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The NEBLINE, December 1998

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Holiday legends, traditions & fun



The Poinsettia, the most popular potted plant during the holidays, originated in Mexico.



The Christmas tree is the best known holiday plant and is identified with the joy and goodwill of the season.



The Scandinavian celebration of Saint Lucia's Day includes wearing the traditional Saint Lucia's crown.

LaDeane Jha
Extension Educator

Whether celebrating Kwanza, Santa Lucia, Los Posadas, Hanukkah, Christmas, New Year's or Winter Solstice, this time of year is a great time to learn about legends associated with the various holidays, try something new, celebrate family traditions and build family relationships by having fun together.

Did you know that the kissing legend about mistletoe originated in the Scandinavian countries? It is said that the son of Venus was once severely injured by an arrow made of mistletoe. While mourning over her son, Venus' tears formed white berries on the plant. After her son recovered, Venus was so happy she bestowed a kiss on anyone passing under the mistletoe.

The Poinsettia, the most popular potted plant during the holidays, originated in Mexico. A poor Mexican girl brought the weed as a gift to the Christ Child's manger and upon presenting it, the upper leaves of the weed changed to a bright red color and became the beautiful plant we know today.

The origins of Hanukkah, or the Festival of Lights, is a celebration of an event that happened 200 years before the

birth of Christ. A king named Antiochus attempted to have all Jewish persons under his reign follow the Greek religion. After three years of fighting under the leadership of Judah Maccabee, the Greek soldiers were driven away. The Maccabees wanted to rededicate their temple, but were only able to find enough oil for one day. Miraculously, the oil lasted eight days, long enough to make new oil.

An important part of the Hanukkah celebration is the menorah. This is a candle holder with eight candles and a shamash or servant candle. One candle is lit by the shamash for each of the nights of Hanukkah. After the lighting of the candles, people give gifts to one another. A popular food of Hanukkah is potato pancakes, or latkes, cooked in oil in honor of the miracle.

The dreidel game is often played during Hanukkah. This is a top game played with nuts or gold-covered chocolate coins. There are four letters on the top standing for nun, gimel, hay and shin. They give the directions for what to give or take during the game. The letters also stand for "nes gadol hayah sham" or "a great miracle happened there." As a family you might make a dreidel and play the game.

Have any of you participated in Kwanza, the African American holiday created in 1966? It begins on December 26 and lasts through January 1. The name Kwanza comes from Swahili and means first fruits of the harvest.

To prepare for Kwanza, families decorate their homes with Kwanza symbols. They place a mkeka, a straw mat, on the table. Corn (one ear for each child in the family) and other

foods are placed on the mkeka to remember the earth's abundance.

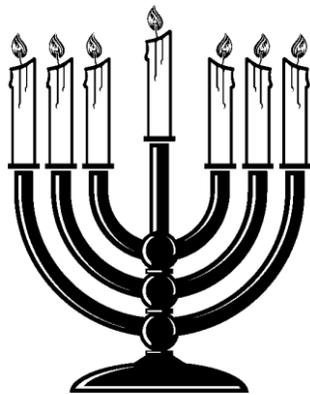
Candles are placed in a kinara, a wooden candle holder. A black candle is placed in the center as a reminder of the richness of African-American skin. Three red candles represent struggles and three green candles represent a prosperous future. A candle is lit for each day of Kwanza. The black candle is lit first, then red and green candles are lit alternately.

There are seven principles of Kwanza, one for each day. They are Umoja or unity, Kujichagulia or self-determination, Ujima or collective work and responsibility, Ujamaa or cooperative economics, Nia or purpose, Kumba or creativity, and Imani or faith.

Long before Christmas, people celebrated the winter solstice. The celebration made the Sun God happy and hurried the coming of spring. Celebrations are held on the eve of the shortest day of the year. A big log, the Yule Log, was burned in a great bonfire and everyone danced and sang around the fire. Families hung mistletoe from the doorways of their homes for good luck. Some people decorated their homes with evergreens.

As you can see, many of the winter solstice traditions were made part of Christmas as more and more people became Christians. The winter solstice is still celebrated by many cultures and is part of the Wiccan religion.

Depending on your country of origin, Christmas legends and traditions may vary considerably. The Christmas tree is probably the best known of our holiday plants and it is closely identified with the joy and goodwill of the season. According to legend, the Christmas tree originated in Germany with Martin Luther. While walking



An important part of the Hanukkah celebration is the menorah.



