The NEBLINE, March 2013

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Dryland Farming in a Drought

Tom Dorn
UNL Extension Educator

Question: With much of Nebraska still in a severe drought situation this spring, is there anything farmers can do to prepare?

Answer: Unfortunately, we can’t make it rain, but we can change farming practices and we can select crops that reduce water demand or are more drought tolerant.

Of course we don’t know what the weather will bring in 2013. We can only assess the actual situation as we get closer to planting time and then make the decisions that seem most likely to strike a reasonable balance between cost and potential return.

Corn

The number of rows of kernels (ear girth) is determined during the 6- to 8-leaf stage. The potential number of kernels per row (ear length) is determined during the 10- to 12-leaf stage. If potential ear size is reduced due to moisture stress during these periods, ear size cannot be increased by relieving moisture stress later in the season.

Drought and temperature stress during the early reproductive stages (tasseling, silking, and pollination) have the greatest impact on yield.

What Changes Should Farmers Make in a Dry Year?

The obvious change is to conserve moisture as much as possible. Each tillage pass results in the loss of at least an inch of moisture from the upper soil profile. Reducing or eliminating tillage can make a huge yield difference when moisture is lacking.

Another benefit to reduced tillage is the mulching effect of crop residues that remain on the soil surface. Weeds compete with crops for moisture. Obtain weed control early using shallow tillage or burn-down herbicides and keep crops as weed-free as possible.

With below-normal soil moisture prevalent in much of Nebraska, producers may consider changing how they use fertilizer this spring. Dry soil influences how fertilizer can be applied and what happens to it after application.

Fertilizer Application Rates

Producers should carefully consider application rates this spring, particularly for nitrogen, which is usually based on expected yield. With low subsoil moisture in much of the state, the yield potential for dryland crops will be reduced compared to recent years. Farmers should be realistic when setting yield expectations and consider fertilizing for lower yields than last year on dryland fields.

Anhydrous Ammonia

The primary concern with anhydrous ammonia application into dry soil is retention of the fertilizer. Silt loam and heavier textured soils in Nebraska generally contain adequate moisture to react with and retain ammonia, even when seemingly very dry, as long as the injection depth is 5–6 inches below the soil surface and application rates are not excessive.

Of greater concern is the ability to seal the injection slot. If the soil is very dry and cloddy, the farmer may observe white “smoke” behind the applicator. This “smoke” is actually water vapor condensed from the air by escaping ammonia. Although it takes a lot of “smoke” to add up to significant fertilizer loss, it’s still best to try to minimize fertilizer loss. If vapor loss cannot be minimized by 1) going to a deeper injection depth, 2) slowing down, or 3) reducing the application rate, it may be advisable to wait for better soil conditions or switch to a different form of nitrogen fertilizer.

Ammonia applied last fall may have partially nitrified and could be leached; however, dry soil conditions have generally minimized any nitrate leaching from see FERTILIZER RATES on next page

U.S. Drought Monitor — Nebraska
As of February 12, 2013

The U.S. Drought Monitor is produced in partnership between the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Soybeans

Soybeans use less total water per season than corn (22 inches vs. 25–27 inches) and generally are not considered to be a drought-tolerant crop, but they can stand more drought stress than corn and don’t have short periods of time in the life cycle of the crop where drought can severely reduce yield potential like corn. They may abort flowers when in severe stress, but then, if we catch some rains in July and August, the plant may be able to produce additional flowers that will produce pods and beans. Provided we have enough growing season remaining when it rains, soybeans can produce a fair to good yield as many growers experienced in 2012 when we received some rain late in the growing season.

Should You Adjust Planting Rates?

Water demand can be affected by plant population but not as much as might be expected. The Water Optimizer computer model, developed by UNL Extension and based on field research across Nebraska, has found plant populations should not be reduced significantly under drought conditions. If the severity of drought moderates, you will want to have a plant population that has potential for a good yield.
Summer annual grasses are used for summer pasture, green chop, hay, silage, and winter pasture. Annual grasses most often used for forage in Nebraska are sudangrass, hybrid sudangrass, sorghum-sudangrass hybrids, and forage sorghums. Fertilizer millet and pearl millet are used occasionally. Each of these grasses has unique growth characteristics that require proper management for optimum production.

Some of the desirable characteristics of summer annuals are rapid growth (especially in mid-season), excellent drought resistance, and good response to fertilizer and water. Alkali soils can reduce yields considerably, but plants will tolerate a moderate amount of salinity. They are well adapted to most areas of the state and grow rapidly following planting in late May or June. They provide good growth from mid-July through August, and then moderate growth until stopped by fall frost. Drought at the end of the growing season affects hybrids produce about the same amount of feed as sudangrass when used for pasture. When used for green chopped forage, yields of sorghum-sudangrass hybrids usually exceed sudangrass or forage sorghum. Forage sorghums are usually best for silage. Making sorghum-sudangrass hybrids can be difficult because drying is slow.

Sudangrass, sorghum-sudangrass hybrids, and forage sorghum pastures are not recommended for horses because kidney ailments may develop.

**Sudangrass**

True sudangrasses have fine stems, tiller extensively when conditions permit, and can regrow rapidly. Thus, they are more suited to pasturing than other types of sorghums. Piper and Wheeler are the most popular varieties in Nebraska. Piper has low prussic acid content and is generally regarded as safe to graze. Wheeler has a slightly higher level of prussic acid, but it presents little danger to grazing livestock.

**Hybrid Sudangrass**

Hybrid sudangrasses are crosses among true sudangrass strains that are available primarily as commercial varieties. They are similar to true sudangrass varieties, but yield slightly more in a three-cut green chop or hay system. Their prussic acid content is generally between that of Piper sudangrass and sorghum-sudangrass hybrids.

**Sorghum-Sudangrass Hybrids**

Sorghum-sudangrass hybrids are the most numerous of the various types of summer annual grasses. Most of these are available as commercial hybrids. They are high producing forage grasses, but more than 50 percent of their yield usually comes from their stems. Their rate of regrowth after repeated clippings or grazing is less than that of sudangrass. Thus, sorghum-sudangrass hybrids are best suited for green chop.

Cattle consuming some sorghum-sudangrass hybrids sometimes gain or gain less than those consuming other summer annuals, apparently due to a lower energy content. When these hybrids are cut at immature stages, quality is higher but yields are much lower.

**Forage Sorghum**

Forage sorghums are usually tall growing and mature late in the growing season. Often called "cane," "sweet sorghum," or "sorg," forage sorghums often have sweet and juicy stems, and many have relatively small grain heads.

Forage sorghums usually yield more silage dry matter per acre than dryland corn, and will yield similarly to corn under irrigation. However, yields of Total Digestible Nutrients (TDN) per acre are usually lower from forage sorghums than from corn.

**Starter Fertilizers**

Starter fertilizers are applied primarily as an emergency hay or silage crop, especially in dry years. It is more dependable than the summer annuals on light, sandy soils, and will usually produce higher hay yields than other hay varieties following a late planting in the western two-thirds of Nebraska. Fertilizer millet does not root securely into the soil during early growth and is slow to regrow following grazing. Thus, it is not recommended for grazing except in an emergency.

**Pearl Millet**

Pearl millet has become increasingly popular for grazing in recent years due to the development of commercial varieties adapted to Nebraska. It is very leafy, regrows well after grazing, yields about the same as sudangrass, and does not cause prussic acid poisoning.

