

# Lenawee County AG NEWS



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As I write this article, the snow is coming down, now only if it will stay. I am tired of the rain and mud!

I really appreciate everyone's concern with DJ. He is doing great, seems to be staying in "remission", that is what they call it. His Doctor is great, very helpful with all of my questions and concerns. There are still no change to diet and no change in activities. The Doctor wants DJ to be as normal as possible unless it affects his disease, so far so good! Therefore, we are still going crazy with hockey. He has a game every weekend, sometimes 2-3 and he loves every minute of it!

I am starting tumbling with Ellie tonight. She is so excited to have an activity of her own! If you could only hear her as she cheers on DJ at his games. She is quite intense-I have no idea where she gets that from, Ha, Ha!

I am cleaning up our mailing list, please let me know if your address is wrong, you get more than one newsletter, you no longer want it...cost continue to rise so I need to be sure we are utilizing every dollar properly! If you would rather get the newsletter via e-mail, please let me know that as well. That saves us printing and postage. Which brings me to my sponsors, The Ag News appreciated every one of you! You are the reason we are able to provide this at no cost to our readers! If you are not a sponsor, you can be! No need to have a business, individuals can sponsor as well! Let me know if you are interested!

In honor of Valentine's Day, "Life's greatest happiness is to be convinced we are loved." -Victor Hugo  
Until Next Month,  
Allison

**MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION**

Submitted by  
**Brenda J. Reau**  
Assistant Director  
MSU Product Center

## CONSUMERS SEEK OUT HERITAGE BREEDS

What's old is new again, at least when it comes to breeds of livestock. Consumers are becoming increasingly interested in heritage breeds in their quest for food with a story. They not only want to know where their food comes from but want to know the history behind it.

Generally a breed is referred to as "heritage" if it has existed for more than 100 years. The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC) is the national organization that works to preserve and promote heritage breeds and educate the public about their attributes. ALBC feels preserving this population of animals is a significant facet

of preserving the agricultural roots and tradition of farming and maintaining genetic diversity.

Heritage breeds are often introduced by chefs and foodies and the word spreads from there to the general population. Consumers are increasingly willing to search outside of traditional market channels to seek out producers of these breeds which they feel offer special attributes.

The heritage turkey market has been developed across the country for the last ten years and an increasing number of producers are offering the birds at premium price. While most consumers today still eat Broad Breasted White turkeys, the mild-flavored bird that replaced other turkey breeds back in the 60's heritage breeds like Bourbon Red and Standard Bronze are making a comeback. These turkeys have a slower growth rate than the Broad Breasted White, more dark meat and a gamier flavor.

There has also been growing interest in heritage breeds of hogs such as Tamworth and Berkshire. These breeds have some characteristics that modern breeds are lacking. In an effort to cater to the health conscious consumer's modern hog breeds have been bred to be very lean. The heritage breeds offer more fat and fat provides flavor. The Berkshire breed is particularly prized for its marbling of fat that is interspersed throughout the meat.

There is also increasing interest in heritage breeds of cattle like Dexter, Devon, Belted Galloway and Highland. These breeds often are well suited to pasture based production which is also another market driver for a growing segment of consumers.

While there is opportunity for producers in raising heritage breeds there are some important principles to keep in mind. Heritage breeds can be more costly to raise. Heritage breeding stock is not as readily accessible and may require travel and a greater initial investment to acquire. Often heritage breeds are less efficient in their growth which increases the cost of production.

As with any niche market, producers need to create value in their products and relay that value to the consumer. Heritage meats and poultry are most often direct marketed to consumers which requires an additional time commitment and the willingness of farmers to interact with consumers.

The MSU Product Center can assist farmers who are interested in developing differentiated livestock products and businesses. The Product Center can provide assistance in developing a business plan; marketing and promotion of value added and differentiated products. The Product Center can also connect producers with MSUE educators who can provide expertise in production practices. For additional information contact reau@msu.edu.

**Lenawee County Fair & Event Grounds invites you to their Cash-A-Fair fundraiser Saturday, February 25th, 2012** - \$75/couple includes dinner for two, 4 drinks & the chance to win \$3,000 cash and other prizes.