The kinara is the centerpiece for the celebration of Kwanza.

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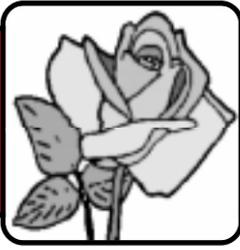
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Horticulture

Keep trees fresh

Many families will erect and decorate the traditional symbol of Christmas this season—the evergreen tree. But, what is the best way to keep the tree fresh and green throughout the holiday season?

Through the years, people have experimented with various “home recipes” to help keep the tree fresh and green. A few of the more novel recipes include the addition of sugar, 7Up, green food coloring and aspirin to the water in the tree stand. Unless your tree has a headache, there is no evidence that additives increase or prolong the freshness of a Christmas tree.

The best advice to keep a fresh tree fresh is to mount it in a stand that holds at least one gallon of water and check the water level at least once daily. Fresh Christmas trees are thirsty. They may drink from two pints to one gallon of water per day. If the water level in the tree stand drops below the cut surface, a seal will form just as it does on cut flowers, and the tree will be unable to absorb water.

A properly watered Christmas tree will stay fresh and green for months. A neglected tree may dry out, drop needles and be a potential fire hazard in a week. (DJ)

Cyclamen care

Cool temperatures and bright light is the prescription for success with cyclamen. Place this flowering plant in an east window, near—but not touching—the glass. A daytime temperature of 60 to 65° Fahrenheit and a nighttime minimum temperature of 50° Fahrenheit should keep it blooming well into next year.



The white, red or pink flowers grow tall with nodding stems above the rosette of heart-shaped, blue-green to dark-green leaves. The foliage is marked with white veins and light green splotches.

Water the cyclamen whenever the soil begins to feel dry and try to keep the soil around the roots moist at all times. Water with lukewarm water and be careful to keep it off the foliage and crown, as the plant is very susceptible to crown rot.

Fertilize the plant with a houseplant fertilizer using one-half the recommended strength every two weeks while it is flowering. When new flowers cease to appear and the leaves turn brown, reduce the frequency and amount of watering and place the pot in a cool spot.

After flowering, let it rest until warm spring weather arrives. Repot in a mixture of equal parts houseplant potting soil and peat moss, with half the crown above the soil. Place in a sunny window or in a protected spot outdoors where it will be shaded during the brightest part of the day. (MJM)

Painting with plants

Landscape design is an art; the art of arranging outdoor spaces to provide the maximum physical and aesthetic enjoyments. The key to good landscape art is simplicity. A well-designed garden is beautiful and functional, yet less costly in money and upkeep time.

Over time, yards and gardens often become overplanted and develop a disconnected appearance. Plants often are bought on impulse, then squeezed into the landscape. Like an ill-arranged room, an overcrowded landscape is cluttered and disorganized.

Thinning out would improve many homesites. Foundation plantings often are prime examples. All too often, old foundation plantings need continual pruning. Foundation plantings originated when houses were set up off the ground, exposing the foundation. Newer home-building techniques eliminate the need for traditional foundation plantings.

On the other hand, over-simplicity in the yard can be monotonous. When properly placed, splashes of color, key accent plants, and garden structures and ornaments make an average landscape friendly and interesting. Nursery personnel can help choose the correct plants for your spaces. (DJ)

Gardening resolutions

Before the successes and failures of the last year’s growing season fade from memory or get pushed aside by the anticipation of another gardening year, why not take a moment to convert lessons learned and good intentions into resolutions for the coming year.

I resolve to:

- make a list of needed plants/seeds before I start browsing through seed catalogs.
- limit the size of vegetable and flower gardens to what I can care for properly.
- plan my vegetable garden carefully and follow the plan closely so I can rotate crops properly and make good use of all available space.
- plant cool season crops early and again in mid to late summer for a fall harvest.
- harvest crops at their peak of quality and maturity. No more giant zucchini or tough beans.
- freeze or can produce as soon as possible after harvest to maintain high quality.
- check plants regularly for

insect problems and do a better job of controlling them.