**Fertilizer Rates**

Fertilizer millet has relatively coarse stems and is used primarily as an emergency hay or silage crop, especially in dry years. It is more dependable than the summer annuals on light, sandy soils, and will usually produce higher hay yields than other hay varieties following a late planting in the western two-thirds of Nebraska. Fertilizer millet does not root securely into the soil during early growth and is slow to regrow following grazing. Thus, it is not recommended for grazing except in an emergency.

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**Grazing of forage sorghums**

Grazing is not recommended. They usually contain much higher levels of prussic acid than other summer annual grasses and can be dangerous to graze even when plants are completely headed, especially when young shoots are present. Forage sorghums can be cut for hay, although their stems dry very slowly after cutting.

**Storage Methods to Reduce Hay Losses**

Round bales with sides touching will have extra spoilage where rain, snow, and ice gather in the "valleys.

**Tom Dorn**

**UNL Extension Educator**

Hay is selling at a premium due to the drought last year which has not shown much sign of ending anytime soon. It is, therefore, even more important to minimize losses from spoilage and to maintain quality. Hay stored outside will be damaged by rain, snow, wind, and ice. If possible, store hay inside or cover it with a canvas or plastic tarp. The average round bale stored out in the weather loses about one fourth of its original nutrients during storage. For instance, do you usually line up round bales so the twine sides touch each other? Or stack your bales? If so, extra spoilage will occur where these bales touch because rain, snow, and ice will gather in these spots instead of running off. Round bales butted end-to-end, cigar-like, usually have less spoilage because there are no "valleys" to collect moisture.

It may seem remote when you are putting up hay in the heat of summer, but think about where snow tends to drift before deciding where to store bales in the field.

- **Round bales in north-south rows will cause fewer snow drifts to form next to the bales and the hay will dry more quickly.**
- **Prevailing winter winds are from the north or northwest in eastern Nebraska.** Placing hay next to fence lines or trees can result in the bales being engulflf in snow drifts later on.
- **Even when placed on open ground, round bales in east-west rows often have drifts on the south side.** As snow melts, it soaks into the bales or makes the ground muddy. Plus, the north side never gets any sun so it’s slow to dry. Bales oriented north-south will cause fewer drifts to form next to the bales and the hay will dry more quickly because the sun and prevailing winds will hit both sides of the row.
- **Most important is the base of your bales. Always put bales on higher, well-drained ground or water drains away from them.** Besides placing them on a knoll, place the bales on a bed of crushed rock, on railroad ties, or on pallets to keep the bottoms dry. This will also reduce problems getting your hay harvested due to snow drifts or mud.
- **Just a little pre-planning can save valuable hay and frustrations next winter.**
**Fire Prevention on the Acreage, Farm, and Ranch**

According to the Nebraska Forest Service, 2012 was a bad year for wildland fires. Over 501,950 acres of land in Nebraska burned as a result of 1,503 fires statewide. More acres of land were affected in 2012, than all the acreage affected by fire from 2001–2011 combined. In and around Lancaster County alone, 158 fires occurred.

A fire in a rural area is far more serious than a fire in a town or city where the fire department and fire-fighting resources are readily available. The most effective fire prevention device yet invented is YOUR attitude. With a positive fire prevention attitude, and by following the prevention measures suggested here, you can enjoy your country home without the threat of fire.

**Around the Home**

Each year fire damages or destroys many homes that could have been saved if simple precautions had been taken before the fire struck. It’s the little things that count.

- **Inspect smoke alarm and fire extinguishers.** Replace smoke detector batteries monthly, making certain they are accessible. Check fire extinguishers in areas where they are readily available. Tools are less likely to produce fire.

- **Remove tree limbs that hang over your roof.**

- **Stack firewood at least 30 feet from buildings and at least 10 feet from a line of combustibles.**

- **Install a spark arrester on your chimney.**

- **Keep the fire department’s telephone number posted prominently and resting on a solid foundation.**

- **Check lighting protection and grounding.**

- **Check TV antenna stability and grounding.**

- **Have electrical wiring and fuse boxes inspected.** Replace worn or damaged wiring and use only fuses approved for the wiring.

- **Make certain stoves and heaters are installed in accordance with local and state fire codes.**

**Machinery Fires**

Checking for and fixing fire hazards before starting work each day will reduce the chance of costly equipment fires. Look for:

- **any build up of plant residue around equipment, exhaust system, belts and chains;**

- **damaged exhaust system components;**

- **worn or overly frayed drive belts;**

- **broken or exposed electrical wiring;**

- **the odor of burning electrical wiring;**

- **worn or misaligned moving parts, which can indicate the lack of lubricant; and**

- **signs of leaking fluids, oil, and fuel.**

**Flammable Liquids**

Flammable liquids, such as gasoline, diesel, oils, and solvents, are frequently used on farms and acreages. Most liquids of this type are stored in garage, shop, or maintenance areas, which also contain many sources of ignition. Extreme caution must be taken with these products.

- **Flammable liquids should be stored in a designated area away from all sources of heat, such as welders, grinders, heaters, electric motors, and hot engines.**

- **Flammable liquids should be stored in Underwriter Laboratories (UL) approved containers.** Plastic milk jugs, pop bottles, glass jars, and coffee cans are not approved containers.

- **Use flammable liquids in well-ventilated areas. Vapors from these liquids can travel great distances to an ignition source.**

**Safe Fueling**

Always use caution when fueling equipment. The few seconds saved are insignificant when compared to the loss of expensive machinery, or the weeks, even months, spent in a hospital due to carelessness. Never refuel equipment with the engine running.

- **Allow hot engines to cool for 15 minutes before refueling.**

- **Extinguish all open flames and smoking materials before refueling.**

- **If fuel spills on an engine, wipe away any excess and allow the fumes to dissipate.**

**Open Burning**

History shows that as long as man has been farming, he has used fire as a tool to clear fields. Unfortunately, each year thousands of acres and millions of dollars are lost to careless burning practices.

- **Check local, county, and state laws on open burning.** Always obtain a permit to burn from the local fire department before you start burning.

- **Be aware of the weather conditions and be flexible.** If weather conditions are unfavorable or forecast to be unfavorable, postpone burning to a later date.

- **Be aware of your surroundings and other combustibles.** Protect build-

**Gardening at Lunch Webinars**

Learn about various aspects of gardening from UNL Extension experts. Join us for an exciting “Gardening at Lunch” webinar series, right from your desk at work or home. During each program you can listen and interact with the speakers. You will need a computer with Internet access and sound to participate.

Cost is $10 per program. Must pre-register at http://marketplace.unl.edu/extension.

**March 6: Get Ready for Spring Vegetable Gardening** — Learn ideal planting time of vegetables. Also get tips on growing strong, healthy transplants at home.

**April 3: Plant Diseases** — Learn how to identify plant diseases, and how to treat them.

**May 1: Outdoor Insects** — Learn how to identify the good insects from the bad!

**Acidified Foods Workshop for Small Food Processors**

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Food Processing Center will present a three-day work- shop “Better Process Control School for Acidified Foods” April 8–10 at the Downtown Holiday Inn, 141 N. 9th St. This school is suitable for anyone requiring certification; however, it has been designed specifically for individuals with little or no food science or food safety background, small processors, and those selling products at farmers’ markets and other local events. The school includes hands-on basic training as well as testing and certification.

**March 6:酸性食品加工小企业食品加工商研讨会**

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Food Processing Center将举办为期三天的研讨会“酸性食品加工更好的过程控制学校”，于4月8-10日在市中心假日酒店，141 N. 9th St。这个学校适合所有人需要认证；然而，它已经被设计为对那些没有食品科学或食品安全背景的小企业、小型加工者以及在农民市场和其他地方销售产品的个人。学校包括基本训练的实践部分，以及测试和认证。

**April 3: 植物疾病** — 学习如何识别植物疾病，并学习如何处理它们。

**May 1: 外部昆虫** — 学习如何识别好的昆虫和坏的昆虫！
**Food & Fitness**

**Choose Nuts and Your Health**

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend: “Choose a variety of protein foods such as lean meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, peas, nuts, and seeds.” The Dietary Guidelines also recommend fat intake should emphasize heart healthy mono-unsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, such as those found in seafood, nuts, seeds, and oils.

