

August 2005

## The Leading Object: August 2005

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## Perspectives

It was a real treat early this month to host members of Agriculture Builders of Nebraska, Inc., (ABN) and representatives of Nebraska's commodity groups at our Agricultural Research and Development Center near Mead.



**John C. Owens**  
NU Vice President and  
Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR

I truly appreciate all those who helped plan the day, which was ABN's summer meeting, and I thank everyone who participated. Hearing members of our IANR community talk with knowledge and enthusiasm about the work we do for Nebraska, as several IANR representatives did that day, always is a pleasure.

It also is a real pleasure to see and hear our stakeholders respond with their own interest in, and enthusiasm for, the work we do.

Having opportunities to visit with IANR stakeholders about the important and exciting work the Institute is doing on behalf of Nebraska always is good. It's even better when, as this day did, the meeting provides opportunities to gain our stakeholders' comments and insights on the work we do and the issues we face.

We value such feedback highly. It helps guide what we do.

We in IANR greatly appreciate and thank all ABN members for their interest in and support of the Institute. We greatly appreciate and thank Nebraska's commodity groups for their support and interest, as well.

A few months ago I had the opportunity to write about the importance and value of commodity groups to Nebraska, and to our work. This month I'd like to focus on ABN, and the importance of ABN members' support for IANR and the University.

Agriculture Builders of Nebraska was incorporated December, 17, 1971, "to bring about an improved and more prosperous Nebraska agriculture." Today continued on page 2

# The Leading Object

*The Morrill Act of 1862 established a Land Grant University in each state where The Leading Object would be instruction in agriculture and related fields.*

August 2005

## IANR Research Advances Smart Chicken

Eating Smart Chicken may not make you smarter, but MBA Poultry in Tecumseh relies on Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources research to promise other advantages.

MBA was the first poultry processor in the United States to chill its dressed chickens with cool air rather than water – a method that research shows reduces the water content and adds flavor. It is only one of two poultry processors currently using the method.

Research has shown that air chilling the chickens reduces cross-contamination with pathogens such as *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*, said Harshavardhan Thippareddi, Assistant Professor in Food Science and Technology. The traditional method of chilling multiple chickens together in water may result in pathogen transfer from one to the others, he said.

In addition, MBA chickens are not fed antibiotics, which other producers use to ward off infection and enhance growth. Research has shown that humans eating poultry containing antibiotic resistant pathogens can contract more severe and longer illnesses due to the pathogens, Thippareddi said.

"It is important we reduce pathogen levels and prevent development of antibiotic-resistance in the pathogens as well," he said.

Mark Haskins, MBA Founder, President, and CEO, said the IANR research aids the company in its marketing.

"Instead of going to the marketplace with assumptions, we're able to go out with actual facts," he said.

Haskins opened MBA Poultry in 1998, patterning it after poultry processes in Europe, where air chilling is common. In



**Mark Haskins, Founder, President, and CEO of MBA Poultry in Tecumseh, shows a package of Smart Chicken.**

1999 MBA received a \$225,000 USDA grant for UNL researchers to study the air-chilling technology.

The research found that forcing chilled air onto the chickens cooled them faster than the dominant practice of submerging them in water for 40 minutes to an hour, resulting in fewer pathogens.

Plus, submerging them results in higher water content when the chickens are sold, Thippareddi said. Other processed chickens may contain as much as 10 percent added water, he said. Smart Chicken contains no added water.

"It makes a difference in the flavor," he said. "It's not diluted. You have the chicken the way it's supposed to be."

Thippareddi travels to MBA several times a month to assist workers with their food safety practices. He helps supply the scientific proof that MBA continued on page 2

Perspectives continued from page 1

the group has a little over 150 members from all across our state.

ABN's mission statement says, "ABN is dedicated to shaping, advancing, and sustaining prominent teaching, research, and outreach programs in all appropriate areas of agriculture and food systems for the benefit of the State of Nebraska."