- if available, try biological or cultural controls first, rather than chemicals to control pest problems.
- mulch earlier to control weeds
- persist in weed control efforts all summer to prevent weeds from going to seed and adding to next year’s problems.
- put tomato cages in place at planting time.
- plant annual flowers earlier this year.
- plant hardy trees, shrubs, perennials and other landscape plants according to a landscape plan, selecting less problem prone plants whenever possible to minimize the need for chemical sprays, pruning and



- other maintenance.
- place landscape prunings, grass clippings and other organic material in a compost pile.
- set up a priority system for lawn and garden resolutions so gardening and landscape maintenance continues to be a pleasant experience rather than an overwhelming list of chores. (MJM)

December/January Garden Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4 Check bird feeders	5
6	7	8	9 Check stored fruits and vegetables for signs of rot	10 Update garden journal	11	12
13	14 Order seed catalogs	15	16 Check landscape plants for snow or wildlife damage	17	18	19
20	21 First day of winter	22	23 Make list of garden supplies needed for next year	24	25	26
27	28	29 Have Christmas tree recycled for mulch	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7 Avoid walking on frozen lawn	8	9
10	11 Review last year's garden journal	12	13 Check stored vegetables for signs of rot	14 Make garden plan	15 Make list of seeds needed	16
17	18 Check landscape plants for snow damage	19	20 Check bird feeders	21	22 Check amaryllis bulbs	23
24	25	26 Check house plants for insects	27 Check plants for rodent, rabbit or deer damage	28	29 Order seeds	30
31						

Many of us need reminders. That is the purpose of this calendar. Check the calendar each month and follow the recommendations if they are necessary in your landscape situation. (MJM)

Pruning vines and groundcovers

Problems with pruning can vary with the different uses of vines. Vines left unpruned for many years become unattractive. They harbor wasps, collect trash and lose their landscape effectiveness. Prune them to prevent such hazards.

Vines usually cover an arbor or wall. Used in these ways, they are easily pruned to give a clean, well-kept appearance for displaying flowers or fruit. Some vines, such as honeysuckle and winter creepers, grow so fast and thick that considerable

pruning may be necessary while other species need little pruning.

Prune most vines during the dormant season from February to April. Prune dead, diseased or damaged vines back to healthy wood. Cut interfering branches of woody vines, such as trumpet creepers, back below the point of interference or at the junction with the main stem. Prune out the top one-third of overgrown or elongated stems. Prune old mature stems that are declining in vigor by one-third or more.

Pruning groundcover

usually is necessary only to remove unhealthy plant parts or to promote spreading. Vigorous groundcovers include honeysuckle, winter creeper, Vinca minor, and English ivy. These groundcovers may be mowed with a rotary lawn mower or cut back to 4 to 6 inches in height every few years to keep them vigorous, neat, and well-manicured. The best time to do this is in the early spring after danger of frost has passed, but before the new growth starts. (DJ)

Combing—a non-toxic method that can eliminate head lice

Last month we discussed head lice control, including inspection, insecticidal shampoos and products. While insecticidal shampoos are safe when used as directed, a few sensitive individuals may have minor allergic reactions to them.



For persons concerned about the safety of insecticidal shampoos, head lice can be eliminated completely by using a special metal comb to remove both lice and nits. This method may also be necessary if the insecticidal treatments don't seem to be working. Combing is the only method that eliminates the nits. Some products claim to dissolve the glue that securely holds the nits to the hair shaft, but they do not work. Neither does vinegar.

The method of combing is time consuming and tedious, but you may find your child actually enjoys the attention he/she receives from you.

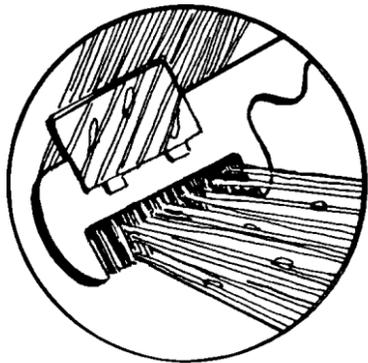
1. Getting ready. First, purchase a special metal lice comb from a pharmacy or department store. The tines of this specially designed comb are narrower than the eggs. Do not use plastic combs provided with pesticidal shampoos; the flexibility of plastic can allow nits and lice to pass through. If you cannot find a metal lice comb, ask your pharmacist to order one. Other items that you will need are: a box of facial tissue, a large towel to place around the child's shoulders during combing and a wide bowl of water with a squirt of dishwashing liquid added. If the

hair is long, bobby pins or hair clips may be needed. You should find two comfortable chairs—one for the child and one for the you. It also might be a good idea to have something fun to entertain the child that does not require much physical activity. Consider reading, modeling clay, coloring or videos. It is best to comb during the daylight, near a window.