**A Handful of Nuts**

How many nuts are in a handful of nuts? A handful equals about 1-ounce. This serving size corresponds to the serving size listed on the “Nutrition Facts” panel on food labels. The International Tree Nut Council Nutrition Research & Education Foundation gives these examples of the average number of nuts per 1-ounce portion.

- Almonds (20–24)
- Brazil Nuts (6–8)
- Cashews (16–18)
- Hazelnuts (18–20)
- Macadamias (10–12)
- Pecans (18–20)
- Pine Nuts (150–157)
- Pistachios (47–49)
- Walnuts (8–14)

**Just a Sprinkle**

Sprinkle nuts into these foods:
- Salads
- Yogurt
- Cereal
- Pasta
- Cooked vegetables
- Muffins and pancakes (toss a handful or two into your batter)

For added flavor, try toasting nuts. View directions for toasting nuts at right.

**Sprinkle**

Sprinkle nuts into these foods:
- 1 tablespoon of peanut butter, or
- 1/2 ounce of nuts or seeds

**Microwave Toasting**

Here’s a quick and cool way (with minimal clean-up) to toast nuts and seeds, based on information I received from Linda Gosssett, MPA, CFCS, Extension Educator - EFENE, University of Idaho. This has become my favorite method for toasting smaller amounts of nuts and seeds! This method works well for amounts ranging from a tablespoon full to 1/2 cup. With larger amounts, some are likely to turn dark quicker than others. The time will vary depending on the size, type, and temperature of the nuts/seeds and also may be influenced by the type of microwave.

1. Spread from a tablespoon to 1/2 cup nuts or seeds evenly in a single layer in a flat, microwave-safe dish, such as a 9-inch microwave-safe pie plate.
2. Add a small amount of soft butter or margarine or add a small amount of oil to the nuts/seeds. Use about 1/2 teaspoon fat per 1/2 cup of nuts/seeds; use proportionally less for smaller amounts of nuts/seeds.
3. Place nuts or seeds in a single layer in an ungreased shallow pan or RIMMED baking sheet such as a cookie sheet or jelly roll pan. DO NOT use a baking sheet without sides.

**Microwave Toasting**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F
2. Toast nuts BEFORE chopping them into smaller pieces
3. Place nuts or seeds in a single layer in an ungreased shallow pan or RIMMED baking sheet such as a cookie sheet or jelly roll pan. DO NOT use a baking sheet without sides.

**Oven Toasting**

1. Toast nuts BEFORE chopping them into smaller pieces
2. Heat nuts or seeds in a dry, heavy skillet over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until they’re golden brown and they give off a rich, toasty fragrance. Watch them closely when using this method as it’s easy to burn them.
3. Stir or toss nuts or seeds frequently for even toasting.
4. Remove from pan to cool.

**You may have nuts or seeds all over the oven if you accidentally tip the sheet when removing it from the oven.**

4. Bake 5–10 minutes or until they are GOLDEN brown.

A toasted nut or seed may look more GOLDEN than BROWN. They will continue to brown slightly after they’re removed from the oven. Stir once or twice or shake the pan during toasting to aid in even browning.

5. Remove from pan to cool.

NOTE: The first time you try toasting nuts or seeds, it’s better to err on the side of under-toasting than over-toasting. As they toast, you’ll notice a change in their fragrance as well as their color.

**Stove-top Toasting**

Stove-top toasting works well for small batches of nuts or seeds. With this method, the parts of the nuts or seeds touching the skillet may become darkest, unlike the oven method where they become more of an overall golden color.

1. Toast nuts BEFORE chopping them into smaller pieces
2. Heat nuts or seeds in a dry, heavy skillet over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until they’re golden brown and they give off a rich, toasty fragrance. Watch them closely when using this method as it’s easy to burn them.
3. Stir or toss nuts or seeds frequently for even toasting.
4. Remove from pan to cool.

**$stretch Your Food Dollar By Freezing Foods**

- Helping limited-resource families learn to prepare nutritious and safe foods and stretch their food dollars.

**Kristen Houaska**

UNL Extension Assistant

**UNE Dietetic Intern**

**Time and money are two things everyone could use more of. Use your freezer to make the most of your time and money without eating the same thing every day.**

Think of some ingredients you often use in the kitchen: ground meats, cooked onions, celery, or carrots. Stock up on these items when they go on sale at the grocery store. When you need one pound of ground beef, buy two. Cook it all and freeze one pound of the cooked ground beef for easy use the next time. Create your own frozen veggie mixes by sautéing and storing them in freezer bags. Now you can instantly add flavor and healthy vitamins and minerals to your next dish in a cinch.

Another great way to save time with freezing is to freeze your foods in single serving amounts. For example, if you make a casserole for supper but don’t want to eat it all week long, you can cut the casserole into single servings and individually freeze each serving in a microwaveable or oven safe container. You now have a quick to-go lunch, or an easy re-heat dinner for busy nights.

**There are some food safety and quality tips to follow when preparing meals and freezing extras.**

- Your prepared frozen meals within two months for best quality.
- Cool food immediately after its initial cooking before freezing it.
- Always label containers with the food item’s name and date it was prepared.
- Reheat food to an internal temperature of 165°F before consuming it.
- Once the thaw is started, eat it within three days.

Here is a recipe that would be a great meal to make. To freeze the Veggie Chili, make a double batch and freeze half, or make the regular amount and freeze the leftovers in one cup single serving sizes. Enjoy!

**Veggie Chili**

(6 servings)

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 1/2 cups zucchini (or vegetable of your choice)
- 1 red or green bell pepper, chopped
- 4 cups tomatoes, chopped (these can also be canned tomatoes)
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 1/2 cups vegetable broth
- 2 cups black beans (cooked)
- 2 cups kidney beans (cooked)
- 1 jalapeno pepper, minced

**In a large saucepan, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion and garlic. Cook 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Add zucchini and bell pepper. Cook 5 minutes, stirring often. Add remaining ingredients, stir well to combine. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serve hot.**
**FAMILY & COMMUNITY EDUCATION (FCE) CLUBS**

**President’s View – Marian’s Message**

Marian Storm  
FCE Council Chair

Can you believe spring is just around the corner? March 20th?  
On a cold, winter day think spring and start planning your flower and vegetable gardens.  
March 20 starts Daylight Savings. I will be glad to have more daylight.  
March 17 is St. Patrick’s Day. This is the day a lot of people like to have corn beef and cabbage. Remember to wear green.  
March 19 is Easter. It is really early and could be very cool for the new spring dresses. The bunny may have a hard time finding places to hide the eggs.

The FCE and Community Leader Training Lesson  
"Option A or Option B: The Steps to Making Good Decisions" presented by Extension Educator Lorene Bartos. All of us make numerous decisions everyday. Knowing how to make good decisions takes time and practice. In this community lesson you will learn about the decision-making process and how to effectively use the decision-making process in your life.

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**FCE News & Events**

**Upcoming Leader Training Lessons**

These FCE and Community Leader Training Lessons give you the tools to present the topic as a program. Extension provides a teaching outline for the facilitator and a handout for participants.

All trainings will be presented Wednesdays at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherry creek Road.  
Non-FCE groups and club members should call Pam at 402-441-7180 to register for these lessons so materials can be prepared.