Their vision is: "To ensure that Nebraska agriculture and food industries have a major and positive role in the economy, natural resources, and quality of life in Nebraska in the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

ABN members understand the importance of agriculture to Nebraska. They are strong supporters of the Institute and the University because they recognize and value the importance of our research, teaching, and extension education program in sustaining and strengthening Nebraska's leading industry.

Their support for IANR is extremely important to us, and we are fortunate to have it.

They are tremendous advocates for IANR and the university, and we greatly appreciate all the times ABN members step forward on our behalf because they value the work we do. They know how important that work is to Nebraska agriculture, and how important agriculture is to our state – and our world.

I, personally, always am grateful for the thoughtful advice I receive from ABN members, and I listen carefully to what they say. I know they have the best interests of the Institute and the agricultural industry at heart. Their knowledge and expertise provide excellent insights and feedback to help us do our jobs even better. It is a privilege and an honor to have their support, and we are grateful for our continuing opportunities to work with them for Nebraska's future.



## Plant Pathologists Honored

The American Phytopathological Society has honored University of Nebraska–Lincoln faculty for their contributions to plant pathology.

James R. Steadman, Plant Pathology Professor, received the International Service Award for his international research, training and outreach.

Associate Professor James R. Alfano received the Syngenta Award for his research accomplishments related to plant genes and bacterial proteins in plant cells.

Thomas (Jack) Morris, Professor and Director of the School of Biological Sciences, received the Ruth Allen Award for applying molecular biology to the study of plant virology.

The awards were presented at the society's annual meeting in Austin, Texas, August 2.

## NCTA to Offer New Associate Degree

A new Associate of Science Degree will be offered to students at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis this fall.

The new degree will be offered in addition to the current Associate of Applied Science Degree offered in four majors – Agriculture Production, Agribusiness, Veterinary Technology, and Horticulture. The new degree is available in the four majors and will require a minimum of 63 credit hours for graduation.

The A.S. degree will allow students to be better prepared for baccalaureate work at a four-year institution and allow for an easy transfer.

"This degree is long overdue and provides our students with the same opportunities all of the two-year colleges

in the state currently offer in terms of a transfer program," said NCTA Interim Dean Jerry Sundquist.

"NCTA's Associate of Science Degree will offer students the uniqueness of a transfer degree rich in agriculture, business, horticulture, and veterinary technology curriculum."

The Applied Science degree focuses on the application of knowledge and skills and usually is not intended for transfer to a four-year institution. The A.S. degree requires more general education courses and focuses on the academic areas of science.

Jill Koslosky, NCTA Admissions Coordinator, said 16 students are expected to enter the new program this fall. That number is expected to grow to 35 or more by 2009.

## IANR Research Advances

**Smart Chicken** (continued from page 1)

needs to make its claims in the marketplace.

Currently, Thippareddi is researching whether Smart Chicken has increased levels of Vitamin E, which could benefit consumers. The vitamin is being fed to the chickens before processing, and Haskins believes absorption into the fat tissue will prove MBA chickens to be a good source of the vitamin.

Smart Chicken packages, sold in 40 states, contain the story about air chilling benefits.

"It's been a big challenge to educate the consumer, but one we have been successful with," Haskins said.

*Need to meet with the*  
**Vice President/Vice Chancellor?**  
Drop-ins each Friday from 3-5 p.m.\*

**John C. Owens**

NU Vice President for  
Agriculture and Natural Resources  
and Harlan Vice Chancellor of IANR

202 Ag Hall • (402) 472-2871

\*Occasionally Dr. Owens will be called away on University business.

Editor - Lori McGinnis • Layout - Anne Moore

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## Messersmith's Path Leads to Agriculture Broadcasting

Rex Messersmith didn't plan on a career in broadcasting when he left his family's ranch near Alliance to come to the College of Agriculture at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL).

But he credits his college education with helping prepare him for a lifetime career informing radio and television audiences about agriculture. He said he would not have gotten to where he is today without it.

"The college experience is something that opens the door for about anything you want to study and do," he said. "It gave me the background for anything I wanted."

When Messersmith graduated in animal science and agronomy in 1952, he returned to work on the family ranch for a year and a half. His four older brothers, who also had studied agriculture in Lincoln, had previously returned to the ranch.