2. Prepare the hair. Cover the child's hair with salad oil (any kind will do). Oil prevents the hair from tangling, drying out and makes it easy to use the lice comb. The oil may smother some of the lice, but you cannot count on it to kill all the lice. After you finish combing, you will need to shampoo the hair at least twice with regular shampoo to remove the oil.

3. Combing. Seat the child so her/his head is just below eye level. Comb the hair with a regular large toothed comb to remove snarls.

—Separate a mass of hair that is slightly wider than the width of your lice comb and about 1/2 to 3/4 inch in the other direction. It is important to separate the hair into small sections so you can more easily see lice and nits.



—Hold the mass of hair with one hand. With the other hand, hold the lice comb in a slanting position with the curved side of the teeth toward the head.

—Insert the comb into the hair as close to the scalp as possible since the eggs are first

laid within 1/2 inch of the scalp. Pull the comb slowly through the hair several times.

—Comb one section at a time and check each section to make sure it is clean, then pin it out of the way, curling it flat against the head. Whenever you comb out nits or live lice, dunk the comb in the soapy water. Make sure the lice and nits are off the comb before you use it on the hair again. Frequently remove the hair and other debris from the comb with a tissue. When the tissue becomes soiled, place it in the bowl of soapy water. When the bowl is full, flush its contents down the toilet and refill the bowl with soapy water.

—When all the hair has been combed, shampoo the hair twice to remove the oil. Once the hair is completely dry, again check the entire head for stray nits and remove those hairs individually with a pair of small, pointed scissors.

4. Cleaning Up. Soak the lice comb in hot ammonia water, prepared by adding one teaspoon of ammonia to two cups of hot water for 15 minutes. Metal combs can also be boiled in plain water for 15 minutes. A comb cleaned either way can be re-used by many different children. Scrub the teeth of the comb with a nail brush or an old toothbrush to remove debris. Remove dirt lodged between the teeth of the comb with dental floss or a small stiff brush. Boil the towels for 10 minutes or wash them in a washing machine in hot, soapy water and followed with a hot dryer.

Head lice control also includes washing bedding and drying it in a hot dryer to prevent re-infestation.

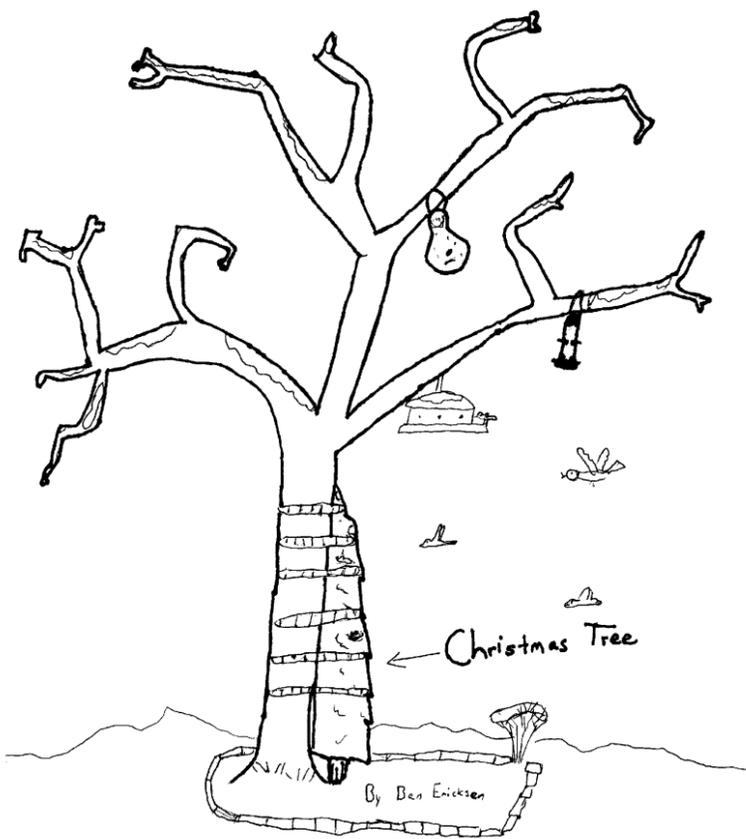
Source: For a fact sheet that includes this and last month's article, call the Lancaster County Extension Office and ask for fact sheet 018-98, "Controlling Head Lice Safely." (BPO)

It's a hit—20,000 hits!

