

NRHEG
Star Eagle

*Happenings in the
local ag community*

A Day in the COUNTRY

INSIDE:

Father and son make it big *Page 2*

Mayo One stars in Farm Safety Day *Page 8*

Star Eagle photo by Kathy Paulsen

Father and son business has grown

Loken Excavating and Drainage is bigger than ever

By KATHY PAULSEN
Staff Writer

Loken Excavating and Drainage has come a long way in the last 40 years.

Don Loken founded the business in 1974 in Lemond Township, Steele County, at his rural location, and it has been growing every since.

Don's son, Dallas, who is now President of the business, joined him about 15 years ago. "Well, maybe before that," Dallas said. "I learned the business at Loken's Hard Knocks School Of Experience."

In other words, he learned the tools of the trade from his dad, but he would have it no other way.

Dallas grew up working for his dad, and following his graduation from NHREG in 1998 he started working full time for his dad, and has been involved in the business ever since.

Learning from the bottom up, in the dirt and grease and tooling around big equipment, has its advantages. One learns what is involved, and the experience really helps.

It helped so well, in fact, that in the '80s the business moved to Owatonna where they rented several buildings for expansion. The buildings were scattered, but they were big enough to house their massive equipment.

For 28 years they made do, but they kept their eyes and ears open, looking for something larger than the 4,000-square-foot building they occupied.

"We would probably still be there on State Avenue, but a stroke of luck changed things," Dallas said. "We heard a building was going up for sale, and were able to tour it in January to see if it would meet our needs."

They thought about it for a day and a half before they signed a purchase agreement to acquire the building and five acres of land where it is located.

The site is the old Northland Farm Systems property on Hoffman Drive. When Northland moved to a location previously occupied by Ag Power Enterprises, it gave the Lokens the



BIG SIGN – Loken Excavating President Dallas Loken waits for business outside their new location at 3695 Hoffman Drive in Owatonna, former site of Northland Farm Systems.
Star Eagle photo by Kathy Paulsen

opportunity to move into a 14,000-square-foot facility.

"And boy, did that feel good," said Dallas.

The visibility of their new location on old Highway 14, one mile west of 1-35 in Owatonna, is a big advantage.

"Being able to put all of our equipment under one roof is a big plus. It really gives us a lot more room to operate."

Speaking of equipment, Loken Excavation and Drainage has four semi tractors, four belly dumps, two dump trucks, two motor graders, four dozers, three skid loaders, three tractor backhoes, three front end loaders, two off-road trucks with 6 wheel drive, and a tile plow. The Lokens try to keep all their equipment in top

shape, doing much of the repair work themselves.

The business, which was started to provide field drainage for the area farmers, has grown to offer a number of other services. Half of the work, which is mostly done within a 25-30 mile radius of Owatonna, still involves farming and agricultural properties, but it now includes all work associated with septic systems, site development for hog pits, building pads, basement excavation, aggregate washing, crushing rock for use in gravel for township roads. They operate out of three aggregate pits – one in

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Star Eagle "A Day In the Country" Special

Thursday, September 19, 2013

Reed Waller, Editor • Tracie Rosacker, Advertising Manager

■ Loken

from Page 2

Owatonna Township, one in Lemond Township, and one in the Blooming Prairie Township. They blade roads in the summer and remove snow in the winter for two Steele County townships. They also build sediment basins, drain wet basements using a special plastic liner, and install waterways.

The company took advantage of the wet spring, when they weren't able to do a great deal of work, to make the move to their new location on Hoffman Drive. Since summer finally arrived, they have been busy trying to finish all of the work that needs to be done before the snow flies.

Their employees start early in the morning and are kept busy, often six days a week.

Dallas and his high school sweetheart, Nicole (Anderson), started dating while they were juniors in high school. Dallas bought

the family farm in March of 2001 and later that year, in August, he and Nicole were married.

Dallas and Nicole are the parents of three: Dylan, in fifth grade, Addison, in second grade, and Alexis, in kindergarten this fall.

When Dallas isn't busy at work, he appreciates being able to stay home with his family. He also likes to follow the Minnesota Vikings.

Although the business started nearly 40 years ago with one dozer and one tile plow, and has now grown to the size it has, Dallas and his dad and their employees continue to provide the same small-town service to all their customers. They take pride in providing personalized, good quality work and in taking care of each of their customers.