"Even with 10,000 acres it still was a little crowded," he said.

In 1953 his UNL contacts led him to a job in Lincoln as Assistant Extension Editor in charge of radio, television, and newspaper reports. He had no experience in the field and "I didn't even know how to string a tape recorder at the time," he said.

"I never had a radio course in my life. I just did it," he said.

He delivered agriculture news to radio and television stations across the state each week. He also was one of the first moderators on the university's "Backyard Farmer" television show.

In the mid-1950s Messersmith became Farm Director of



Messersmith

WNAX radio in Yankton, South Dakota, where he remained for 17 years.

"It gave me an opportunity to be on the air every day," he said.

During that time Messersmith managed the 1960 World Ploughing Matches in Sioux Falls – an event which drew Richard M. Nixon, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson as guest speakers.

Starting in 1956, he started broadcasting commercial messages for J.C. Robinson Seed Company at Waterloo, Nebraska, and continued for 44 years.

He returned to Nebraska and served as Farm Director for KRVN in Lexington, became Executive Secretary of the Nebraska Livestock Feeders Association in Lincoln, then returned to radio at KNEB in Scottsbluff.

He also was the volunteer voice for the Nebraska State 4-H Beef Championship Show for 20 years.

Messersmith fondly recalls his time in college when he represented the College of Agriculture on the Student Council and was President of the Farmers Fair Board, Vice Chairman of Block and Bridle Club, Vice President of FarmHouse Fraternity, and a member of the Innocents Society. After college he was President of the American National Junior Cattlemen organization.

More recently he has received Service to Agriculture Awards from KRVN, the Grain Sorghum Producers Association, the Nebraska Soybean Association, and Nebraska Cattlemen. He also has been named Farm Broadcaster Emeritus by the National Association of Farm Broadcasters.

– Lori McGinnis

## State Fair Resurrects Bigger and Better 4-H Cyber Fair

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension 4-H Cyber Fair returns to the Nebraska State Fair this year even bigger than before following a two-year absence.

Fair patrons visiting Cyber Fair will have access to technology demonstrations and 50 computers loaned by Gateway, said Patricia Fairchild, 4-H Curriculum Design Specialist. In addition, UNL departments will set up displays using technology as a recruiting tool, she said.

"The State Fair is pleased to have a stronger university presence," she said.

Cyber Fair launched at the fair in 2001 and was held in 2002. Cuts in the fair's budget, however, prevented 4-H from having the event at the 2003 and 2004 fairs. This year, the State Fair decided to use money from new lottery funds to bring back Cyber Fair.

"For the fair it's an attraction you don't



A family visits Cyber Fair at the Nebraska State Fair.

typically see," said Joseph McDermott, Assistant Executive Director of the State Fair.

The State Fair contributed \$28,000 for Cyber Fair and moved it to a larger building. It will be held in the 4,200-square-foot Farmland Building. It had been held in the 2,400-square-foot Morton Building.

Cyber Fair was moved because the Morton Building was already being used and the larger size allows the fair to expand its relationship with the university, McDermott said.

Computers and plasma screens will occupy most of the Farmland Building. The computers will feature Web-based materials and interactive games which promote Nebraska 4-H and uses of technology.

About 1,000 square feet of the Farmland Building will be dedicated to UNL recruitment efforts,

Fairchild said. IANR departments will demonstrate agricultural-related Web sites, CDs, and technology displays.

A total of 31,000 people visited the 2001 and 2002 Cyber Fairs, Fairchild said. The event has been nationally recognized as an innovative, creative, and educational project, she said.

– Lori McGinnis



## Animal Science Awards Given

Three University of Nebraska–Lincoln Department of Animal Science faculty members and an adjunct professor were honored at the recent American Society of Animal Science annual meeting.

Dale Van Vleck, USDA Research Scientist and Professor of Animal Science, was given the Morrison Award, ASAS's premier award. The award is given for research excellence of direct importance to livestock production. To be eligible, the recipient must have made a meritorious scientific contribution or discovery in the field of animal science.