The Lancaster County Cooperative Extension Environment and Natural Resources website has had over 20,000 hits since May 1998. Internet users can find information on water quality, soils, recycling and other environmental programs. Users can also find helpful fact sheets on household pests like spiders, house dust mites, centipedes and more. Wildlife topics include birds, squirrels, rabbits and snakes. (SC)

Join the crowd and give us a hit at the UNL Cooperative Extension in Lancaster County Environment and Natural Resources Website: <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/ianr/lanco/enviro/>

Environmental Focus



Our Christmas tree

Ben Ericksen
(Age 10)

After Christmas, we take all the decorations and tinsel off our Christmas tree. We take the tree outside and tie it to the trunk of a big tree outside our home. The big tree has all our bird feeders in it so lots of birds hang out there. We use a rope to tie the Christmas tree to the big tree. We hang some seeds and suet in the tree.

The Christmas tree helps keep the little birds safe from the hawks. It also keeps the wind and snow off the birds. The birds hide in the tree to get away from the mangy, black cat that hides under mom's car.

In springtime, we take the Christmas tree to grandpa's farm. Grandpa puts the tree in a pile in the woods with other branches and old Christmas trees. The birds hide in the pile and build their nests there. Rabbits like to live in the pile.

The lesson is: Once you're finished enjoying your Christmas tree, there are lots of other good uses for it. (SC)

A mouse in the house

- Mice are **excellent climbers** and can run up almost any roughened wall without breaking stride.
 - Mice, **although preferring not to swim, can do so.** More than once a live mouse flushed down a toilet has resurfaced.
 - **Mice can jump** a vertical distance of 12 inches from the floor onto an elevated flat surface.
 - Mice are **capable of jumping from a height of 8 feet** to the floor without injury.
 - Mice can survive and **thrive in cold storage** at 14 degrees F.
 - Mice are capable of squeezing through an **opening slightly larger than 1/4 inch** in diameter (about the size of a dime).
 - Mice can **run horizontally** along pipes, wires and ropes.
 - In six months, one pair of mice **can eat about 4 pounds of food** and in that same period produce some 18,000 fecal droppings.
 - Mice feeding on colored crayons will **produce droppings based on the color** of the crayon they feed on.
 - Mice **chew on electrical wires** and thereby are capable of starting fires.
 - Mice are not blind, but **have poor vision** and cannot clearly see beyond 6 inches. At 45 feet, they respond to outlines, not details.
- Source:* Handbook of Pest Control, Mallis, 7th Edition (SC)

Use and care of home humidifiers

Humidifiers are commonly used in homes to relieve the physical discomforts of dry nose, throat, lips and skin. The moisture they add to dry air also helps alleviate common nuisances brought on by winter heating, such as static electricity, peeling wallpaper and cracks in paint and furniture.

Some federal studies have shown that ultrasonic and impeller (or "cool mist") humidifiers can disperse materials, such as micro-

A "must read" book

A Civil Action by Janathan Harr

Last November, I was fortunate to listen to a commentary by Attorney Jan Schlichtmann about his experiences with the tragic absurdity of working with contenders of unequal power in a legal system that is geared to resolving cases that are neither seeking the truth nor justice.

A Civil Action, a true story, involves the struggles of a small group of citizens living in Woburn, Massachusetts vs. Riley Tannery, a division of Beatrice Foods Company and W. R. Grace Company. It concerns a cluster of childhood leukemia victims who lived in the neighborhood where the city water wells have been poisoned by industrial chemicals. Two of the nation's largest corporations, each with a plant near the wells, stand accused of the contamination of these wells. Jan Schlichtmann, attorney-at-law becomes involved.

The case turns into an epic struggle that takes nine years of Jan's life. At the heart of the legal system, he is confronted by powerful and well-connected interests who would do anything to win. In the end, he sacrifices everything—home, friends, and reputation—not for money, but for what he believes to be the truth.