"It's not how many hours you put in," they say, "but how much you put in those hours. When laboring for others, it should be with the same zeal as if it were for yourself."

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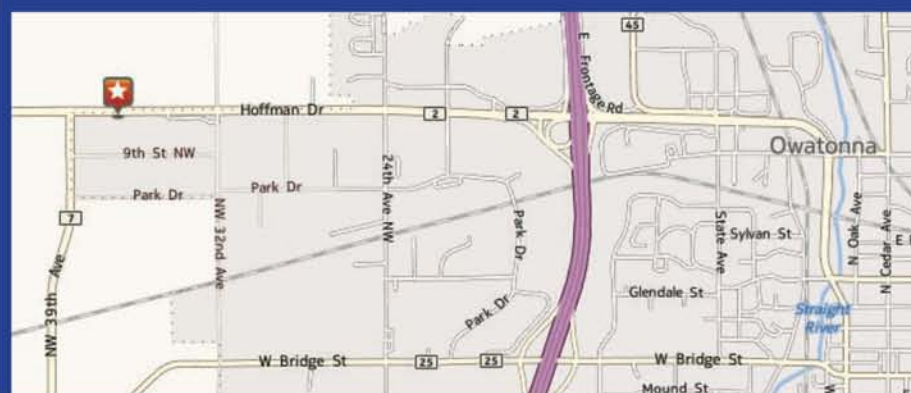
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MDA reminds livestock farmers to apply for investment grants

Grant application deadline is September 23

ST. PAUL, Minn. – Minnesota livestock farmers should apply now to take advantage of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Livestock Investment Grants. The program has \$1 million in grant funding available to eligible livestock producers to offset the costs of on-farm improvements.



Qualifying producers would be reimbursed ten percent of the first \$500,000 of investment, with a minimum investment of \$4,000. Qualifying expenditures include the purchase, construction, or improvement of buildings or facilities for the production of livestock, and the purchase of fencing as well as feeding and waste management equipment. Producers who suffered a loss due to a natural disaster or unintended consequence may also apply. The grant will not pay for livestock or land purchases or for the cost of debt refinancing.

Minnesota livestock producers who applied for but did not receive a grant in past years will need to reapply to be considered for the 2013 program.

The deadline to apply for the grant program is September 23, 2013. More information on the Minnesota Livestock Investment Program can be found on the MDA website at www.mda.state.mn.us/livestockinvestmentgrant.

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New round of value added grants available

St. Paul, Minn. – Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has another round of funding available for projects that will help farmers, producers and processors add value to their operations. A total of \$2 million in funding was made available through the Agricultural Growth, Research and Innovation Program (AGRI), established by the legislature to advance Minnesota's agricultural and renewable energy industries.

MDA will distribute the funds through its AGRI Value Added Grant Program which aims to increase sales of Minnesota agricultural products by diversifying markets and by increasing market access and food safety.

Specifically, these grants are intended to:



initiate or expand livestock product processing;

create feasibility, business, marketing and succession plans for existing and new businesses;

purchase equipment to initiate, upgrade, or modernize value added businesses;

increase on-farm food safety, such as implementation of a food safety plan; and

increase farmers' processing and aggregating capacity to enter farm-to-school and other markets.

Proposals that have a meat processing, farm-to-school (or other institution) component, or are addressing Good

Agricultural Practices (GAP) or similar type of food safety plan will receive priority, but applicants with other value added proposals are encouraged to apply. Small to medium sized operations will also receive special consideration. Proposals that include business planning, feasibility studies, marketing planning and succession planning are eligible for 50 percent of the total project cost up to a maximum grant award of \$30,000.

Equipment purchases or physical improvements are eligible for 25 percent of the total project cost up to a maximum grant award of \$150,000 with a com-

pleted business plan or food safety plan. A business or food safety plan must outline what equipment and improvements are necessary to fulfill the plan.

This round of applications must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. on Monday, October 21, 2013 and there are plans for a second round in early 2014. Proposals may be delivered by mail, in person, or by email. If a proposal is emailed, the time and date it is received by the program administrator will be considered the received-by date. Applications are available at www.mda.state.mn.us/valueadded.aspx. For more information, contact Emily Murphy, MDA grants administrator, at 651-201-6648 or emily.murphy@state.mn.us.