**March 17, 7 p.m. – "Quick and Healthy One Dish Meals"** presented by Extension Educator Alice Henneman. Tips and recipes for making quick, delicious, and nutritious one dish meals will be shared. One dish meals offer several advantages:  
• your entire meal often can easily be made in advance,  
• once it is assembled, you have only one cooking process to monitor,  
• clean-up can be simpler, and  
• they are a delicious way to use leftovers and "planned" overs.

**March 20, 1:30 p.m. (note date and time change) – “Option A or Option B: The Steps to Making Good Decisions” presented by Extension Educator Lorene Bartos. All of us make numerous decisions everyday. Knowing how to make good decisions takes time and practice. In this community lesson you will learn about the decision-making process and how to effectively use the decision-making process in your life.

**March 21, 8:30 a.m. – "Invisible Stains" presented by Extension Educator Alice Henneman.**

Invisible Stains

To avoid invisible stains make sure items are clean before they are put away for the season. When a clear substance, such as clear soda or white grape juice, is spilled on a garment, it seemingly disappears when it dries. So if you used the “it looks clean, so it is clean” system of evaluating the status of garments for storage, the stains you couldn’t see oxidized over the winter and turned brown. Try treating the stain with a prewash stain remover, then laundering, using both the type of bleach and the hottest water temperature safe for the fabric. Unfortunately, this type of discoloration is usually permanent.

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**National Poison Prevention Week is March 17–23**

The goal of this week is to create national awareness about the risk of injury or death due to poisoning. The Environmental Protection Agency reports in the past year, America’s 57 poison control centers fielded 4 million calls, treating 2.4 million human poison exposures and handling 1.6 million information calls. Parents and caregivers are urged to be vigilant and take steps now to prevent unnecessary exposures and poisonings throughout the year.

**Did You Know?**

- People call poison centers most often about analogues (pain medicine). This includes: acetaminophen, ibuprofen, methadone, and oxycodone.
- Parents call poison centers age five and under make up more than half (51%) of all poison exposures.
- Teens (age 13–19) show a higher rate of intentional poison exposures than other age groups. Almost half (49%) of teen poison exposures are intentional.
- Adults make up 90% of poisoning deaths. The highest rate of poisoning deaths is in adults age 40–59.

**Precaution Steps**

Families are encouraged to take precautions and safeguard against poisoning. Some steps to take are:

- Post the Poison Control Centers’ national helpline number, 1-800-222-1222, near your phone. Program the number into your phone’s “address book” or redial feature.
- Read the product label first and follow the directions to the letter.
- Use the safest possible cleaning products. Look for the Design for the Environment (DfE) label on products.
- Never leave products unattended when you are using them.
- Re-close products if interrupted during application (e.g., phone call, doorbell, etc.).
- Use child-resistant packaging properly by closing the container tightly.
- Prevention is the best way to decrease poisoning in all ages. Medicine and cleaning supplies look alike and have used to mix problem with poisoning. Never store medicine or cleaning supplies in locked cabinets. Medicine should not be referred to as candy to children. Take the right steps to help decrease poisonings.

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**Common Look-A-Likes**

Remember, young children can’t read labels, and many products around the home look like candy or something tasty to drink. Take a look for yourself. Can you see a difference?

- Chew Candy and Medicine
- Sports Drink and Cleaner
- Chocolate and Laxatives

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All-America Selections for 2013

Canna ‘South Pacific Scarlet’
2013 AAS Flower Award Winner

This stunning first-year flowering echinacea captures the spirit of the North American Plains by producing a delightful mix of flower colors from rich purple, pink, red, and orange tones to lighter yellows, cream, and white. This wide range of flower colors on well-branched, durable plants are sure to please the color preferences of any gardener. As an added bonus, ‘Cheyenne Spirit’ does not require a lot of water and offers a wide range of uses from the perennial border, in a mass landscape planting, in a butterfly garden, or as cut flower. The plant is 2 feet tall and grows in full sun.

Echinacea ‘Cheyenne Spirit’
2013 AAS Flower Award Winner

Flower petals start out white then deepen to rose-pink as flowers mature, giving an attractive bicolored effect. Dense, well-branched plants have deep green leaves with darker areas that contrast beautifully with the light-colored flowers. ‘Pinto Premium White to Rose’ has numerous 5-inch blooms that are long-lasting in the garden. It is a great choice for carefree, colorful summer garden beds or patio containers.

Meltomen ‘Melemon’
2013 AAS Vegetable Award Winner

The earliness, high yield on healthy, strong plants and superior taste all contributed to this melon becoming an AAS Winner. Judges related the taste of this melon to honeydew, but with a surprising and delicious tanginess. A uniform fruit shape makes it perfect for market growers as well as home gardeners. Each personalized fruit is refreshing, crisp flesh and a unique sweet-tart taste.

Geranium ‘Pinto Premium White to Rose’
2013 AAS Bedding Plant Award Winner

This variety is grown from seed, not tuber. Compact in habit and well suited for both landscape and container use. Plants are 2-fee tall. Canna ‘South Pacific Scarlet’ prefers warm and humid conditions over 77°F. This variety has a beautiful red flower with a yellow throat. Seeds should be sown indoors in February in a growing medium. Lightly cover the seeds and water. Maintain indoors in February in a growing medium.

Watermelon ‘Harvest Moon’
2013 AAS Vegetable Award Winner

The first ever hybrid, triploid seedless watermelon to win a coveted AAS Award. Similar to the popular heirloom variety, ‘Moon and Stars,’ ‘Harvest Moon’ is an improvement in that it features healthy, shorter vines that produce medium-sized fruits and sweet, crisp pinkish-red flesh. ‘Harvest Moon’ retains the familiar red rind with yellow dots, but is seedless, earlier to ripen, higher yielding, and better tasting.

Tomato ‘Jasper’
2013 AAS Vegetable Award Winner

Excellent taste, a long harvest window, and outstanding performance in the trials contributes to this cherry tomato’s success. Judges liked the texture and sweetness of the tomato as well as the uniformity of the fruits that grow on vigorous, healthy plants. ‘Jasper’ is a high-yielding variety with fruits that stay on the vine and then hold well after ripening both on the vine and post-harvest. Vigorous vines require little to no fertilization. An added bonus is fusarium resistance and the ability to overcome weather-related stresses.

Shrubs are valuable assets to a home landscape. Shrubs are often planted for their ornamental characteristics, such as flowers, colorful fall foliage, or attractive fruit. They can provide privacy, block wind, and attract wildlife. For shrubs to perform well in the landscape, home gardeners must prune them properly. Proper pruning helps to maintain plant health, control, or shape plant growth, and stimulate flower production.

Many deciduous shrubs (those that lose their leaves in the fall) can be kept healthy and vigorous by removing a few of the largest, oldest stems every 2–3 years. Unfortunately, many individuals fail to prune their shrubs because of a lack of time, knowledge, or courage. As a result of this neglect, shrubs often become leggy and unattractive. Flowering shrubs not pruned properly, may not bloom well.

Proper pruning can renew or rejuvenate overgrown, deciduous shrubs. One method is to prune them back over a 3-year period. The first year, remove one-third of the large, old stems at ground level. The second year prune one-half of the remaining old stems. Also, thin out some of the new growth. Retain several well-spaced, vigorous shoots and remove all of the others. Finally, remove all of the remaining old wood in late winter/early spring of the third year. Additional thinning of new shoots should be done.