A Civil Action is being made into a movie with John Travolta playing the part of Jan. It should be on the screen sometime in December. But I encourage you to read the book. It comes in paperback and/or you may check it out from any Lincoln library. You'll be glad that you read this interesting, true story. (ALH)



Farm Views

Private applicators training

Producers of agricultural products needing initial certification or recertification of their Private Applicators Certificate may complete this requirement by attending a 3 hour classroom training session to be held at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. The cost of the training is \$10 for each person completing the training. Participants may attend any one of the below scheduled sessions:

- Dec 18 from 1-4 p.m.
- Feb 8 from 9-12 a.m. or 1-4 p.m.
- Feb 10 from 7-10 p.m.
- Feb 18 from 7-10 p.m. (WS)

Crop Protection Clinic

The 1999 Crop Protection Clinic will be held **Tuesday, January 5**, so be sure to mark your calendar. This annual clinic is designed to provide the latest information on plant diseases, weeds and insects that pose specific problems for agricultural producers in this region of Nebraska. Integrated Pest Management is the approach taken by all presenters in addressing the current issues in crop production. Registration opens at 8 a.m. and presentations conclude at 4 p.m. Commercial applicators who need recertification in the agricultural plant division may complete this requirement at this clinic.

The registration fee of \$20 includes the cost of the program proceedings, refreshments and the noon meal. Advanced registration is not mandatory but helps determine a meal count. Detailed programs and registration forms are available at any Farm Service Center or COOP in Lancaster County or by contacting Lancaster County Cooperative Extension, 441-7180. (WS)

The Power of a PTO

Do you know someone who has been hurt by a power takeoff? Just about every farmer does. Like many farm machines, a power takeoff, or "PTO," can be a useful tool—or a lethal one. Used in the right way, a PTO can safely power your augers, mowers, choppers, and other implements. Used in the wrong way, a PTO can rip off your arm, crush your skull, or sever your spine. In Nebraska, PTO's on farm tractors have killed several people and maimed hundreds of others over the years. Don't endanger yourself or your loved ones by underestimating the power of a PTO. The PTO can spin around 1,000 times per minute. That's 16 times per second! Toss a six-foot rope over a spinning PTO, it'll wrap around the shaft in less than a second. Now, imagine that rope is your shoelace—or your sleeve. How fast could you pull free? You'd need nearly a full second just to realize you've been caught.

Electrical wires are insulated. Manure pits are covered. It's just common sense to cover up something that's a farm hazard. It's also state law that any new or used tractor sold by a dealer must have a PTO master shield. The master shield covers the front U-joint and connector, a frequent site of entanglement. On newer PTOs, a drive line shield covers and spins independently of the drive line shaft. Other PTO shields that attach directly to the implement are available. Most of them cost less than \$200 (and even the most expensive shield costs less than a day in the hospital). Sometimes shields are offered free; check with your equipment dealer.

Source: Adapted from "Safe Operation of Agricultural Equipment" by T.A. Silletto, D.O. Student Manual, Hobar Publications, St. Paul, 1988. (WS)

Landlords need to reduce cash crop rental rates for '99

With crop commodity prices at 20-year lows and having little chance of improvement with the fall's bumper crop, agricultural landlords need to consider lowering cash rental rates for 1999.

Tenants who are cash renting at competitive rates this year are re-thinking what they can pay in 1999. Projected earnings may not justify those same rates next year.

Landlords who are uninformed may not be planning to decrease

continued on page 11

Deadline near for requesting free inspection in compliance with Livestock Waste Management Act

What is LB1209 and does it affect you?

Nebraska has had legislation in place for a number of years which authorizes the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, under Title 130, to administer the state's livestock waste control regulations. The Livestock Waste Management Act (LB1209), passed by the 1998 legislative session and signed into law on April 15 by Governor Nelson, affects various aspects of the way DEQ administers and enforces provisions of Title 130.

Under LB1209, "livestock operations" are defined. All operations meeting the criteria to be classed as a livestock operation (see definition below) must request an inspection by the DEQ. The purpose of the inspection is to determine the potential for livestock wastes from that operation to pollute surface water or groundwater. Those found to have potential to pollute water resources will be required to obtain a livestock waste control facility permit.

Many of the state's livestock feeding operations are already operating under a livestock waste control permit. This legislation clarifies which operations need a permit, sets deadlines and specifies fines for those found in violation. (Violation of any requirement of LB1209, including failure to request an inspection by January 1, 2000, is subject to a fine of up to \$10,000 per day of violation.)

Who needs to request a DEQ inspection?

Under LB1209, any "livestock operation," regardless of size, needs to request an inspection from the DEQ to determine if a livestock waste facility is required. Forms to request an inspection can be obtained at the Extension office or from DEQ.

What defines a "livestock operation" under LB1209?