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Minnesota farmers lead Conservation Stewardship Program



Minnesota farmers have consistently been the biggest users of one of America's most significant farm conservation programs, according to a new analysis released today by the Land Stewardship Project. The analysis concludes that since 2009 the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) has helped farmers produce real environmental benefits on working farms, but those benefits are in danger of being lost because of cuts to conservation proposed by Congress.

"This report further shows what we've known for awhile—Minnesota farmers are using CSP to do more conservation on the land," said Don Baloun, Minnesota State Conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS administers the Conservation Stewardship Program through USDA service centers spread across the state.

"Conservation on working land is an area we really need to focus on in agriculture and the strong demand we are seeing for CSP is good for the land and our rural communities and verifies that Minnesota farmers recognize there is room for NRCS conservation programs on their farms," added Baloun.

CSP was created by drafters of the 2008 Farm Bill and has been available to farmers since 2009. It represents a major departure from traditional federal farm programs, which pay farmers to raise a handful of commodity crops while penalizing diverse farm-



ing systems that are good for the environment. CSP rewards farmers for current conservation practices on working farmland, as well as additional stewardship measures they agree to adopt.

Since 2009, CSP has become the nation's largest farm conservation program, with over 50 million acres enrolled in contracts. That's equivalent to the size of the entire state of Nebraska.

LSP's examination of CSP contract data shows that Minnesota farmers have been the biggest users of the program every year that it's been offered, both in terms of number of contracts—3,200—and dollars obligated to farmers who hold those contracts—\$280 million. In terms of number of active CSP contracts, the next closest state is Missouri, with 3,084.

Interviews with Minnesota farmers show

that they are using their CSP contracts to protect water, soil and wildlife habitat using everything from diverse crop rotations and rotational grazing to wildlife-friendly implements and more targeted use of chemicals.

However, the LSP analysis found that use of CSP varies widely from county-to-county. The state's top CSP county, Morrison, has over 200 active CSP contracts, while other agricultural counties have none.

LSP's analysis makes several recommendations for maintaining and strengthening CSP, including making sure that a new Farm Bill allocates enough resources to enroll 12.8 million acres of CSP contracts for the five-year life of the law, encouraging NRCS and other federal and local government agencies to work together to maximize CSP use in every county, and clarifying the sign-up and scoring system that determines who gets contracts. The development of the next five-year Farm Bill is currently stalled in Congress.

"CSP has emerged as a critical program for putting real conservation and real dollars on Minnesota's working farms," said Adam Warthesen, an LSP Policy organizer and author of the report. "The drafters of a new Farm Bill have a prime opportunity to not only maintain this exciting program, but make it stronger and more effective than ever."

See more at: <http://minnesotafarmnetwork.com/mfn-news/minnesota-farmers-are-nations-top-users-of-innovative-ag-conservation-program/#sthash.VNFecN.dpuf>


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Farm safety taught by the pros

Area fifth-graders gather for Farm and Home Safety Day Camp



FARM AND HOME Safety Day Camp instructors Steve Scheffert and Jeff Huelsnitz tell visiting students about tractor and power take-off safety, in conjunction with a simulated accident scenario involving area EMTs and the Mayo One helicopter.

Star Eagle photo by Kathy Pulsen

By KATHY PAULSEN
Staff Writer

Tuesday, Sept. 10th was a beautiful day for an outing.

At 9:00 that morning, fifth grade students from NRHEG and their teachers boarded buses which took them to FarmAmerica for Farm and Home Safety Day.

This was the 16th year the Waseca County Farm Bureau has hosted their safety day, which helps make young people aware of the hazards present as farmers are harvesting and moving down the roads

to get to their fields to get their crops out. Approximately 330 students arrived to participate.

Children are never too young to realize that precautions that need to be taken, not only for their own safety, but for that of their parents and others as well. Farm and Home Safety Day teaches that accidents don't "just happen," and often can be prevented.

Stations of safety

Six major "stations" of safety were presented to the students in small groups, rotating all of them through the process. Animal Safety

was presented by Dr. Troy Summers and assistant Renae Ireland, Summers Ridge Veterinary; Chemical Safety by Jason Androli from Crystal Valley in the morning, and Tim Danburry in the afternoon. Brian Trihus and Craig Sletten from Ag Power presented Lawn Mower/Chainsaw Safety and PTO (Power Take Off), and Tractor Safety was demonstrated and presented by Steve Scheffert and Jeff Huelsnitz. Kevin Kjersen from Steele-Waseca Cooperative presented Electrical Safety; and Boat, ATV and Snowmobile Safety

was presented by Jay Dulas.

