

# SAFETY FIRST

## Grain Dust & Respiratory Problems



Grain dust can be a mixture of particles of grain, soil, plant material, fungi, bacteria, residues of agricultural chemicals and the excreta of insects, rodents and birds. These dusts can affect the respiratory tract in a variety of ways and can cause gastrointestinal problems, skin rashes and eye irritation.

Individuals may react quite differently to the same dust. Thus, some people may be quite sensitive to the dust while others may be able to withstand several exposures prior to becoming sensitized.

Some respiratory problems caused by grain dust are listed below.

- Inflammation of air passages: Causes stuffy, runny nose, sore throat, cough, spitting up phlegm and labored breathing
- Asthma: Causes wheezing, labored breathing and cough
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD): Causes recurring cough, phlegm production for two or more years, labored breathing and wheezing

- Toxic Organic Dust Syndrome (TODS): Causes flu-like symptoms including chills, flushed face, muscle pain and general bodily discomfort
- Farmers Lung: Causes flu-like symptoms including cough, fever & chills, labored breathing, muscle pain, general discomfort

To help reduce and prevent allergic reactions, a person should wear adequate protective devices, such as dust masks or helmets, and provide ventilation to remove the dusts. Those sensitive to the dusts should not enter areas where the dusts exist. "One-strap" disposable dust masks are not nearly as effective as "two-strap" models. Two-strap models fit better and allow less air leakage. Use NIOSH approved respirators.

For further information on grain dusts and respiratory problems or other grain safety related information, contact Cheryl Skjolaas, UW Extension Ag Safety Specialist, at 608.265.0568 or [www.wiscash.uwex.edu](http://www.wiscash.uwex.edu). ■

*Information provided by: Cheryl Skjolaas, UWEX Ag Safety Specialist*

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UW-Madison  
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Promoting Success in Agriculture for People with Disabilities and Their Families

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### FEATURING:

*Schmidt to Obtain 100 Years with Success*

*AgrAbility of Wisconsin Fall/Winter Schedule*

*Neighbor-to-Neighbor Meetings: Bringing AgrAbility's Farmers Together*

*Safety First: Grain Dust & Respiratory Problems*

**ALSO LOOK FOR:**  
*Partners...  
by Deb Henderson-Guenther, WI Client Assistance Program (CAP)*

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AgrAbility of Wisconsin

# Plowing Ahead

## Schmidt to Obtain 100 Years with Success

In October 2003, Carl Schmidt went to the hospital after developing a 104-degree fever; twenty-two days later he was in therapy, unable to even walk without a walker. Schmidt explained that he could not remember the first eleven days of the fever when his organs started shutting down due to an unidentifiable virus. During recovery he discovered that the virus caused nerve and muscle damage that left his right hand and foot weak and temperature sensitive. This left the nearly century-old family dairy farm's responsibilities to Schmidt's wife, Marilyn, their children, and a neighbor who was already in the process of retiring from farming. The Farm Bureau Disaster Team also aided in the continuation of the daily operation of the farm. With the help of his family and friends, the remaining crops were harvested and



*The grain bin eliminated the need to shovel grain daily*

the day-to-day operation of the farm continued. Schmidt was grateful for all the help he received during that time. A year later, still struggling with his day-to-day farm operations, he read an article in a farm paper about the AgrAbility of Wisconsin

program (AAW). Schmidt knew that without aid, his farm career would be significantly shortened. After contacting AAW and Easter Seals FARM Program (FARM), he was directed to the Wisconsin Division of Vocation Rehabilitation (DVR). He admitted that he was not sure of the steps he needed to take to work with the DVR, but after talking to Holly Allen, FARM Rehabilitation Specialist, he felt more confident about navigating the DVR process.

A crucial aspect of the assistance from AAW is the on-site farm assessment. In addition to Allen's suggestions during the farm assessment, she and Schmidt brainstormed other assistive technology solutions that would allow him to complete his day-to-day activities, and that were best suited to his operation and disability.

Since Schmidt suffered nerve and muscle damage in his hand and foot, repetitive shoveling and walking created extreme difficulty for him. To feed cattle, Allen suggested a powered feed cart as well as a grain bin to move feed from storage on the second floor to a cart. In the past it would take about twenty wheelbarrow loads a day to feed cattle. The powered feed cart and grain bin lessened the need for Schmidt to continuously shovel grain and silage twice a day to feed cattle and reduced loads to two to three feed carts per day. With the grain bin in place, Schmidt opened up the previous storage area for heifer feed which only required handling every few days. After discussing the possibility of a bedding chopper to reduce handling bales, Schmidt and

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Allen decided on cow mats to bring straw handling to a minimum. This would also eliminate dust and create a stable surface for Schmidt to stand while milking. Spreading lime in the barn was a constant difficulty for Schmidt, so Allen suggested a barn limer to eliminate the need to spread the lime by hand.