A "livestock operation" is defined as the feeding or holding of beef cattle, dairy cattle, horses, swine, sheep, poultry or other livestock in buildings, lots or pens which normally are not used for the growing of crops or vegetation. If you raise livestock, you need to answer the following two questions to determine whether you need to request an inspection. First, are the livestock located in buildings, lots, or pens? (Calving

Under LB1209, any "livestock operation," regardless of size, needs to request an inspection from the DEQ to determine if a livestock waste facility is required.

facilities are excluded). If the answer is "no," you don't need to request a DEQ inspection. If the answer is "yes" you need to answer the next question.

The second question, "is the land where the animals are roaming normally used for growing crops or vegetation (e.g. grass or annual crops)?" If the answer is "yes" (e.g. grazing cattle in corn stalks or cattle on pasture), then no inspection is needed. If the answer is "no" you need an inspection. Cattle feedlots and swine operations likely will need inspections (unless you are growing "free range" swine on pasture or creep feeding calves on pasture).

What does it cost to have an inspection done?

If the request for an inspection is made before January 1, 1999 there is no fee

for an inspection. After January 1, 1999, an inspection fee will be charged. The fee varies according to the size of the operation, \$50 for small operations and \$500 for large operations. Call the DEQ (402-471-2186) to ask about the fee schedule.

If the inspection determines that a waste control facility permit is required, what additional steps need to be taken?

A permit application must be sent to the DEQ, along with a permit fee which varies with the size of the operation. The permit process is too complex to cover completely in this article, but a few major items include: NRD's will be given notice of each application filed with DEQ and will have 20 days to comment on any condition they believe relevant to DEQ's evaluation of the application. There are "bad actor" provisions which can be used to deny granting of a permit to individuals with poor records in complying with environmental regulations in Nebraska or other states. County government will be notified and given an opportunity to comment on the application. Public notice will also be given on large (Class III and Class IV) operations presumably so they can make their concerns known to appropriate authorities.

Permit requirements include the design (by a licensed professional engineer, in most cases) of the actual livestock waste control facility, initial and annual inspection by appropriate agencies, and the development of a plan, approved by the NRD, for the disposal of the livestock waste which may include testing the soil for phosphorus content before application of waste and ground water monitoring in some cases. (TD)

Beef home study course begins fifth year

Due to the success of the NU Beef Basics home study courses, they will again be offered across Nebraska. They are designed to assist beef producers in making management decisions for improving profitability. Most beef producers, veterinarians and agribusiness people find it difficult to be away from their business for educational programs. These courses allow the participants to sharpen their beef cattle management knowledge without making a large time commitment away from their family and business.

These courses were developed and sponsored by the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension and the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. There are four beef

basics courses that each specialize in a particular area of beef cattle production. For that reason, participants may enroll in any or all of the following courses:

Beef Basics I. Provides lessons on cow nutrition, ration formulations, and forage analysis.

Discussion of forage crops and alfalfa production leads to information on grazing strategies and management. A lesson on feed ration economics will also be included.

Beef Basics II. Includes lessons on anatomy and physiology, replacement heifer development, reducing calving difficulty and calf losses, and calving management. A lesson covering basic genetics will explore the

combination of genetics and environment. Another lesson investigates crossbreeding programs and breed selection which will allow producers to tailor a crossbreeding program to fit their operation. Breeding management, herd health management, and managing the herd to fit producer resources rounds out the course.

Beef Basics III. Focuses on management strategies, nutritional considerations, ration formulation, implant programs and health programs for the growing calf. Other lessons will emphasize the importance of all phases of weaning management, wintering systems and summer grazing management.

Beef Basics IV. Entitled, "Beef as a Business," this course

continued on page 11

Developing your marketing plan

State-of-the-art marketing today means being sensitive and responsive to customer needs and providing the products and services customers want; not just presenting what we have, and hoping they will buy. The traditional viewpoint in agriculture has been "I am a wheat farmer. How can I get people to eat more of my wheat?" This tendency to focus on our product as the reason we exist is fatal in today's marketplace. We must recognize that we are in business to serve our customers' needs, and let the customers dictate the type and form of our products.

The kind of marketing that will make your small-scale farming operation profitable is niche marketing, finding a unique aspect or type of buyer in the market, and focusing your efforts on reaching that niche. Simply stated, this means you will want to differentiate your product, or set it apart from those of your competitors and target it to a select group of customers with unique needs

Market Research

The first thing you will need is information, professionals call it marketing research. You need to know who your customers are, where they live, what they buy, how they buy, when they buy, and who influences their purchases. Additionally, a marketing oriented producer wants to know about customer needs that are not being satisfied.