An added way to prune overgrown, deciduous shrubs is to cut them back to within 4–6 inches of the ground in March or early April. This severe pruning will induce a large number of shoots to develop during the growing season. In late winter of the following year, select and retain several strong, healthy shoots and remove all others at ground level. Head (cut) back the retained shoots to encourage branching. Large, overgrown lilacs, honeysuckles, dogwoods, spireas, and forsythias may be pruned in this manner. Lilacs rejuvenated by this method will not bloom for 3–5 years.

Deciduous, formal hedges (those pruned to a definite size and shape), such as privets, that become open and leggy, can be rejuvenated by pruning them back to within 4–6 inches of the ground in late winter/early spring. To obtain a full, thick hedge, prune (shear) the shoots often as they grow back in spring and summer. Make sure the base of the hedge is slightly wider than the top to encourage growth close to the ground. Large, overgrown evergreen shrubs, such as junipers, are a more difficult problem. Junipers possess bare or dead cones in their centers. They can not be pruned back severely because they are incapable of initiating new growth from bare branches. Large, overgrown junipers that have become too large or unattractive will need to be removed and new shrubs planted.

It is only wise to prune overgrown, deciduous shrubs when it will not harm the shrub. Regular pruning will keep the shrubs full, healthy, and attractive.

Source: All-America Selections

Pruning Overgrown Shrubs

One pruning method for shrubs is to prune them back over a 3-year period. The first year, remove one-third of the large, old stems at ground level.
Ants in the Wintertime

Barb Ogg
UNL Extension Educator

Pavement ants prefer to live under objects on the soil surface, such as a slab-contracted house.

Larger yellow ants (also called citronella ants) produce winged swimmers in December or January.

Pest control companies may be able to help with this. Many of them have moisture meters, which can detect moisture inside the wall.

Insecticides can be used to eliminate colonies, but it may be necessary to target the colony, which is inside the wall.

I recommend homeowners work with a pest control professional who has products and equipment to do this type of work.

There is one other treatment that might be helpful. In the spring and summer, when ants are active, a perimeter treatment of Termidor™ may eliminate the ant colony. It only works if the ants travel through the treated area. Termidor™ is a professional-use-only product and is not available in hardware stores. According to label directions, this product can only be used twice a year, and it cannot be used inside the home.

However, if the moisture problem isn’t addressed, these areas continue to be attractive to insects which may re-colonize the area. In addition, mold and other damage from moisture may continue.

Cats Are in the News Again

Sonni Cochran
UNL Extension Associate

On Jan. 29, 2013 “The Impact of Free-ranging Domestic Cats on Wildlife of the United States,” research study was published in the journal Nature Communications. The study is available on-line and it made the news. After the study was published, headlines like “That Cuddly Kitty is Deadlier Than You Think” — or “Cats Kill Billions of Animals a Year” — or “CBS News,” are hard to ignore.

The study was authored by scientists from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is reported to be the most comprehensive analysis of information on the issue ever made. Researchers found cats kill far more native wildlife than previ- ously thought, with feral cats killing between 1.4 billion and 3.7 billion birds and between 6.9 billion and 20.7 billion small mammals each year. Feral cats which included mostly native species, such as meadow voles and chipmunks.

The cats which killed most of the wildlife were feral cats and free-range cats allowed to roam extensively outside. Barn cats are an example of free-range cats and they can be tame or wild. Feral cats are domestic cats that have gone wild. The study also found pet cats were responsible for a about third of the songbird and native wildlife kills.

Once published, these studies have always created passionate reactions. This time is no different. Feral cat advocates dismissed the research as another attempt to demonize cats by using sketchy results. While others say the study shows efforts to control feral cat populations with sterilization aren’t solving the feral cat problem.

I like cats, so I get it. I’m not anti-cat. I have owned cats and grew up with cats. I never allowed my cats outside because I didn’t want them getting too far. Keeping them inside means they live longer, healthier lives.

I also know cats are indiscriminate foragers. While growing up, our well-fed farm cats brought “gifts” to the front porch which included parts of songbirds (usually a few feathers and tiny bird legs and feet), shrews, baby bunnies, small snakes, and even weasels. If there are facts about feral cats we can’t ignore:

• Domesticated cats are not native to the United States. Feral cats are not pets. They are different than any other invasive species.

• Ears are responsible for significant losses to popu- lations of native songbirds, gamebirds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

• Predation of cats on birds with an economic impact of more than $17 billion dollars each year in the United States (based on economic activity of bird watchers, hunters, and bird reasers).

• The majority of feral cats are not vaccinated. Unvaccinated feral cats can transmit several diseases to humans and other cats including rabies, toxoplasmosis, cat scratch fever, plague, ringworm and salmonellosis. Feral cats are also hosts to fleas and ticks that can transmit disease to humans.

We can all help reduce the feral cat problem by promoting responsible pet ownership. Make sure every cat you own is vaccinated, neutered/ spayed. Encourage others to do the same. Keep cats inside. Your cats will live longer, be healthier, and they can’t harm wildlife.

If you don’t want a cat or kittens, don’t think you are doing the cat a favor by dumping it off in another neighborhood or on a country road. Take unwanted animals to your local animal shelter.

If you are having a problem with feral cats, read UNL Extension publication “Feral Cats and Their Management” (EC1781) online at http://go.unl.edu/empg. This practical, research-based publi- cation reviews options legally available to control problem cats. It also covers responsible pet ownership. We know not everyone is concerned about some of the control options, but it is our responsibility to provide you with the information you need to make informed choices.

The Non-4-Killed residential ants products containing single-lethal dose anticoagulant active ingredi- ents: brodifacoum, bromadiolone, diphacinone, and difethane. After June 2011 when the new standards went into effect, EPA received no reports of children being exposed to rodenticide baits contained in bait stations.

EPA expects to see a substantial reduction in exposures to children when the 12 banned D-Con products are removed from the commercial market. Many households use these products each year.

Nearly all D-Con products have been banned, only those not in compliance with the new stan- dards. Consumers can still purchase the homeowner-use rat and mouse products that meet the EPA’s safety standards as long as they are banned, only those not in compliance with the new stan- dards. Consumers can still purchase the homeowner-use rat and mouse products that meet the EPA’s safety standards as long as they are presently produced.


EPA Bans D-Con Rodent Control Products

Barb Ogg
UNL Extension Educator

Homeowners who purchase rodenticides for use inside structures may not find their favorite products on the shelf of their local hardware store much longer. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has moved to ban the sale of 12 D-Con mouse and rat poison products manufactured by Reckitt Benckiser Inc. because these products do not comply with current EPA safety standards. The current standards were designed to protect rodenticide exposure to children, pets, and wildlife for rodent baits used in and around the home. The expected companies manufacturing and selling rodenticides to adopt these standards by June 2011.

During the last few years, a number of companies have made changes in their product line to meet these new standards. These companies include Bell Laboratories’ Flocmate products, PM Resources’ Assault brand products and Chemstar’s products. According to the EPA, Reckitt Benckiser Inc., maker of D-Con brand products, is the only rodenticide manufacturer refusing to adopt EPA new safety standards for its consumer-use products.

The new standards — the EPA compliant consumer-use rodenticide products must be contained in protective tamper- resistant bait stations. The new standards prohibit the sale of pellets and other bait forms that cannot be secured in bait stations. In addition, the EPA prohibits the sale to residential consumers products containing single-lethal dose anticoagulant active ingredi- ents: brodifacoum, bromadiolone, diphacinone, and difethane. After June 2011 when the new standards went into effect, EPA received no reports of children being exposed to rodenticide baits contained in bait stations.

EPA expects to see a substantial reduction in exposures to children when the 12 banned D-Con products are removed from the commercial market. Many households use these products each year.