You can support this by buying a ticket to attend, donating auction items or cash donations to help offset expenses. All proceeds from the event will be split evenly to help pay 4-H & Open class premiums, Building & Grounds improvements, and debt reduction.

To purchase a ticket or for more information for donations please call the Fair office @ 517-263-3007 or Melinda Stubli 517-215-1366



**GWEN HESS**  
Lenawee County  
Farm Bureau

The Membership Committee is gearing up for a fantastic Membership Kickoff this year. Lenawee's kickoff will be Thursday, March 8th from 6:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. at the county office. A delicious breakfast will be served during that time. We are planning to have our legislators available for discussion on AG issues. So mark your calendar now and bring a friend or a potential member.

The Lansing Legislative Seminar will be Wednesday, February 15th at the Lansing Center in Lansing. Thank you to those who are attending.

The Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) is applauding today's gubernatorial appointment of Farm Bureau member Trever Meachum to the Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Meachum is the production manager of High Acres Fruit Farm in Hartford and owns a 1,000 acre fruit, vegetable and cash crop farm with his parents and brother.

At the ripe age of 41, Meachum already has a distinguished history with Farm Bureau. He is a past president of the Van Buren County Farm Bureau and has lent his service to a variety of county Farm Bureau committees.

At the state level, Meachum served on a special farm bill advisory committee appointed by the MFB board of directors in 2007. He also is a graduate of ProFILE, MFB's leadership education program. In addition, Meachum is a member of the board of directors of the Michigan Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Association (MACMA), an affiliate of the MFB Family of Companies, and serves on MACMA's Michigan Processing Apple Growers Marketing Committee.

As a young farmer, Meachum excelled in activities for Farm Bureau members between the ages of 18 and 35. In 2002, he won MFB's Outstanding Young Agricultural Leader Award, which recognizes a successful young farmer for outstanding leadership roles in Farm Bureau, agriculture, and the recipient's local community. The following year, he won the MFB Young Farmer Discussion Meet, a public speaking contest which judges contestants on their ability to discuss current agricultural issues. As the state winner, Meachum advanced to the American

Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmers and Ranchers Discussion Meet in 2003 and prevailed as a runner-up in the national competition.

Don't forget to do something special for your sweetheart on February 14th. I am sure they will appreciate that.

Love would never be a promise of a rose garden unless it is showered with light of faith, water of sincerity and air of passion. ~Author Unknown



By  
**Lisa Kay**

"Shell Shocked" is how I'd describe farmers after the January 12th crop production & stocks report. History proved true as this was the 6th year in a row where the January report caused the markets to trade the daily limit. South America has been hit with hot dry weather; even under these conditions the USDA maintains their stance that there will be an increase in S. American corn production vs. last year and unchanged soy production. Traders are also estimating that if we have optimal planting conditions, farmers could put 94-95 million acres of corn in the ground (2 million more than last year!) Today, thankfully, there is solid corn export demand & sustained ethanol production even amidst tight ethanol margins. Also, this selloff in prices may spark unanticipated Chinese demand which could help support corn prices. South America is readying for their soybean harvest; Chinese export demand will switch from the US to Brazil & Argentina in the coming months for the remainder of our marketing year (S. American beans tend to be cheaper than American beans). Not to mention soy processing demand is lack luster due to poor margins. In regards to wheat, we've locally seen huge decreases in SRW acres, but remember, this fall U.S. farmers actually increased all winter wheat acres by 3%. One interesting note, the past few years U.S. wheat was too expensive on the world market by at least \$1/bushel. The latest world trade for wheat showed the U.S. was only 17 cents too expensive to make the sale. If this continues to tighten, we may finally start to see U.S. wheat export demand which has been virtually nonexistent.