Van Vleck was cited for his numerous scientific publications on a variety of topics, including determining economic value of sexed semen, embryo transfer, and cloning for genetic improvement.

Terry Klopfenstein, Wagner Professor of Animal Science, was given the Distinguished Teacher Award for his work in teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in animal science.

Ivan Rush, Animal Science Professor and Extension Beef Specialist at the Panhandle Research and Extension Center in Scottsbluff, received the Extension Award for outstanding achievements in animal science extension.

Ronald Christenson, USDA Research Scientist at the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center in Clay Center and Adjunct Professor, received the Fellow Award. The award recognizes long-term distinguished service to animal science and the livestock industry.

## Entomologist Identifies Beetle Fossil

The world's largest known scarab beetle fossil has been identified by a UNL entomologist as a new genus and species.

Brett C. Ratcliffe, Professor of Entomology and Curator of insects at the University of Nebraska State Museum, identified the fossil this summer with a geologist from the University of Colorado, Dena Smith.

Smith and a University of California–Berkeley paleontologist found the fossil in north-central Oregon in a 45-million-year-old formation.

Smith was referred to Ratcliffe, who leads an internationally recognized lab that specializes in the taxonomy of scarab beetles. Ratcliffe and Smith named the fossil as *Oryctoantiquus borealis*, a new genus and species.

The specimen is attributable to a group

of scarabs known as rhinoceros beetles, Ratcliffe said.

*Oryctoantiquus*, the genus name, comes from the Greek word "oryktes," which means digger and the Latin "antiquus," meaning old. The species name, *borealis*, means northern in reference to its northerly location in Oregon.

Ratcliffe said the discovery has caused a stir among entomologists who study scarab beetles because the location proves large rhinoceros beetles existed in northwestern North America 38 million years before the Panama land bridge was established 7 million years ago.

Entomologists had not previously known of any large scarabs in North America which hadn't originally come from Central or South America.

## Educators Receive Awards at Meeting

Several University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension Educators were honored at the National Association of County Agricultural Agents annual meeting in Buffalo, New York on July 17-21.

Jim Hruskoci in Grand Island was given the 2005 Distinguished Service Award and also was a state and regional finalist in radio communications.

David Varner in Fremont was the national winner in the Search for Excellence in Precision Agriculture/Remote Sensing category. The award was based on

his presentation on biosolids. Varner also was a state finalist in the publication competition and in the Search for Excellence Award in Crop Production.

Troy Walz in Broken Bow was named the 2005 Agricultural Achievement Award winner from Nebraska.

Larry Howard in West Point was a national finalist in the Search for Excellence in Livestock Production competition.

Gary Zoubek in York was appointed Vice Chair of the NACAA Program Recognition Council.

## Dickey Takes CSREES Position

Elbert Dickey, Dean and Director of University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension, has accepted a part-time appointment as Education Advisor with USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES).



Dickey

Dickey expects the new position will require him to be in Washington, D.C., two weeks of every month. The appointment, to begin this fall, will last up to two years. He will continue his duties as UNL Extension Dean as well.

"I am excited, honored, and feel very good about the opportunity," he said in an announcement to faculty and staff. "I think it is a great reflection on UNL Extension."

Dickey said he plans to maintain some of his normal schedule in Nebraska, although some responsibilities will be assumed by other administrative team members.

Dickey succeeds Michael Tate of Washington State University in the new position.

## Lindgren Receives Society's Award

Dale Lindgren has received the American Penstemon Society's Glenn Viehmeyer Award for developing penstemon hybrids of merit.

Lindgren, Professor and Horticulturist at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln's West Central Research and Extension Center in North Platte, developed new breeds of penstemons that resulted in five new varieties.

The award was presented at the society's annual meeting in June in Bishop, California.

## Crews Honored

The International Textiles and Apparel Association has named Patricia Crews a 2005 Distinguished Scholar.

Crews, a UNL Textiles, Clothing and Design Professor, will make the keynote presentation at ITAA's annual meeting in Washington, D.C., in November.

Crews directs the International Quilt Study Center.