updated on the AgrAbility of Wisconsin website at www.bse.wisc.edu/agrability. We hope to see you in 2007!

- 29th Midwest Farm Show, La Crosse Center, La Crosse, WI January 17-18, 2007
- 16th Rice Lake Area Farm Show, Cedar Mall, Rice Lake, WI January 23-24, 2007
- Southern Wisconsin Farm Expo, Jefferson Cty Fair Park, Jefferson, WI January 31-February 1, 2007
- 44th Eau Claire Farm Show, Eau Claire Indoor Sports Center, Eau Claire, WI March 6-7, 2007
- WPS Farm Show, EAA Aviation Grounds, Oshkosh, WI March 27-29, 2007 ■

This material is based upon work supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under special project number 2006-41590-03414. UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming including Title IX and ADA. If you need this material in another format, please contact AgrAbility of Wisconsin at (608) 262-9336 or aaw@mailplus.wisc.edu.

Partners...

What Is the Best Silage Storage for Me?

Deciding on a silage storage system requires consideration of many factors. Richard Muck and Brian Holmes discussed these factors for six types of storage in the article "Deciding on a Silage Storage Type" published in the proceedings of the "Silage for Dairy Farms" (NRAES-181) conference. Some of the advantages and disadvantages of Silage Piles and Silo Bags are excerpted below.

Pile Silos

Pile silos can be an economical means of making high quality silage assuming very good management. The quality of silage from these silos depends on three principal factors: packing the crop to a high density during filling, sealing the surface well with plastic, and feeding off the face at a sufficient rate (6+ in./day in the northern U.S.). Typical moisture recommendations for ensiling are between 60 and 70% moisture.

Advantages:

- Lower capital costs than tower silos and bunker silos
- Layering forage into the silo results in a blended silage at feed out, creating a more stable nutritive value through the whole silo than in towers and bags.
- Specialized equipment is not needed for loading and unloading
- Recommended moisture range matches the range for optimum corn silage quality
- Less likely to have weather damage in harvesting hay crop silages than in towers
- Size is flexible, better accommodating variations in yield.

Disadvantages:

- More labor is required to fill these silos than towers, bags, bales.
- Density is highly dependent on the operator and packing equipment
- The top surface must be sealed well plus holes must be patched to minimize spoilage.
- Higher losses than towers, 15 to 25%
- Larger footprint than towers and bunkers

Bag Silos

Forages are ensiled at approximately the same moisture content as in bunker and pile silos (between 60 and 70%). While specialized equipment is needed to make bags, bagging machines can be rented to make extra silage when forage yields are beyond the capacity of permanent silo structures.

Advantages:

- One of the lowest capital cost storages
- Modest labor requirements for filling
- Capacity varies with yield
- Specialized equipment is not needed for unloading
- Fewer safety hazards than towers, bunkers, piles
- Recommended moisture range matches the range for optimum corn silage quality
- Less likely to have weather damage in harvesting hay crop silages than in towers
- Potentially low losses (<10%) but... (see Disadvantages)

Disadvantages:

- Lower density and more plastic per unit of silage than bunkers and piles make these silos more vulnerable to spoilage losses from plastic punctures.
- Losses can be highly variable because of holes and how promptly they patched. Inspect bags weekly and patch holes with bag tape.
- There is an art to making a smooth bag (important for minimizing losses)
- Density is more adversely affected by long particles than in other silo types.
- Larger footprint than towers and bunkers.
- Disposal of plastic film can be a concern.

Muck and Holmes discuss factors that contribute to annual costs in the article. For more information on silage storage including sizing information, look at the Team Forage-Harvest and Storage web site at:

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/crops/uwforage/storage.htm>

Brian Holmes

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The FARM Calf Project Progress Report



The FARM Program's Calf Project is well underway for this year. Our project has 14 bulls being raised in central and eastern Wisconsin. We are in the process of finding homes for a few 6-month-old calves. They will be raised to finished weight and sold at auction with the proceeds directly benefiting our program.

If you are interested in learning more about this worthwhile project, please call T Ellenbecker, Rural Rehabilitation Specialist, Easter Seals AgrAbility of Wisconsin, at (608) 279-9437 or (715) 842-3411.

Look for another update in the next newsletter and a story about "The Adventures of Coco", a brown Swiss bull calf. ■

Submitted by: T Ellenbecker, ESW FARM Program