The morning group of NRHEG fifth-grade students, along with students from Janesville, were joined at noon by the afternoon group of students from the Waseca schools, including Trinity Lutheran, and they all ate lunch outdoors around the picnic tables and park benches, anticipating the big highlight of the day.

Mayo One demo

The Mayo One emergency helicopter arrived in conjunction with

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■ Safety

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the North Waseca Ambulance and EMTs from Janesville assisting, as they demonstrated a farm accident scenario.

One of the students was asked to pretend he had been injured in the power take-off of the tractor, and a 911 call was made asking for medical help. A crew of First Responders and an ambulance arrived on the scene, and once they had reviewed the situation, they put out a call for Mayo One to come to the accident so the injured person could be quickly taken to the hospital.

Once the helicopter was landed and the blades shut down, the students were permitted to come up close and get a good look at the inside of the ambulance and helicopter.

Following the Farm Accident scenario and the arrival of Mayo One, the NRHEG and Janesville students headed back to their schools, while the Waseca students took part in the six major stations of safety in the afternoon.



COOL SHADES – Isaac Borchert demonstrates proper safety gear while operating a powered mower.

Star Eagle photo by Kathy Paulsen

The program

Traveling with one of the groups, the first stop was Boat/ ATV/ Snowmobile Safety. The students were informed that driving a boat with a motor with horsepower of 25 or more required a license. It was also stressed that the first thing they need to do when they get into a boat is put on a life jacket. They were taught how to help someone who falls out of the boat. They were also reminded to be concerned about the weather conditions when they were near or on the



SAFETY STUDENT Danielle Nappin tries on the latest style in chemical protection suits. Star Eagle photo by Kathy Paulsen

water.

Students were reminded it's the law that they must wear a seatbelt, helmet, and protective gear and goggles if they are operating an ATV. They need to be certified to operate an ATV, and they should not carry passengers. People operating a snowmobile also need certification, as well as wear helmets, goggles, and protective gear. It is also required that snowmobile headlights be turned on, even in daylight.

The group then moved on to learn about Electrical Safety. Electrical wires run in many different places on farms, as well as near homes, and everyone has to be careful dealing with electricity. Do not touch electrical wires that may be lying on the ground.

They were also reminded not to fly kites anywhere near power lines, because it is dangerous if any part of the kite touches an electrical line. If that happens, drop the kite and do not touch any of the cords.

Chemical safety included many of the different chemicals that are used on farms, as well as in homes. Dish soap, glue, conditioners, Febreze®, toilet bowl cleaners etc. are all potentially harmful chemicals. Many of them have a poison label on them.

The students were reminded that they and their families must always read the label before using any chemical. They should be mindful that using chemicals incorrectly, or overuse, could cause runoff that would contaminate water in ponds and creeks, and have serious conse-

quences to people, fish, birds and animals.

The students learned there are many things people can be allergic to. It is important that chemicals are stored safely away from vulnerable children and adults, and should always be kept in their original labeled containers.

The labels not only give information, instructions and phone numbers to call for help, but also give information so that it will not be confused with other products. If someone becomes sick from a product, the container should be brought along when they are taken to the doctor.

Excess chemical products should always be taken to a qualified station for disposal. Never pour these products on the ground or down the drain, as it can be devastating to the environment.

The students also learned several safety items regarding lawnmowers, weed whackers and chainsaws. They should always wear earplugs and eye protection when operating these types of machines. They should always shut the mower off before getting on. They should get on and off the mower on the left side, away from the blades. They should be careful while mowing hilly areas, or when there is dew on the ground, as they may slip. It was also stressed to wear long pants and tennis shoes. "God gave you 10 fingers and 10 toes, try and protect them."

Power Take-off and Tractor Safety was also reviewed. The students were taught not to play on tractors and farm equipment. Young children like to sit in the tire rims and buckets of tractors, and the instructors advised everyone to look carefully for young children before they start operating these machines. They also stressed the importance of not wearing clothing that can get caught in the power take-off, augers, combines and machinery.

At the Animal Safety station, the students were told not to try to break up a dog fight, and told what they should do if they come in contact with animals that may have rabies. They were also told to be careful if they were near large animals like cows and horses, as they may knock you over, step on you, or bite you.