Nearly all D-Con products have been banned, only those not in compliance with the new stan- dards. Consumers can still purchase the homeowner-use rat and mouse products that meet the EPA’s safety standards as long as they are presently produced.

Week of March 2-8, 2013

4-H & Youth

4-H & Youth

4-H Speech & PSA

Contests are open to all 4-H’ers — need not be enrolled in a specific project. Youth may choose to participate in either or both the Speech and PSA contests. For resources, guidelines, and examples, go to http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/Contest/speech.shtml. If questions, contact Cole Meador at cmeador2@unl.edu or 402-441-7180.

Speech/PSA Workshop, March 28

Learn more at a Speech/PSA workshop on Thursday, March 28, 6 p.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. Out of ideas? We will help you get started. Already started? Bring your completed speech/PSAs to practice or get suggestions. We will teach you auditory basics so you can add sound effects and edit to make your final PSA perfect. There will be computers available to work with, or bring your own. Cole will record PSA's for 4-H'ers ready to do so — come in after 4 p.m.

PSA Contest, Due April 12

In the Public Service Announcement (PSA) Contest, 4-H’ers submit a 60 second “radio commercial” promoting 4-H. Submit a PSA via CD playable on any standard stereo equipment to extension by Friday, April 12. Results and comment sheets will be handed out at the 4-H Speech Contest on April 21. The 2013 PSA theme is “Taking the Lead.”

Speech Contest, April 21

The 4-H Speech Contest will be held Sunday, April 21, 1 p.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. Register by April 12 by calling 402-441-7180 or emailing cmeador2@unl.edu. Use your name, speech title, age, division, and if it is “Speech for YouTube.” Note new age divisions this year. New this year: Speech For Youtube for ages 13–18 (may enter a regular speech and/or this county-only class).

4-H Furniture Painting Workshop, April 20

Mark your calendars for the upcoming “Unique to Jumbles” furniture painting workshop on Saturday, April 20, 9 a.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. Open to 4-H youth ages 8–18. Check the April Nebline for more information.

Kiwanis Karnival, April 13

The annual Kiwanis Karnival, a FREE family event, is sponsored by the Lincoln Center Kiwanis. This year, it will be held Saturday, April 13, 6–8 p.m. at Elliott Elementary School, 225 S. 26th St., Lincoln. The Karnival features carnival type games for the kids, bingo for adults, prizes, snacks, fun, and fellowship. Lincoln Center Kiwanis has sponsored this event for over 50 years — providing prizes and snacks. 4-H clubs are needed to provide carnival-type booths. This is a great community service and leadership activity for clubs. If your 4-H club or family would like to have a booth or for more information, call Lorene at 402-441-7180 or tandyerson14@unl.edu. All help is very much appreciated!

March

Rod Hollman

Lancaster County 4-H is proud to announce Rod Hollman as a member of March’s “Heart of 4-H Award” in recognition of outstanding volunteer service.

Rod Hollman is a longtime supporter of 4-H through a variety of roles, including:

• leader of the Lone Star 4-H livestock club 1974–89
• President of Lancaster County 4-H Council in the ‘80s and ex officio member on the Extension Board (he was involved when the current building at 444 Cherry creek Road was built),
• member of the Lancaster County Ag Society for more than 20 years — 8 years as president (he was involved when the Lancaster Building at the old State Fairgrounds was built and when the Lancaster Event Center was built),
• member of the Nebraska State Fair Board for nearly seven years in the ‘90s,
• has served as superintendent for 4-H and open class beef shows since overall livestock superintendent at the Lancaster County Fair,
• has served as superintendent for open class beef show and overall livestock superintendent at the Nebraska State Fair,
• still sponsors trophies/awards for the 4-H beef shows at Lancaster County Super Fair and Saline County Fair.

He says, “I like being a 4-H volunteer because I always liked helping youth. I like the enthusiasm they have for their projects. My favorite experience as a 4-H volunteer is watching how the youth respond and the changes they make as they grow. I am now successful livestock producers and business owners, and I believe our experience in 4-H played a part in their success.”

Lancaster County 4-H thanks Rod for donating his time and talents. Volunteers like him are indeed the heart of 4-H.

4-H Dog Skill-A-Thon, March 26

Want to test your dog knowledge? Come to the 4th annual 4-H Dog Skill-A-Thon! Tuesday, March 26 from 2:30–4 p.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. Youth do not need to be present the entire time — just come at your convenience, it usually takes 1–2 hours. There will be a variety of topics that will test your knowledge including: parts, parasites, breeds, conformation, nutrition, and more. Open to all youth ages 8–18 — you do not have to be enrolled in 4-H and do not need a dog to participate. Must preregister by March 19 by contacting Cole Meador at cmeador2@unl.edu or 402-441-7180 (there is no entry form). Resource materials for Skill-a-thon are available at the extension office.

4-H Furniture Painting Workshop, April 20

Mark your calendars for the upcoming “Unique to Jumbles” furniture painting workshop on Saturday, April 20, 9 a.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. Open to 4-H youth ages 8–18. Check the April Nebline for more information.

4-H Clover College

The 2013 Lancaster County 4-H Clover College is four days of fun filled workshops for workshops for youth ages 6 and up, June 18–21 at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. If you have workshop ideas, or would like to teach a workshop or volunteer to help, please contact Tracey at 402-441-7180 or tandyerson14@unl.edu. All help is very much appreciated!

Clover College Instructors Needed

4-H Clover College is four days of fun filled workshops for workshops for youth ages 6 and up, June 18–21 at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. If you have workshop ideas, or would like to teach a workshop or volunteer to help, please contact Tracey at 402-441-7180 or tandyerson14@unl.edu. All help is very much appreciated!

4-H Dog Skill-A-Thon, March 26

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4-H Furniture Painting Workshop, April 20

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4-H Dog Skill-A-Thon, March 26

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4-H Furniture Painting Workshop, April 20

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4-H Dog Skill-A-Thon, March 26

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4-H Furniture Painting Workshop, April 20

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4-H Dog Skill-A-Thon, March 26

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4-H Furniture Painting Workshop, April 20

Mark your calendars for the upcoming “Unique to Jumbles” furniture painting workshop on Saturday, April 20, 9 a.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. Open to 4-H youth ages 8–18. Check the April Nebline for more information.
4-H Achievement Night

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension in Lancaster County and 4-H Council presented Lancaster County 4-H Achievement Night on Feb. 12. 4-H’ers, 4-H clubs, and 4-H leaders were recognized for their 2012 achievements. The Lancaster County Board of Commissioners signed a proclamation declaring February 12 as “4-H Achievement Day.” Lancaster County 4-H congratulates all 4-H youth who commit themselves to excellence! We also thank all 4-H volunteers who donate their time and talents to youth! For a complete list of award, scholarship, and pin recipients (as well as additional photos) go to http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h.

NEBRASKA DIAMOND CLOVER
The Nebraska 4-H Diamond Clover Program is a statewide program which encourages 4-H members to engage in a variety of projects and activities. At the beginning of the 4-H year, youth choose goals from a provided list, and at the end of the 4-H year, complete a report which documents their accomplishments.