Knowing what we know today, most traders have taken off their bull horns and put on their bear claws (for now). How do you market your grain a downtrend? My advice is, check your pride at the door and realize there is nothing shameful in selling \$6 corn or \$12 beans. Lower your expectations and come to terms that we most likely won't see \$8 corn again anytime soon. Don't listen to your neighbors bragging "Thank God, I sold my entire crop when prices were at the highest." Trust me, they didn't and only wish it were true. After a decline in prices, it's even more important to KNOW YOUR COST OF PRODUCTION. How can you identify if you are selling below or above breakeven if you don't know what breakeven really is? Create a marketing plan and be optimistic but remain realistic with your objectives. The old adage applies: "don't put all your eggs in one basket". Diversify your marketing strategy by taking advantage of target orders, and other contract alternatives your local elevator offers to capture market rallies. Farmers will have to market their grain in a year where margins will be much tighter than the past two years. Educate yourself on what is driving the markets and remember the strategy that worked for you last year might not be the strategy to use this year. I've always said being a farmer & marketing grain is like gambling at a Las Vegas casino. Some years you win big and walk away with solid profits while other years you slip away with only the money you walked in with. With that being said, farmers confidently headed into the Jan 12 report with a full house in their hand and the US government surprised everyone and pulled out a royal flush taking all our profits.



## CONSERVATION CORNER

by Judith Holcomb  
Education Coordinator



### DISTRICT TREE SALE FUNDRAISER BEGINS

The recent Center for Excellence Crop Day and Lenawee Conservation District Annual Meeting marked the lead off into the next event for the Conservation District, namely the annual spring tree sale fundraiser. It officially begins in January and continues through the third week in March every year, and is one of the major avenues of acquiring operating revenue for the Lenawee Conservation District.

Since Michigan Conservation Districts are independent and self-funded government entities, operating funds come from a variety of avenues, such as grants, assistance from County Boards of Commissioners and annual Tree Sales. The State of Michigan dissolved any monetary assistance to Michigan Conservation Districts approximately three years ago, and since then Districts have had to strive even harder to sustain themselves.

Lenawee Conservation District continues to exist because of local support, and a major way of helping the District continue its work involving local solutions for local resource concerns is in purchasing native trees and shrubs. Stock is obtained from Michigan nurseries and focuses on native tree and shrub species, with a few naturalized species that have a large aesthetic value as well.

With soil erosion and sedimentation still one of the top resource concerns in Lenawee County, trees are a valuable solution and perfect conservation partner for us. Trees absorb carbon dioxide (which we release) and release oxygen (which we take in), break up hard ground and make it more porous to absorb water, and use their roots to help hold soil in place. Trees and shrubs can serve as windbreaks (and snow breaks) in fields and around houses. Best of all, they are a renewable resource. If you sell choice trees on your property for timber, replanting is continuing conservation where you live and serve as the conservation legacy for our children and our planet. Call the Lenawee Conservation District for more information or for a tree sale catalog at (517) 263-7400 Ext. 5. Or go online to [www.lenaweeconservationdistrict.org](http://www.lenaweeconservationdistrict.org) to "products available" and check out all the items as well as download an order form.



### BRUCE LITCHFORD LENAWEE FUELS

Because the tension with Iran and their threat to disrupt oil shipments through the Persian Gulf is not going to go away any time soon, I thought the following editorial form Bloomberg would be a little comforting.

#### AN OIL STRATEGY IN CASE OF IRAN'S NAVY SHUTS DOWN THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ:

What if Iran makes good on its recent threats to shut down the Strait of Hormuz? And let's say that with one-fifth of the world's oil supply bottled up, the price of a barrel of oil then almost doubles, as some predict, to more than \$200.

What can the world do to bring prices down before a still-wozzy global economy gets pushed back into recession?

Pipelines that circumvent the strait could carry to market at least 7 million of the 17 million barrels of tanker-born oil that passes through the strait each day. The U.S. could, for the second time since the Gulf War in 1991 release oil from its 700 million barrel Strategic Petroleum Reserve; other members of the international Energy Agency (set up after the 1973-74 oil crisis) could also tap the 90-day supply stocks that they are required to maintain.

The International Energy Administration (IEA) has already

prepared a plan to release as many as 14 million barrels a day in the event of a Gulf closure. Saudi Arabia, long the self-appointed swing man of OPEC, has a spare production capacity-on paper, at least- of about 3 million barrels per day; everyone else is producing almost flat out.

