



The Farm Link

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Publication of the AGEdS 450 Class and the Ag 450 Farm – An ISU Student Managed Farm

Contact Information

Instructor

Dr. Charles Steiner
Iowa State University
Agriculture Education
& Studies Department
217 Curtiss Hall
Ames, Iowa 50011
(515) 294-0047

Farm Manager

Greg Vogel
ISU Ag450 Farm
52097 260th street
Ames, Iowa 50011
(515) 292-0742

Teaching Assistant

Jessica Bowser
Agricultural Education &
Studies Department
jrbowser@iastate.edu

450 Class Officers

President

Gretchen Godwin

Vice President

Jeff Anderson

Secretary

Nick Dreyer

Historian

Jeff Landers

AG 450 Web site

www.ag450farm.
iastate.edu



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New Instructor

This fall semester was Dr. Charles Steiner's first semester as instructor of the Ag 450 Farm. He replaced Dr. Larry Trede, who retired in 2004. Steiner was the teaching assistant for the past three years for AGEDS 450. Jessica Bowser, an Agricultural Education graduate student, is the new teaching assistant on the farm. Since 1992, Greg Vogel has been the farm manager.

Committee Updates

In order to increase the farrowing schedule of the sows, the swine committee restarted the artificial insemination (A.I.) program that had stopped due to reproduction problems from PRRS. The committee has also had an ISU veterinarian complete blood work on the herd to check the status of PRRS and overall herd health. Another project the committee worked on was compiling manure samples from the finisher. The samples were then sent off for testing to determine the proper amount of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium to spread on the fields and the proper rates to apply.

Harvest has wined down for the crops committee. The committee helped remove the test plot that was conducted by Pioneer. Overall the test plot went well with nearly ever variety yielding above 200 bushels per acre. Corn harvest is complete and yields are well above average. The overall average soybean yield was 46.7 bushels per acre. In the final session of the course the committee proposed a farm management software program, Farm Works, which was passed. The committee's goal for the program is to keep field history reports of crop yields, crop rotation and fertilizers applied.

Re-wiring the upstairs of the farm house was a task that the buildings and grounds committee decided to tackle on their own. The estimated price to have an electrician re-wire the house was \$2,800. However, on the committee were several electrical minds and they decided they could complete the task much cheaper. The committee also decided to put new insulation into the upstairs. Once they were complete the farm house had new switches and fixtures, ceiling fans, insulation, lights and leads. The work done by the committee drastically improved the farm house condition.

This semester's marketing committee has been very busy. They have placed three mini contracts on hogs with Farmland to take



The marketing committee spent time discussing whether to store or sell the excess soybean harvest.

advantage of high 4th quarter 2004 and 1st quarter 2005 prices. The contracts were well above the farm's hog breakeven price: November \$48.73, December \$50.39 and February \$52.00. All of these base prices will also have grade and yield premiums added on at slaughter. On all eligible corn harvested, Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) were taken. Five thousand bushels of corn were sold for fall delivery at \$2.64. LDPs were taken on all soybean crops, except for Bin #1. Bin #1 was sealed at a loan rate of \$4.96. The committee also established a fence marketing strategy with 5,000 bushels of soybeans. The committee worked closely with the finance committee to meet all financial obligations due by the end of the year.

A new net worth statement was created by the finance committee. They determined the breakeven prices for corn and soybean commodities. The finance committee will make a \$10,000 finisher payment and pay off \$5,000 of the farm's operating loan by the end of the year. The committee also proposed a plan to refinance the finisher loan into a seven-year note.

Keeping all of the equipment up-to-date is a key component of the machinery committee. They prepared the corn head and bean platform for harvest, replaced worn pins on the skid loader, repaired the disk ripper for fall tillage, rebuilt an end gate on a straight truck, drained pumps on sprayers and rotated tires and put machinery away for the winter. The committee also purchased a new power washer for the farrowing house.

The public relations committee helped to design a brochure for the farm. They also created the template for this newsletter, which they want future public relations committees to use. Strategic issues, class history and committee pictures were some changes that the committee had Dr. Gaylan Scofield add to the course Web site.