LEVEL 1 – AMETHYST: Kieran Burkey, Catherine Hytrek, Joshua Hytrek, Megan Lange, Sophie Polk, Anna Sump, David Swatek, Addison Wanser
LEVEL 2 – AQUAMARINE: Ellie Babcock, Nathan Becker, Cassie Brown, Nathan Gabel, Valerie Griess, Kayla Humphrey, Rachael Lange
LEVEL 3 – RUBY: Abby Babcock, Elizabeth Garza, James Griess, Brooke Kreikemeier, Jared Nielsen, Madelaine Polk, Jenna White, Alyssa Zimmer
Level 4 – Sapphire: Morgan Cuttlers, Valerie Gabel, Victoria Garza, Holly Hillebran, Emma Lanik, Caleb Nielsen, Paige Roach
LEVEL 5 – EMERALD: Madeline Gabel, Kylee Plager, Sheridan Swotek

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS
Presented to 4-H’ers who have completed the most hours of community service. Award recipients receive a $30 Activity Certificate from Lancaster County 4-H Council redeemable towards 4-H activities and supplies.

AGE 14 AND OVER: Victoria Garza, Holly Hillebran, Austin Hurt, Kylee Plager, Paige Roach, Sheridan Swatek
AGE 8 – 13: Valerie Gabel, Elizabeth Garza, Kyle Hurt, McKenzie Kapperman, Brooke Kreikemeier, Emma Lanik, Addison Wanser, Alyssa Zimmer

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS
Presented to individuals 16 years of age or older who have excelled in his/her involvement with the Lancaster County 4-H program. Selection is based on participation in a wide variety and depth of 4-H activities.

ELLIE, KD: $500 for the year

LENON BARTOS

Lancaster County Commissioner Jane Roybould presented the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners’ proclamation declaring Feb. 12 as “4-H Achievement Day.”

NEBRASKA 4-H CLUBS OF EXCELLENCE
Nebraska 4-H Clubs of Excellence have met criteria outlined by the State 4-H office.

4-H Explorers, All American Kids, Fantastic 4, Joe’s Clover Knights, Pick-A-Pig, Rabbits R Us, Rock Creek Ranchers, Rock’n Riders, Star City Cornhuskers, Super Shamrocks

CAREER PORTFOLIOS
Career Portfolios are a record of an individual’s 4-H career.

COUNTRY WINNERS
Cassie Meyer: Animal Science
Sheridan Swatek: Healthy Lifestyles Education

NOMINATED TO REPRESENT LANCASTER COUNTY AT DISTRICT COMPETITION
Cassie Meyer: Animal Science
Sheridan Swatek: Healthy Lifestyles Education; Leadership and Citizenship

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS
Presented to individuals 16 years of age or older who have excelled in his/her involvement with the Lancaster County 4-H program. Selection is based on participation in a wide variety and depth of 4-H activities.

4-H TEEN COUNCIL – $250: Christian Brandt, Caitlyn Schmidt
LINCOLN CENTER KIWANIS – $1,000: Kayla Green

I DARE YOU LEADERSHIP AWARD
Awarded on behalf of the American Youth Foundation to juniors or seniors who strive to achieve their personal best and make a positive difference in their community.

4-H MERITORIOUS SERVICE
Lorene Bartos started her Extension career in 1973. She has served many roles in her 40 years of service, including the 4-H development program. In 1976, Lorene helped start the 4-H Embryology program in local schools. She helped with the development of Eastern Nebraska 4-H Center (camp) and currently is a board member. Lorene has dedicated countless hours to the Lancaster County Fair. She organizes “Fair Fun Day” for child care groups and last year organized the 4-H historical displays. An instructor at 4-H Clover College, she teaches a variety of workshops. As a member of Lincoln Center Kiwanis, she organizes the annual Kiwanis Karnival and coordinates the Outstanding 4-H Clubs and college scholarship sponsored by Kiwanis.

Extension Educator Lorene Bartos pictured with Extension Unit Leader Gary Bergman.
Tips for Coping With Drought-Related Stress
Farm/Ranch Stress and Disaster Stress

**Stressors Identified by Farm/Ranch Families**
Farm/ranch-specific worries include:
- Rising expenses & low prices
- Weather-related crop loss
- Machinery breakdown
- Prolonged bad weather or natural disaster
- Few vacations
- Weather-related crop loss
- Prolonged bad weather or natural disaster
- Machinery breakdown
- Prolonged bad weather or natural disaster
- Few vacations

Farmers/ranchers holding a second off-farm/ranch job and women in farm/ranch families.

Farmers/ranchers and their families should remind themselves these are common stress reactions. Once recognized, realize stress is a natural by-product of both internal and external circumstances. It is important to recognize these are normal 'stress' responses to an unusual situation.

**What Can We Do About Stress?**
Stress unrecognized is often referred to as the silent killer. It is the number one variable that affects our emotional, mental, and physical health. Experiencing the effects of stress and taking ownership over our feelings associated with stress will empower us to find peace in the midst of the stressful situation rather than the stressful situation slowly taking pieces of you, i.e., your happiness, appetite, or the many other facets of your mental, physical, and emotional health.

When we are proactive at facing the challenges each day, the stronger we will be in the face of other difficult circumstances life will inevitably throw our way. Focusing on our own strengths and partnering with our community supports, we can take steps to grow ourselves and our families by:
- Acknowledging feelings and talking them out. We have feelings for a reason, they serve as our barometer, measuring our internal pressure. Family, friends, and neighbors can be helpful listeners, and may share some of the same worries. Participating in church or spiritual renewal activities can be sources of comfort and assistance in difficult times.
- Paying attention to health, nutritious diet, and adequate sleep is important. Engaging in recreation or a favorite hobby, getting away for a few hours with close friends, reading a good book, volunteering to help others, and finding time to laugh can give your mind and body reprieve from the constant relationship we have developed with stress and worry.
- Nurturing personal relationships should be a priority. Couples should make time to be alone, to talk, and to have fun.
- Families should re-establish important rituals such as mealtimes and holiday celebrations. Listening to and reassuring children who may need additional support is significant in dealing with the current situation and critical for continued healthy development.

The good news is, with time, we will bounce back and return to what is normal for us and our families. Keep in mind, it may be a 'new normal,' but it will be a normal that serves our well-being.

**When Should We Seek Help?**
If stress, anxiety, depression, or physical problems continue for more than a few weeks or if someone is having feelings of extreme hopelessness or extreme anger, talking about suicide or is violent, it is important to seek help immediately. Contact a physician or community mental health center as soon as possible.

**What Help is Available?**
Information about community mental health services in Nebraska can be found at:
- **COMHT Program** 1-800-464-0258 – the Nebraska Counseling, Outreach and Mental Health Therapy offers no-cost vouchers for confidential mental health services for persons affected by the rural crisis
  - [http://chm.ne.gov/behavioral_health](http://chm.ne.gov/behavioral_health) – official Nebraska Government Website with a listing of licensed mental health counselors throughout the State of Nebraska
- Other resources for stress management for farm/ranch families:
  - [http://droughtresources.unl.edu](http://droughtresources.unl.edu) – an index of articles provided by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension that address drought issues facing individuals or small farms
  - Nebraska Farm Hotline 1-800-464-0258
  - Farm Mediation Clinics 1-800-446-4071
  - [www.lego4hodaknebraska.com](http://www.lego4hodaknebraska.com) – Nebraska Legal Aid
  - [http://nrrs.ne.gov](http://nrrs.ne.gov) – the NRRS is a statewide database created with input from Nebraska families, service providers, and emergency services.
  - The NRRS provides 1-800 numbers as well as websites and email contacts to help you connect faster to the services you are seeking.
  - [www.nebraska.org](http://www.nebraska.org) – the Nebraska Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault Coalition
  - [http://community.org](http://community.org) – Community Action of Nebraska
  - [www.ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov](http://www.ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov) – Department of Health and Human Services - food stamps, Medicaid, Bill Collection etc.
  - [http://extension.missouri.edu/main/family/index.shtml](http://extension.missouri.edu/main/family/index.shtml) – an index of articles provided by the University of Missouri Cooperative Extension system that address strong families and programs to help families cope
  - [www.uwm.edu/cei/g/issues/stress/safety/index.htm](http://www.uwm.edu/cei/g/issues/stress/safety/index.htm) – this site for the University of Wisconsin Extension offices provides an index of resources for farmers regarding to and relieving stress targeted for farm families
  - [www.extension.umn.edu/extreme-weather/droughtfire](http://www.extension.umn.edu/extreme-weather/droughtfire) – University of Minnesota Extension Service sponsors drought and fire information
  - [www.kse.ksu.edu/library/kolfmi/Mf7062.pdf](http://www.kse.ksu.edu/library/kolfmi/Mf7062.pdf) – an index of resources for farmers in distress developed by the Cooperative Extension Service of Kansas State University.
  - The four page brochure includes listing skills and a referral gift guide for families who need more assistance

