

December



NEWSLETTER

Driftless Ag Update

Ag news for La Crosse, Vernon, and Crawford Counties from UW-Madison Extension



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Here's your December Driftless Ag Update!

Hello and congratulations on receiving our December Driftless Ag Update! This newsletter is co-written by your local UW-Madison Extension Ag Educators, Beth McIlquham (livestock) and Sam Bibby (crops).

Please contact your local extension office for the print version of any article included in this newsletter.

Notes from your Regional Crops Educator- Sam Bibby

- Pesticide Applicator Training (PAT) is getting started as we move into winter. Check the expiration date on your pesticide applicator license and sign up for a training if your license expires in 2026. Learn more on the PAT website: <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/pat/> or if you have questions give me a call.
- Country Tree Sales are in full swing. Reach out to your local county land conservation office to order trees for planting in spring of 2026.
- Using a drone in your ag business? The UW-Madison Division of Extension Crops and Soils Program is looking for feedback from farmers, agronomists, and custom applicators regarding the use of drone technology on farms across the state. Please provide your insight on drone technology through this brief survey: https://uwmadison.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cFKaPugFpXprLnM. Survey should take less than 5 minutes to complete.

Notes from your Regional Livestock Educator- Beth McIlquham

- Seasons Greetings: Happy Holidays to everyone! Thank you to everyone who reads this newsletter, attended a workshop, or said hi at a local pasture walk. I appreciate your support of this position and Extension. I hope to see you in the coming year!
- Beef Quality Assurance (BQA): There is one in-person BQA training scheduled for early 2026 in Eau Claire, WI. Registration and more information can be found on the Wisconsin Beef Council website. If you still need BQA certification, it can be completed at any time on the BQA website.
- Disease Digest: The UW-Madison Extension Livestock team has created a webpage that houses resources and information on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, <https://livestock.extension.wisc.edu/avian-influenza-in-wisconsin/>. There have been no cases of New World Screwworm in the U.S. in livestock, but more information can be found <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/cattle/ticks/screwworm>. For information on Asian Longhorned Ticks, tune in to the Beef Roundup Webinar Series. For animal owners of all kinds, please evaluate your biosecurity protocols, including pest management.



Register for WWASH- Dec 16-17

Join us at the 2025 WWASH Conference to explore the intersection of on-farm research, soil health, and water quality. Engage with other farmers, dynamic keynote speakers, participate in interactive breakout sessions, and contribute to thought-provoking roundtable discussions, all designed to deepen your expertise and provide actionable insights for your farm or the producers you support.

<https://cropsandoils.extension.wisc.edu/wwash/>

We want to hear from you!

Do you know your actual costs of raising your heifers from birth to bulk tank?

[http://go.wisc.edu/dairysurvey26](https://go.wisc.edu/dairysurvey26)

Extension

Cost of Raising Dairy Heifers Survey

We want to find out how much it costs you to raise dairy heifers! The first step is simple. Just submit your contact information and a dairy educator will reach out to you. You have valuable feedback and we want it!

Your insights will help us tailor our services to better meet the needs of Wisconsin dairy farmers

<https://signup.e2ma.net/signup/2019375/1954380/>



WABA Classic Jan 12-13

The program is held each January and boasts an attendance of nearly 1,000 attendees. The conference and tradeshow is a collaborative effort between the Wisconsin Agri-Business Association and the University of Wisconsin.

<https://www.wiagribusiness.org/2026-ag-classic>



Driftless Region Beef Conference

The fourteenth annual event will be held Jan. 22-23, 2026, at the Grand River Convention Center in Dubuque, Iowa. Past participants in this conference have said the program would increase their economic return by more than \$10 per animal managed, testifying to the value of attending the conference.

<https://www.regcyles.extension.iastate.edu/beef/register/>

Starting a Meat Business in Wisconsin

How do I get started?

In order to obtain a license for a meat business, new processors must **meet several standards**. State of Wisconsin meat plants must meet the same standards as USDA inspected meat plants. In 2000, all plants were required to implement a food safety system called HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point). A licensed meat establishment is required to implement HACCP plans and have an SSOP (Sanitation Standard Operating Procedure). Other requirements include meeting construction guidelines, having appropriate product labeling and approved formulations.

Wisconsin's State Meat Inspection Program

Cleanliness. Wholesomeness. Safety. These are the standards of quality found in State of Wisconsin-inspected meat plants and products. The **State of Wisconsin meat inspection program** and meat establishments ensure that meat products produced in the state and sold to consumers comply with required standards for safety, purity and wholesomeness set by the state and federal governments. In fact, all products produced in a state-inspected plant must meet or exceed standards set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

USDA/NCDA&CS Facility Guidelines for Meat Processing Plants

This **guidebook** is intended for use by meat and poultry establishments in considering decisions about design and construction of their facilities, as well as the selection of equipment to be used in their operations. The material that forms the basis for this guidebook is drawn principally from technical knowledge and experiences used by the Food Safety and Inspection Service in making its prior approval decisions about the acceptability of facilities and equipment.

USDA Code of Federal Regulations

- Title 9–Animals and Animal Products
- Regulatory Requirements under the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Poultry Products Inspection Act–Sanitation Standards
- Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point Systems Guidebook

Iowa Meat Processors' Resource Guide

This guidebook explains the resources available at the local, state and national levels to assist small meat producers who seek to begin, upgrade or expand their business. Additionally, this book gives an overview of the necessary business and regulatory steps along with where to find guidance for each step.