Fall 2004 Class Roster

Buildings and Grounds

Shawn Balvanz
Jon Minnehan
Jeremy Feldman
Caleb Bergmann
John Lehan
Jeff Landers

Crops

Lance Miller
Brett Greve
Luther Roit
Justin Petersen
Adam Anderson
Kenny Roose

Finance

Kevin Schock
Mitch Kennedy
Ryan Ohrtman
Dusty Brown

Marketing

Nick Helland
Eric Siebrecht
Erin Hoffman
Mike Walker
Josh Sponheim

Machinery

Aaron Moes
Michael Strohmman
Josh Ewoldt
Nick Dreyer
Evan Hollingsworth
Luke Schuldt

Swine

Gretchen Godwin
Corey Schuiteman
Jeff Anderson

Public Relations

Nate Rink
Nick Sampson

Farm Clean-up Day



One of the goals of the swine committee was to sell old sows and select replacement gilts. The crops and public relations committee worked together to pick up brush around the farm. The picture to the far right is Adam Anderson, of the crops committee, cutting down brush around the farm.

In a cooperative effort between the buildings and grounds committee and the Farm Operations Club a farm clean-up day was held at the end of October. Students from the 450 class teamed up with students from the club to improve the aesthetics of the farm. Several tasks were completed: trimming of trees, cutting brush, cleaning up the shop, putting new tires on the grain trucks and updating machinery. Overall the clean-up day was a success and was appreciated by the farm staff. The pictures are from the farm clean-up day.



Strategic Issues

Every semester each of the seven committees are given a strategic issue to work on. The strategic issues are designed to examine and research a problem facing the farm. The issues impact all phases of the farm from short to long-term goals. The committees must write a report, which examines all questions that were addressed in the strategic issue, and give a group presentation over their findings and recommendations.

The buildings and grounds committee was asked to look into an appraisal of the Ag 450 Farm facilities and land. The group didn't think it was feasible at this time to have a professional appraisal done. The committee went to the courthouse and worked with Hertz Farm Management to try to come up with an appropriate figure for the farm appraisal. Using information from recent land and building sales the committee developed a 2004 appraisal for the Ag 450 operation and land.

From 1995 to 1998 the Ag 450 Farm's soybean yields have been below the state and Story County averages. The crops committee looked into what the major problems for this loss of yield were, and possible alternatives the farm could use to improve yields. Integrating a pest management system, using seed treatment and keeping better records of the fields were their recommendations for improving the soybean yields.

The finance committee was asked to look into ways of improving the farm's liquidity. Options that the committee explored were refinancing the finisher loan to a seven year note, locking in input prices and developing a plan for reducing current labor debt. Another requirement of the committee was to develop the breakeven cost for the farm's grains.

With the possibility of the ISU dairy farm being built close to the 450 Farm, the machinery committee looked at updating equipment for an expanding land base. The committee was asked to evaluate what size of operation would demand an increase in machinery. Using an Iowa State

University extension worksheet the committee recommended that with any increase in land the 450 Farm would need bigger equipment or more labor.

Creating a grain and swine marketing plan for 2004-2005 was the marketing committee's strategic issues. There is a time gap between the fall semester and when the students come back in the spring. The marketing plan is to help guide the farm staff during the breaks when students aren't there to ensure that the farm's breakeven prices are being met. It also provides the next marketing committee with information related to current marketing options and recommendations for future marketing strategies.

Developing this newsletter to distribute to faculty and staff in the department was the strategic issue facing the public relations committee. They were asked to develop a template for other public relations committee's to follow. The committee felt that the newsletter could also be beneficial to the farm's vendors, high school agriculture programs in the state and past 450 course members.

The swine committee looked at the cost of swine production. They also looked at the benefits of hiring a full-time employee specifically for the swine enterprise. The committee felt before the farm could raise the production back to full-capacity it would need to hire a swine caretaker. They reported that not enough time is spent with the hogs causing a decrease in income because of sort loss and lack of adequate records. The committee recommended hiring a swine caretaker to get the swine production back on its feet, and then after a couple of years trying to increase the herd back to full-capacity.