As the program came to a close the students were reminded again to be careful when operating machines and dealing with chemicals, electricity and animals. They didn't want to hear that a student had been involved in an accident, or worse yet, killed.

Debbie Roemhildt served as chairperson for the event and said, "Accidents happen so fast and we want to stress to the kids there are things to do to prevent them and be safe when on the

Safety continued on 10



MAN DOWN – “Injured patient” Corbin Sibilrud helps Mayo and area EMT personnel demonstrate an emergency response procedure. He is examined, strapped onto a stretcher, then carefully moved to a gurney on which he can be transported by the waiting ambulance or helicopter.
Star Eagle photos by Kathy Paulsen



■ Safety

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farm and at home, and we can prepare them for what they should do should an accident occur. PREVENTION is our cause!" Debbie thanked everyone for making the day possible for the kids and communities.

What they learned

What did the students learn from the presentation?

Avery Hill said, "I learned that

you do not want to touch the bottom electrical wire as it is very dangerous."

Abby Anderson said, "I learned to never play around any of the big machines."

Lorelei Strom reported that she learned what happens when you call 911.

Hanna Crabtree and Courtney Techau said they both learned a lot.

The morning instructors hoped that the program was a great learning experience for the students, and encouraged the students to send let-

ters of appreciation to the people who sponsored the program, which included Ag Power Enterprises, Roundbank, AgStar, First National Bank, United Prairie Bank, Donahue Electric, Smith's Mill Implement, Associated Lumber Mart, Huey's Farm Seeds-Pioneer Seeds and Precision Planting, Culligan, Godfather's and Hy-Vee.

As the students prepared to get back on the school buses, they were each given grey Farm & Home Safety T-Shirts, which displayed the different stations of safety and

the names of those who gave donations. They were also given "Smart Choices for Life" Rural Safety books.

While it's impossible to provide complete safety advice in such a short time, it is hoped that some will stick in their minds of these young children that will help keep them safe.

"Farms and homes can be safe and dangerous, but we must just be careful and then we will avoid accidents and tragedies," said Roemhildt.



TOP – Safety Camp visitors to FarmAmerica get a good look at Mayo One, guided by Mayo Clinic emergency medics Todd Dorn and Barry Rokusek and pilot Daniel Kleingelutz. **LEFT** – Mayo One was opened up so students could view the interior and see the variety of EMT equipment. **BOTTOM** – Mayo One landing.

Star Eagle photos by Kathy Paulsen



Make a disaster plan for National Preparedness Month

ST. PAUL, Minn. — September marks the 10th annual National Preparedness Month. This annual event, led by FEMA, encourages individuals to take appropriate steps towards emergency preparedness for all hazards.

While all hazards are important to prepare for, weather related disasters are particularly impactful in this region. Whether it is a tornado or flood, families should have a plan for what to do in the event of a natural disaster. These preparations should take into account all family members and property, as well as give clear directions for different disaster situations.

Be proactive

When a disaster occurs, we instinctively react. In order to prepare for a disaster, take proactive measures. A few proactive prac-

tices to do in preparation for a natural disaster are:

- Review your insurance coverage
- Inventory your household property
- Start an emergency fund

Talk with your family

Making a disaster plan is a great opportunity to talk to the whole family about disasters. It's important to talk to your children, no matter what the age. Even small children need to have information, helping them to know what to expect. Remember, avoiding the topic will not prevent the disaster from happening. Families need to talk about disasters, their plan for responding and how to be better prepared if a disaster is expected.

Pack a "grab and go" bag



Have a packed bag ready to "grab and go" should an emergency arise. This bag should be easy to carry and contain basic materials including, a flashlight, food and water for three days, a cell phone charger, warm clothing and a battery operated radio. Remember to include copies of important documents.

Consider your property

Don't forget about your property

when making disaster preparations. All property owners have their own ideas of a disastrous event for their area. Identify what types of situations provide the most threat and what repercussions they would have for your pets, livestock, buildings, appliances, machinery, etc. By identifying these situations and planning for them, negative effects can be minimized.

Practice your plan

The key to making your disaster plan effective is to practice it. Practice will allow you to maximize safety in the event of a disaster.