Farmers Gain Precision Spray Knowledge at Wisconsin Weed Management Workshop

The rapidly developing industry of precision spray technology drew over 170 farmers, crop consultants, and weed scientists to a University of Wisconsin research center on September 11, 2025. They were there to attend the second annual University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension Weed Management Workshop, which brought attendees in from multiple states, representing over 2.6 million acres of farmland.

The workshop's agenda, organized by the WiscWeeds team in partnership with Crops & Soils Extension Educators, covered a broad range of targeted spray topics, from weed control with targeted spray equipment to nozzle selection, herbicide spray coverage, and laser weeding.

The workshop included 10 sponsor booths for attendees to visit throughout the event. **GROW** and **Take Action**, sponsored by the **United Soybean Board**, were among the organizations handing out informational materials on weed control and herbicide resistance.

Workshop speakers included:

- Purdue's Dr. Tommy Butts, who kicked things off with, "Spraying is Easy, Doing it Right Isn't: Tips for Better Herbicide Applications."
- The University of Wisconsin-Madison's Dr. Jed Colquhoun with his presentation, "Practical Experiences with Laser Weeders and Intelligent Sprayers in Vegetable Crops."
- Representatives from John Deere, Ecorobotix, and One Smart Spray.
- University of Wisconsin-Madison researchers such as Dr. Rodrigo Werle and Dr. Guilherme Sousa Alves, as well as graduate students Nikola Arsenijevic, Zaim Ugljic, and Danny Zhu with updates on their precision spray research.

Attendees networked and competed head-to-head in weed identification and weed facts quizzes during the lunch break. Quiz winners received gifts from the workshop's sponsors: John Deere, Ecorobotix, One Smart Spray, American Drone LLC, BASF, Bayer, Brandt, CHS, FMC, Syngenta, TeeJet Technologies, Valent, the Wisconsin Association of Professional Agricultural Consultants, the Wisconsin Corn Promotion Board, and the Wisconsin Soybean Marketing Board.



A John Deere precision sprayer system at the 2025 University of Wisconsin Weed Management Workshop. (Photo credit: Amy Sullivan, GROW)

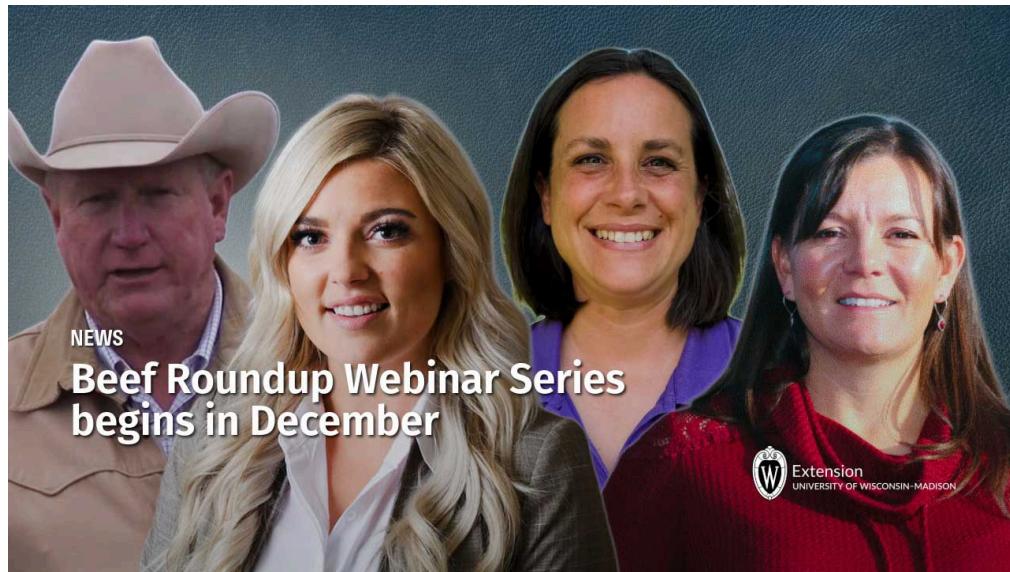
After lunch, attendees heard a panel of two Wisconsin farmers and a co-op representative explain how they use precision sprayers in their operations, and their perceived benefits and limitations.

The day ended with everyone climbing into trailers and heading into the field to watch demonstrations of the John Deere See and Spray, Ecorobotix ARA Ultra Precision, and One Smart Spray systems.

Workshop attendees reported that this was one of the best educational events they attended. Attendees also noted that the information they gained will improve decisions made on their farms, or the farms that they advise. Be sure to keep your eyes peeled for the third annual weed management workshop in 2026!

Explore GROW's and Take Action's website for more information on precision weed control, and to hear farmers talk about their own experiences with targeted spray technology.

Beef Roundup Webinar Series begins in December



Beef producers are invited to attend a series of free educational webinars this winter. The Beef Roundup Webinar Series will be hosted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension featuring Extension specialists and industry experts from across the country covering timely topics relevant to today's beef producers.

- December 11th, 2025: Handling Facilities with Dr. Ron Gill, Texas A&M Extension Livestock Specialist
- January 15th, 2026: Unlocking the Full Potential of Growth-Enhancing Technologies with Dr. Jessica Sperber, University of Nebraska- Lincoln Extension Feedlot Specialist
- February 19th, 2026: Asian Longhorned Tick, Dr. Cassandra Olds, Kansas State, Extension Entomologist
- March 19th, 2026: Key Considerations for Rebuilding Your Cow Herd with Dr. Randie Culbertson, Iowa State, Extension Cow-calf Specialist

All webinars will be held from 7-8pm CST.

Don't miss out on this opportunity to connect with other producers and professionals in the beef industry.

Free Registration

To register for this free webinar series, please visit this link:
<https://go.wisc.edu/BeefReg>

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