The U.S. now gets only about 9 percent of the oil it consumes from the Persian Gulf. Countries such as China, India, Japan and S. Korea, however, rely on Gulf exports, particularly from Iran, to power their economies. In the European Union, debt-ridden Greece gets 14 percent of its oil imports from Iran, Italy 13 percent and Spain almost 10 percent. And because oil is a global commodity, as far as oil prices are concerned, what happens in the Persian Gulf does not stay in the Persian Gulf.

For all Iran's missile-rattling, however, there is little reason to think it will carry through on its bluster. To block the Gulf would verge on economic suicide: Petroleum products account for 20 percent of Iran's gross domestic product, 80 percent of exports and 70 percent of its government revenue. Any attempt to close the Gulf could also provoke a war with the U.S and vaporize what diplomatic support and leverage Iran gets from countries (and clients) such as China. (My daughter-in-law is in the Navy ((USS Nitze)) and she assures me that, if needed, they will re-open the Strait).

Iran may not intend ultimately to close the strait, but its threats to do so can still instigate tremendous economic uncertainty with very real consequences, especially in a hyper-connected world wired with complex speculative instruments. The challenge is similar to dealing with terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, which command our attention and resources through their potential no less than their actions. In either case, the goal is to balance the risks that such treats present with the costs of protecting against them. More pipelines would be a good start. Unfortunately, the United Arab Emirates just announced that the opening of a 1.8 million barrel-per-day pipeline that circumvents the strait will be put off until May. The use of drag-reduction agents- an estimated \$600 million investment-could increase the capacity of Saudi Arabia's existing two pipelines that reach the Red Sea to as many as 11 million barrels per day. And if the Kingdom wants to bolster its reputation as a 'stable, reliable' supplier of oil, it could invest the several billion dollars needed to build another pipeline-a prospect that may be less painful if oil prices remain high. The current turmoil is another reason why Iraq needs to repair its pipeline to Turkey. At home, we support the building of the Keystone XL pipeline that will bring oil from Canada's tar sands to market in the U.S.

The IEA's plan to release oil from emergency stocks will only work of China, India and other non-IEA countries agree not to hoard. That would require an unprecedented degree of policy coordination. One way to reduce future shocks, especially in Asia, may be more positions of exports in regional storage depots and greater use of floating stocks. Governments may also want to dust off the IEA's 2005 blueprint for cutting the amount of fuel consumed by cars, trucks and buses. If the crisis continues, the market's response could also be an important first test of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission's soon-to-be imposed limits on trading to speculators. Eventually, the market will fix the price and behavior will fix consumption.

Over the last few years, the U.S. has reduced its dependence on oil imports in general and from the Middle East in particular. Yet, almost four decades after the first oil shocks, the economy remains deeply vulnerable to the treat of a cutoff of oil from the Persian Gulf (the U.S. Navy notwithstanding). This is a state of affairs that calls into question the commitment of, by some estimates, trillions of dollars to keep the Gulf stable and the Strait of Hormuz open. Factor that 'externality' into the price of a barrel of oil, and alternative fuels begin to look like a bargain by comparison, at least until someone figures out how to take away the sun, wind, rivers and tides.

Lenawee Fuels  
Good luck to us all.

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## FEBRUARY 2012

- 7 Lenawee Farm Bureau Board Meeting
- 15 Lansing Legislative Seminar
- 17/20 YF&R Grand Rapids, MI
- 21 FFA Alumni Meeting
- 20/25 Archbold Equipment - Parts Discount Days
- 25 Archbold Equipment - Customer Appreciation Day 8 a.m. to noon
- 25 Cash A-Fair, Lenawee County Fair & Events Grounds
- 28 Get Out to VOTE

## MARCH 2012

- 1/2 Voice of Agriculture Conference

- 6 Lenawee Farm Bureau Board Meeting
- 8 Lenawee Farm Bureau Membership Kick Off
- 14 Ag Day at the Capital
- 18 4-H Auction Silent Auction - 1:30 p.m.  
Live Auction - 2 p.m. Merchant's Building, Lenawee Fairgrounds
- 20 FFA Alumni Meeting
- 22 Membership Victory Auction
- 21/23 Washington Legislative Seminar

## APRIL 2012

- 3 Lenawee Farm Bureau Board Meeting
- 17 FFA Alumni Meeting