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Minnesota organic farms show profit in 2012

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Despite flooding and drought, organic farmers in Minnesota had a profitable year in 2012 according to a new report released issued by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA). Average and median net farm income for both crop and dairy farms were up substantially, although there was a high degree of variability among farm sizes and between the most and least profitable farms.

The 2012 Minnesota Organic Farm Performance report summarizes financial data reported by 56 certified organic farmers, for both whole farm and for individual cropping and dairy enterprises. It also includes historical data for the four previous years. The report can be viewed on the MDA website at



<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/fbm>.

The report, which includes an analysis by the Center for Farm Financial Management (CFFM), shows that for key financial measures, such as rate of return on assets, rate of return on equity, and liquidity, organic farms generally performed very well. Rate of return on assets and on equity were both strong, debt repayment capacity improved, and most farms entered 2013 in a strong liquidity position.

MDA's organic program administrator, Meg Moynihan, says the report provides useful information.

"Organic farmers can use this report to shine a light on their

own farm's performance, said Moynihan. "By benchmarking their farm financial information against a group of their peers, they can get insights into areas where the farm is doing well, and where it may be falling short," she said.

Moynihan added that farmers who are considering a transition to organic production can use the report to get an idea of what they might expect in terms of yields, production costs, and profitability.

The MDA's systematic collection of organic farm data started in 2006 and is unique to Minnesota. Farmers participate voluntarily and their privacy is

strictly protected.

The farms in this report, along with several thousand other nonorganic operations, participate in farm business management education programs offered by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. Their data is analyzed and published by the CFFM in a public database called FINBIN www.finbin.umn.edu.



ORGANIC FARMING was strong last year despite the environment.



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Harvest management for drought-stressed corn silage

By JEFF COULTER
University of Minnesota
Extension Service

ST. PAUL, Minn. – Proper harvest timing is critical for ensuring corn silage is at the optimum moisture for packing and fermentation.

If silage is too dry when harvested, it has lower digestibility because of harder kernels and more lignified stalks. Dry silage also does not pack well, increasing the potential for air pockets and mold.

In comparison, silage that is too wet when harvested may not ferment properly and can lose nutrients through seepage. Optimum silage moisture at harvest ranges from: 50 to 60 percent for upright oxygen limiting silos, 60 to 65 percent for upright stave silos, 60 to 70 percent for bags, and 65 to 70 percent for bunkers.

Due to variability among and within fields, it's better to measure corn silage moisture using a commercial moisture tester or microwave oven rather than estimating it from the kernel starch line. The kernel starch line can serve as an indicator of when to collect the first silage samples for moisture testing. A general guideline is to begin moisture testing when the kernel starch line is 25 percent of the way down for horizontal silos and 40 percent of the way down for vertical silos. Then, assume a drydown rate of 0.6 percent per day and measure moisture again before harvest.

Length of cut and crop processing also are important considerations for high-quality corn silage. Breakage of cobs and kernels increases surface area, which improves digestibility, reduces cob sorting and results in higher-density silage that packs better.



The benefit to crop processors is greatest when there are hard kernels resulting from delayed harvest or drought.

A 6-inch cutting height often maximizes corn silage yield and milk per acre. However, drought-stressed corn can accumulate nitrate in the lower part of the stalk. This increases the potential for nitrate poisoning, particularly

in older livestock on lower-energy rations. The potential for high-nitrate silage is enhanced when drought-stressed silage is harvested within a few days of significant rainfall, since rainfall stimulates crop uptake of soil nitrogen.

Corn silage with high nitrate levels should be ensiled before feeding; doing so can reduce nitrate levels by one third to one half. It can also be managed by diluting with other feed sources or by increasing the cutting height to at least 12 inches. Even after ensiling, silage with suspected high nitrate levels should be tested before feeding.

For more resources on corn production from University of Minnesota Extension, visit <http://www1.extension.umn.edu/agriculture/corn/>.

Jeff Coulter is an agronomist with University of Minnesota Extension.

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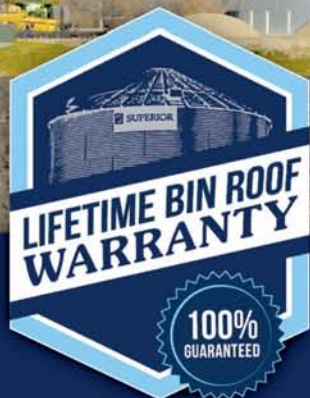
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