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*Improve the bottom line and make a better place to work*

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Most dairy barns are too dark. Improved barn lights operated according to a specific time program can improve both the profitability and working conditions on dairy farms. This technique known as Long-day Lighting has been researched during the last 20 years. Benefits from the use of Long-day Lighting include:

- Increased milk production
- Improved heifer growth
- Safer working conditions

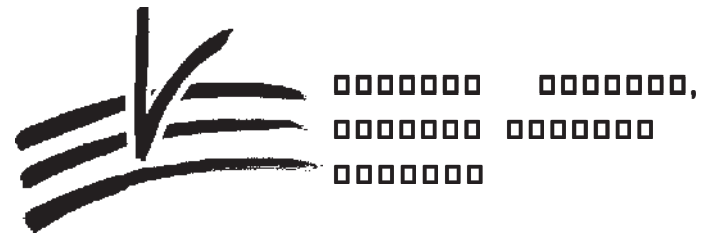
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Studies have shown that exposing cows to supplemental light during the short days in fall and winter months can increase milk production by about 5-16%. Cows are stimulated to milk more when they, through their eyes, register longer/brighter days. Long-day Lighting is profitable and practical for herds of all sizes and can be implemented in conventional stall barns as well as in free stall barns.

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Trivial accidents (slips and falls) do happen during barn chores and are occasionally fatal. Good light helps workers spot obstructions and slippery areas. Better lighting also facilitates detection of cows in heat, health problems, cows off feed, low feed quality, etc. Most people appreciate and are more productive in a well lit work place.

For more information on lighting in dairy barns, contact your county Extension agent or the University of Wisconsin Healthy Farmers, Healthy Profits Project at (608)262-7408 or access their website at <http://bse.wisc.edu/hfhp>.



*Adapted from source: University of Wisconsin Healthy Farmers, Healthy Profits Project, December, 1999; First Edition.*

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Promoting Success in Agriculture for People with Disabilities and Their Families

Spring 2000  
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**FEATURING:**

*Mosinee Farmer Meets Challenge of Farming with a Disability*

*Farmers and Professionals Invited to AgrAbility Field Day*

**ALSO LOOK FOR:**

*Partners... by Amy Jo Bazile*

*Safety... Improved lighting in dairy barns*

*AgrAbility of Wisconsin is a partnership between the UW Cooperative Extension Service and Easter Seals Wisconsin. Printing donated by Rural Insurance Companies.*



AgrAbility of Wisconsin

# Plowing Ahead

## MOSINEE FARMER MEETS CHALLENGE OF FARMING WITH A DISABILITY

Zell Farm to be featured at April 27 AgrAbility Field Day

*By Kim Berhans & Amy Hagenow*

Everyday the American dairy farmer faces new challenges: coping with milk prices, battling with Mother Nature and continually searching for new ways to become more efficient to survive.

But for Jim Zell, a dairy producer near Mosinee, Wis., farming presents even more challenges. On July 9, 1988, Zell fell approximately 15 feet off a ladder, smashing several vertebrae and nearly severing his spinal cord. Even after a miraculous recovery in the hospital, he returned home with five steel plates in his back.

Each day was filled with new obstacles and Zell recalled how all of the farm work got to be harder and harder for him.

"If I had to do that today, there is no way I would still be farming. It was not fun," he said.

But farming for Zell is now the easiest it has ever been. The process has been nothing short of a miracle, according to Zell, thanks in part to AgrAbility.

AgrAbility of Wisconsin is a partnership between Easter Seals Wisconsin Resource Center for Farmers with Disabilities and University Wisconsin Extension that has been supporting farmers with disabilities since 1991. AgrAbility services are available to those individuals and their families who are engaged in farming or farm-related occupations and are coping with the effects of disabling conditions such as arthritis, respiratory impairments, chronic back pain, amputations and many others.