1 Walker and Walker, 1987 and 2003 USDA Small Farm Digest. Missouri Department of Mental Health

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**Notes: Ron Suing Receives Statewide Volunteer Award**
At the Nebraska Association of County Extension Boards’ (NACEB) annual meeting in February, Ron Suing received the organization’s statewide Volunteer Award. He was nominated by Denise Farley, outgoing member of the Lancaster County Extension Board.

Ron has an outstanding 4-H volunteer for nearly 30 years in a variety of roles including:
- Superintendent of the 4-H Science, Engineering, and Technology areas at the Lancaster County Fair for 26 years,
- Clover County Rocketry instructor for 17 years,
- Leader of the Hills Heroes 4-H club for 6 years,
- Technology areas at the Lancaster County Fair for 26 years,
- Farm Digest. Missouri Department of Mental Health
Good Neighbor Award Nominations Due March 15

The Ak-Sar-Ben Good Neighbor Award began in 1943 and is co-sponsored by the Omaha World-Herald. This award pays special recognition to individuals who perform selfless, neighborly deeds during the past year. The good deeds these individuals do range in small and big, and from the heart, to help those served. Individuals are nominated by others in their community, most often by their neighbors, friends, or coworkers. The recipients are recognized by the Omaha World-Herald and are also awarded a commemorative certificate and pin.

In Lancaster County, these Good Neighbors are honored at the Lancaster County Super Fair Foundation and Awards Dinner in July. For an application, go to www.aksarben.org/programs/good-neighbor or call the Lancaster Event Center at 402-441-6545. Deadline is March 15.

AARP Driver Safety Program, April 3

This course will be presented in Lincoln as a one 4-hour session on Wednesday, April 3, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road. A certified AARP instructor will teach the course. Cost is $12 for AARP members and $14 for non-members payable at the door. To register for class, call 402-441-7180. AARP members must bring their membership card with their ID number as well as their driver’s license. Payment by check is required—charge/credit cards are not accepted, nor is cash.

Pioneer Farm Award Nominations Due May 1

The Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben Foundation’s Pioneer Farm Family Award honors farm families in Nebraska whose land has been owned by the same family for 100 years or more. Each honoree receives an engraved plaque and a heritage deed. The recipients are recognized by the Omaha World-Herald and are also awarded a commemorative certificate and pin.

In Lancaster County, these Good Neighbors are honored at the Lancaster County Super Fair Foundation and Awards Dinner in July. For an application, go to www.aksarben.org/programs/good-neighbor or call the Lancaster Event Center at 402-441-6545. Deadline is May 1.

The Nebraska Library Commission’s Talking Book and Braille Service records are intended for individuals with a visual or physical condition or a reading disability which limits use of regular print. For more information, call 402-471-4038 or 800-742-7691.

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Nebraska 4-H’ers Earn Back-to-Back National Champions at Horse Nationals!

In January, more than 900 youth from 30 states, along with Alberta, Canada, traveled to Denver, Colo. to take part in the 4-H-FFA Western National Roundup. 15 Nebraska 4-H youth from Lancaster and Douglas/Sarpy Counties attended the 2012 4-H Horse Classic portion of the Roundup. Competitions in the Western National 4-H Horse Classic included hippology, horse bowl, public speaking and individual and team demonstration. Each team and individual had to first win the state competition to qualify for nationals. Team Nebraska (consisting of Lancaster and Douglas/Sarpy 4-H’ers) earned High Overall State Award 1st place — National Champions! This is the second year in a row 4-H youth from Lancaster and Douglas/Sarpy Counties earned High Overall State Award 1st place! The High Overall State Award is given to the state with the overall highest score based on placings in the five different competitions. Top five teams in the nation were, in order of placing: Nebraska, Missouri, Colorado, Arizona, and Texas.

The Hippology team of Ellia Dearmont, Megan Luedtke, Kate Rawlinson, and Hannah Ronnau (coached by Kendra Ronnau) earned Overall High Team — National Champions! Hippology means the study of horses. The competition included four phases: examination (written test and slide identification), stations, judging, and team problems. Hippology Overall Individuals included Megan Luedtke placing 1st, Hannah Ronnau placing 2nd, and Ellia Dearmont and Kate Rawlinson tying for 4th place.

The Horse Judging Team of Ashley Holm, Sierra Nelson, and Bailee Sobotka (coached by Roger Bell) earned 4th High Team Overall. (Vanessa Butterfield, also on the team, was unexpectedly unable to attend nationals.) Horse Judging High Overall Individuals included Bailee Sobotka placing 2nd.

The Douglas/Sarpy Horse Bowl team of Courtney Everhart, Megan Klug, Cheyenne Overman, and Heidi Wesly (coached by Shari Parys) placed 6th; and Taylor Barnes placed High Individual in the Horse Public Speaking Contest.

Teen Council 4-H’ers Practice Leadership at Lock-In

In January, 25 4-H Teen Council members organized and led the overnight 4-H Lock-In for 65 4th and 5th graders. This year, teens chose the theme, “Super Heroes” and divided into four groups: games, education, crafts, and snacks. At the Lock-In attendees rotated through each of the four groups, made friends, slept a little, and had lots of fun.

 Teens reported on evaluations that by participating in the Lock-In:
• 91% improved their leadership skills
• 83% learned at least one new leadership skill (examples given include being patient, talking in front of everyone, explaining directions well, listening, and how to “take charge”)
• 87% feel more comfortable being in a leadership role

Asked what benefits do they receive by being a Teen Council member at the Lock-In, teens said:
• leadership growth
• having more confidence and being self around strangers
• how to problem solve a situation when there’s still time left but the activities have run dry
• learning how to be a better leader in life
• respect
• learned how to work as part of a team and how to work with younger children
• since I’d like to be a teacher, it gave me an idea of different ways to lead kids
• having fun
• to make real friends
• Teen Council Leader Marilyn Schepers says, “Super Heroes was the theme for the lock-in and the teens proved to be my Super Heroes. The skills they learned for organizing, execution, and accountability for the Lock-In activities were outstanding. I thoroughly enjoy observing these young people develop into responsible adults. They are wonderful role models for the younger participants.”

Cash receipts from farm/marketing contributed more than $17 billion to Nebraska’s economy in 2010. Nebraska’s Top 10 leading commodities:
1) cattle and calves
2) corn
3) soybeans
4) hogs
5) wheat
6) dairy products
7) chicken eggs
8) hay
9) dry beans
10) potatoes

Every dollar in agricultural exports generates $1.35 in economic activities, such as transportation, financing, warehousing and production. Nebraska’s $7.0 billion in agricultural exports translates into $7.0 billion in additional economic activity.

Source: “Nebraska Agriculture Fact Card,” USDA, NASS, Nebraska Field Office