Due to the weakness in his hand and the potential secondary injuries created in Schmidt's other arm, an alternative solution to handling the milking units was addressed by Allen. The final solution was a track system installed throughout the barn so that the units are attached to the track in the milk house and not removed again until the units are cleaned. This system, coupled with the automatic takeoffs previously owned by Schmidt, minimized his lifting and allowed him to move the units between cows and around the barn by merely pushing the unit along the track.



The track system installed throughout the barn allows Schmidt to attach the units with in the milk house and push the units along the track during milking.

AAW and the FARM program address a farmer's current injuries and also look to prevent secondary injuries. In Schmidt's case, a few simple modifications al-

lowed him to complete daily tasks without causing further physical harm to himself. For instance, the vibrations from operating the skid loader caused irritation to Schmidt's hand. By simply adding foam rubber hand grips to the handles of Schmidt's skid loader, the vibrations were reduced. Additional steps were added to the tractors, and two drive-through gates were added on the farm to reduce the number of times he would dismount from the tractors to access the pastures.



Two drive-through gates were added on the farm to reduce the number of times dismounting from the tractors to access the pastures.

Schmidt admitted that after his first meeting with Allen he was skeptical and did not expect anything to come from it. He was astonished and pleased with the help and follow-through of the AAW, FARM and DVR staff.

"It's been a godsend. I don't think we'd be doing this anymore if we didn't have this [AAW]," Schmidt explained.

Thanks to the assistive technology suggested by AAW and FARM and purchased by DVR, Schmidt plans to be milking for many years to come. ■

### Neighbor-to-Neighbor Meetings: Bringing AgrAbility's Farmer's Together



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 her operation. Staff members of AgrAbility and Easter Seals FARM Program attend to be available to answer any questions regarding the program.

Two Neighbor-to-Neighbor meetings were held in October. Hosts for these meetings included

the Randy Hartjes family in Portage County and the David White family in Grant County. AgrAbility of Wisconsin and Easter Seals Wisconsin FARM Program staff would like to thank these farm families for volunteering their time and opening their farms to our current clients.

AAW is planning a meeting in Northwest Wisconsin Spring 2008, if you are 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. ■

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## Partners...

The Wisconsin Client Assistance Program (CAP) is a federally funded program which provides information, referral, and dispute resolution services to Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) clients.

Linda Vegoe, CAP director, and Deb Henderson-Guenther, complaint investigator, are the two employees of the CAP program.

One of CAP's roles is to help DVR clients understand the laws, regulations, and policies that DVR counselors and supervisors use when making a decision regarding a request from a client for DVR to purchase a particular piece of equipment or service.

If a farmer is found eligible for DVR services and wants to keep farming, DVR typically refers the farmer for an Easter Seals FARM Program (FARM) farm assessment. The reason for this referral is that most DVR counselors are not experts on agriculture industry standards and farming related rehabilitation technology. The FARM Program has hired staff for their expertise in this area. An on-site visit is conducted to determine the disability barriers that are preventing the farmer from performing various day to day

tasks.

The DVR program is an individualized program. Services are provided based on the person's disability, their farming operation, etc.

CAP believes it is important to:

- Identify all of the tasks that are difficult to perform due to the disability,
- Keep an open mind when discussing possible solutions,
- Remember that DVR is not required to fund the best solution, but the solution that will allow the farmer to maintain their farming operation.

CAP cannot advocate for what the client believes is the best solution simply because that is what the client wants. CAP must advocate for the service or equipment that is the least cost to DVR and addresses the disability or vocational rehabilitation needs.

Please feel free to contact CAP at 1-800-362-1290 for further information or visit us online at [www.wicap.wisconsin.gov/cap.jsp](http://www.wicap.wisconsin.gov/cap.jsp).

**Deb Henderson-Guenther**  
CAP Complaint Investigator

## AgrAbility of Wisconsin Fall/Winter Schedule

There are several events and shows coming up in the new year for AgrAbility of Wisconsin. Below is a list of the upcoming farm shows 2008. If you plan to attend a show or event, please feel free to stop by and say hello. These events 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 events, 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 web site at [www.bse.wisc.edu/agrability](http://www.bse.wisc.edu/agrability).

- Greater Midwest Farm Show, La Crosse

January 16-17, 2008

- Southern Wisconsin Farm Expo, Jefferson January 30-31, 2008



- Rice Lake Area Farm Show, Rice Lake February 6-7, 2008

- Fond du Lac Ag Showcase & Celebration, Fond du lac March 1, 2008

- Greater Eau Claire Farm Show, Eau Claire March 4-5, 2008

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Editor/Layout Designer:  
Cally Ehle  
Please direct inquiries to:  
**AgrAbility of Wisconsin**  
460 Henry Mall, Madison, WI 53706  
(608) 262-9336 Voice  
(608) 262-1228 Fax  
aaw@mailplus.wisc.edu