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1. Shelterbelts and living snow fences benefit livestock producers

One proactive way for livestock producers to demonstrate they are good stewards of the environment is to put up living snow fences or shelterbelts around confinement buildings. Providing a shelterbelt of various trees and/or shrubs provides an aesthetic value and conveys a sense of pride and community to the general public. Additionally, livestock areas are protected from wind and snow, and research indicates a benefit in dispersing and reducing odor emissions from these sites. Plantings can be established under the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), providing cost share arrangements and/or cash rental rate payments over a specified period of time. For more information, contact your local county Farm Service Agency (FSA) or go to their website at:

www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/stateoffapp?mystate=mn&area=home&subject=landing&topic=landing.

2. Feeding DDGS to grow-finish pigs: latest results

Increased corn prices have stretched corn supplies and increased interest in alternative energy sources for swine diets, especially DDGS. This article summarizes recently completed and reported data from 3 research groups investigating DDGS inclusion in growing swine diets and its effect on growth performance and carcass quality. Access the article on the UMN Swine Extension home page at www.extension.umn.edu.

3. Webcast on options for producers to reduce feed cost impacts available online

Presentations from the March 28th PorkCast program "Rising to the Challenge of Rising Corn Prices: Proactive Options for the Pork Industry" are now available online. The free program, presented by the Minnesota Pork Board and University of Minnesota Extension, resulted in

participants connecting throughout Minnesota, along with some other states, via home computer or attending one of 12 host sites. A complete recording of the program, along with slides from individual presentations, are available free of charge at the University of Minnesota Swine Extension website at www.extension.umn.edu/swine. The webcast recording provides strategies and information on how to prepare for grain availability issues, how to manage price volatility, production strategies and options to control costs, and steps on assessing financial health and business goals.

4. Challenges and continuous improvement to reduce variation

The variation of a measure can be called a capability measure. It measures that capability of the system to change. Where variation is the highest is in attrition of the population. These losses are calculated as opportunity costs, in other words as the value of the pig if it would reach market weight minus feed saved when it is shipped or died early. Too often we attribute such variation to “normal biology”. There is nothing normal about this range of performance between pigs. We have three challenges in current pig production methods. They are: (1) the record-keeping system, (2) the accounting system, and (3) the analysis capabilities of managers. Access the entire article on our web page at www.extension.umn.edu.

5. Research update: applying swine manure to alfalfa and reed canarygrass

Perennial forages can serve as an alternative land base for manure application. University of Minnesota research conducted at Rosemount and Waseca evaluated applying swine manure to several varieties of alfalfa and reed canarygrass. Applying less than 3000 lbs/ac of organic solids resulted in similar or improved yields of these forages, while higher application levels decreased yield and fall stands, presumably because the manure completely covered and smothered the plants. Access this research report on our web page at www.extension.umn.edu

6. Minnesota Guide to Organic Certification and Marketing Local Food publications

The Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) has just prepared and released two new publications that are available both in print and also for download online. The “Minnesota Guide to Organic Certification” explains the organic certification process, and includes a summary of USDA organic standards. “Marketing Local Food” is designed to help Minnesota farmers explore various options for marketing local food. Print copies can be ordered directly through MISA at 1-800-909-6472 or misamail@umn.edu. Publications can also be accessed and downloaded online at www.misa.umn.edu.

7. PQAPlus program will be launched at World Pork Expo

In June, in conjunction with World Pork Expo, the PQA Level III program will no longer exist, and instead will be replaced by PQAPlus. PQA Plus expands the animal well-being component of the original PQA content. PQA Plus, like the current PQA, has a producer education component, but it adds an on-site assessment of animal well-being. Veterinarians, Extension specialists and ag educators with a B.S. or equivalent in animal science or a related field, two years of recent, documentable swine production experience and PQA Plus Advisor training taken from a PQA Plus Trainer will provide training and certification to producers. More information on the PQAPlus program is available on the National Pork Board website at www.pork.org.

Questions?

It is our goal to bring University research to the Minnesota Pork Industry, ensuring the continued sustainability and competitiveness of producers and allied industry. Periodically check our events calendar on the U of MN Swine Extension website (www.extension.umn.edu) for upcoming workshops and seminars. Please email or call me if I can be of assistance:

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