The AgrAbility staff designs a customized plan that can include equipment modifications, farm job restructuring, stress management, identification of funding sources and much

more. AgrAbility has assisted over 500 Wisconsin farmers with disabilities to continue to farm and work independently.

Zell decided to call AgrAbility after reading a newspaper article about AgrAbility and speaking with a friend who is a successful client. Paul Leverenz, Director of the Resource Center for Farmers with Disabilities, assessed Zell's farm and made several recommendations. Zell learned that even though his injury had happened several years earlier, it is never too late to contact AgrAbility.

Zell began grazing. He said that everyone thought he was crazy and he had never imagined himself a grazer, either. Yet today, he is grazing approximately 40 cows and 40 young stock on 55 acres.

"A ten-year-old kid could run this farm,"



*Zell has extended steps on his tractor that make it easier to get on and off.*

*continued on page 2...*

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chuckled Zell.

AgrAbility worked in conjunction with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to help Zell accommodate his disability on his farm. Zell now has a John Deere Gator to get around his farm more easily and a calf cart to haul calves in from the pasture. He also has electric winches for the silo unloaders inside of his barn instead of hand winches outside on the silo. He purchased a bedding chopper and electric feed cart to eliminate the use of a wheelbarrow. Zell has tractor seats with extra suspension and additional steps on the tractors to make getting on and off easier and less stressful on his back. The gateless fencing on his farm also consists of very simple and easy to move "pigtail" posts with no electric fencing. All of the water tanks contain floats and are also very easy to move and maintain.

And these are only a few of the changes.

"I've never had it so easy in my life," exclaimed Zell. He said that most of all, he loves the time off and the extremely low maintenance of the entire farm. "I used to plant corn until one or two in the morning," he said, "Now I don't. This is so simple. I've gotten smart."

Since all of the changes have been made, Zell also has significantly lowered his somatic cell count and has been able to keep his cows in the herd for a longer time, while maintaining an almost 20,000 pound rolling herd average.

"AgrAbility has made it much easier for me," Zell said, "and it has allowed me to meet a lot of people."

Zell's farm will be featured at the upcoming AgrAbility Field Day on April 27. The Field Day will begin at 9:30 a.m. at the Marathon County Extension Office. For more information about AgrAbility or to register for the Field Day, contact Amy Jo Bazile at (608) 262-9336.

### **AgrAbility to study long-term impact of farming with a disability**

Holly Allen, AgrAbility Consumer Services Assistant and graduate student in rehabilitation psychology is conducting a statewide survey of past consumers who have been a part of the AgrAbility program since 1991.

Through this survey, AgrAbility will evaluate what affect disabilities have on an individual's ability to do daily farm chores and to continue to stay in farming. The survey will also look at the impact that service organizations, like AgrAbility, have on a farmer's ability to continue to farm with a disability.

Many of you will be receiving this survey in the mail soon. We appreciate your help in completing the

questionnaire. The results will enable our program to better address the long-term needs of farmers with disabilities and improve our services.

If you have any questions about this survey, please call Holly or Amy at (608)262-9336.



### **Plowing Ahead**

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## **Farmers and Professionals Invited to AgrAbility Field Day**

AgrAbility of Wisconsin and Marathon County Extension are hosting an educational Field Day on Thursday, April 27, in Wausau, WI for area farmers and health care and rehabilitation professionals. The day begins at 9:30 a.m. and includes a free lunch. The Field Day will inform farmers and health care professionals in the community about the many services offered by AgrAbility. "We want farmers with disabilities and serious health conditions to know who we are and what we have to offer," said Amy Jo Bazile, the Associate Outreach Specialist for AgrAbility.

Farmers and other participants will also have the opportunity to talk to other farmers with disabilities and hear their stories about how AgrAbility has worked with them. Participants will have a choice between a farm tour and a caregivers' session in the afternoon. The farm tour will allow individuals to see the farm site and equipment modifications that AgrAbility recommended for Jim Zell, a dairy producer in Mosinee. The caregivers' session will focus on the effects of disabilities and serious illnesses on families and how to deal with them.

There is still time to register! For more information contact Amy Jo Bazile at (608) 262-9336.

**There is still time to register for the April 27 Field Day!**

**Call (608)262-9336 to register!**

**Please have this information ready:**

- **Your name**
- **Your address**
- **Your daytime phone number**
- **Your afternoon session choice: Caregiving or Farm Tour**
- **Any additional needs such as: materials in alternative formats, interpretive services, information for service animals, lift equipped transportation for farm tours, other tour transportation needs, or dietary needs.**

## **AgrAbility of Wisconsin Field Day**

**April 27, 2000**

**Marathon County Extension Office**

### **AGENDA**

**9:30-10:00 Registration**

**10:00-10:15 Welcome and Introductions**

*Ronald T. Schuler, UW Cooperative Extension*

*Christine Fessler, Easter Seals Wisconsin*

*Ken Barnett, Marathon County Cooperative Extension*

**10:15-10:45 What is AgrAbility?**

*Amy Jo Bazile, UW-Cooperative Extension*

*Paul Leverenz, Easter Seals Wisconsin*

**10:45-11:30 Partner Organization Panel**

*Division of Vocational Rehabilitation*

*Wisconsin Farm Center*

*Marathon County Cooperative Extension*

**11:30-12:00 Farmer Panel**

*Ron Brown, Edgar, WI*

*Laura Koenig Athens, WI*

*John Govek, Wausau, WI*

**12:00-1:00 Lunch** (free for registered participants)

**1:00-3:00 Session A: Farm Tour**

*Jim Zell, Mosinee, WI*

*Transportation by vans will be provided for the farm tour, if desired. You are welcome to also drive your own vehicles.*

*Please request accessible transportation needs.*

**1:00-3:00 Session B: Caregiving: To Everything**

*There is a Season...*

*Sue Birch, VNA Home Health*

*Susan Kidd, Caregivers Support Project*

*This session will include:*

- *Caring for the caregiver*
- *How and where to ask for assistance*
- *Panel of Caregivers and Networking*

**3:00-3:30 Return to the Extension Office**

## **Partners...**

**"If you pray for rain, be prepared to deal with some mud."**

Only those who till the soil know how true those words are! I received a card with this saying on it recently and felt that it really applied to the AgrAbility project as well. Spring has sprung around here and we are bursting with activity!

AgrAbility has displayed an informational booth in several farm shows throughout Wisconsin and have had the opportunity to meet several of you at these events. We are so glad you stopped by!

In just a few short days, we will be hosting an AgrAbility Field Day in Wausau, WI, with Marathon County Extension. It will be a great opportunity to learn about AgrAbility and tour a farm in the area that has been modified to accommodate a farmer with a serious back injury. There is still time to join us if you would like—just give us a call!

And new referrals! Many folks have called recently to find out if AgrAbility can work with them so that they can continue to farm with disabilities. We are a little backlogged (remember that mud I talked about earlier?) but not to worry, we are setting up farm visits and making calls. If you have any questions, you are always welcome to call.

Thank you to those of you who have promoted AgrAbility and have helped get the word out. We appreciate the efforts of our partners to help make this program a success.

Spring is also the time that we begin a new grant year so we are looking ahead to some of the new activities that we will be tackling. We will be expanding our Speakers Bureau, Farmer Network and Caregiver Program and better utilizing these resources. Are you connected to the internet? If so, check out our website, <http://bse.wisc.edu/agrability>, regularly for updates, useful links and other information for farmers with disabilities and their service providers. And, of course, AgrAbility will continue to work with farmers with disabilities to stay involved with agriculture production.

So, as you can see, things are busy here! As the weather warms and you start to get out to the fields, we hope that all of you have a safe and successful spring! And as far as rain and mud goes, I have always thought that a little mud between your toes felt pretty good!

**Amy Jo Bazile**

Outreach Specialist