Another form of practical market research that any individual can do inexpensively is simply to ask your customers what they want. This can be done in the form of a personal interview, a telephone call, or a simple questionnaire. If you own a roadside stand, ask those people who purchase from you or shop at your stand, why they stopped, what are they looking for, and what else can you do to satisfy and meet their needs.

Planning

Knowing your customers' needs and having a written program to consistently satisfy those needs, is vital. Developing a marketing plan can be a simple project that can yield tremendous, long-term benefits. Having a usable marketing plan allows

one to react to changes more effectively when they occur, but most importantly, the purpose of planning for an agricultural marketer is to maximize limited resources.

Finding your niche in the market means finding customers who have needs that you can satisfy better than anyone else. It means differentiating your product to a specific segment of customers, and building a relationship with those customers so they perceive you to be specially qualified or equipped to satisfy their unique demands. If there has been one significant development that has characterized the "cutting edge" of marketing today, "niche" marketing is it.

Product Strategy

The single most important strategy for a successful small farm marketing program today is to produce the highest quality

The kind of marketing that will make your small-scale farming operation profitable is niche marketing, finding a unique aspect or type of buyer in the market, and focusing your efforts on reaching that niche.

product that one is able to produce. Remember that a clever ad, shiny package, a sophisticated brand name or a persistent salesperson, will never compensate for a flawed product or a product that doesn't satisfy the needs that it is alleged to satisfy. The oldest and least expensive form of promotion is "word of mouth," and that form of customer goodwill and support cannot be bought with flashy advertising.

Pricing

No doubt most of us obediently learned, in a basic agriculture class in high school or college, that "farmers are price takers, not price makers." And, although that has been true for the most part, it has tended to create an attitude amongst

agricultural producers that there is nothing that can be done about their inability to control their fate.

By knowing your costs of production and allowing yourself a fair percentage return on your investment, you should be able to develop a price for your product that allows you to stay in business. If the customer will not buy at your calculated price then other production and marketing considerations will need to be considered.

Place

Out of financial necessity, the battle cry of the innovative producer today is, GET CLOSE TO YOUR FINAL CONSUMER! If you are a small farmer, this can be approached through roadside stands, farmer's markets or developing relationships with local markets and restaurants.

Promotion

The last major category of marketing strategy is that of promotion or marketing communications. It's the activity that a marketer does to communicate to the marketplace or customers that he or she has the features and benefits to satisfy the needs of potential customers. The activities available to one in this area include advertising, personal selling, public relations and publicity, along with special promotional incentives.

When making decisions on how and if to advertise, it is important to ask yourself a simple question. What specific media does my target market read, watch, or listen to? Precisely reaching the largest number of people in your target market for your dollar is very important, and the method of mass communications you select should be governed by this principle. Because of this, direct mail offers an effective way of communicating your message.

Advertising has its place, but don't be mesmerized into neglecting the oldest, and by far the most effective, form of marketing communications, the personal sales call. People make buying decisions, and nothing beats the power of a person-to-person relationship between buyer and seller. (DJ)

moisture loss is the second most important post-harvest factor. Most herbs respond favorably with very high humidity (greater than 95%). Some herbs can be held successfully in water (basil, mints, tarragon), but water loss in most can best be controlled by packaging and maintaining high humidity. Lowering the holding temperature to the recommended levels also greatly reduces water loss.

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Acreage Insights



Chain saw operation

The safest and least tiring way of sawing is to cut with the backward-running, or lower part of the saw bar close to the bumper. Sawing with the forward-running or upper part makes it difficult to control the saw and increases the risk of kickback. Do not try to overreach while using a chain saw. It can cause a loss of grip on the chain saw. Never cut over your head or cut with the nose of the saw. Avoid forcing the saw when cutting. Be alert for wire and nails in the wood.

Carry the saw at your side with one hand, holding the cutting bar to the rear and the muffler side away from your body. Stop the engine to carry the saw in a rough, bushy area or if the distance between cuts is more than 30 feet.

Chain saw kickback can cause serious injuries. When cutting, the chain is traveling about 65 feet per second. If kickback occurs, it will be over within 2/10 of a second. This does not give the operator time to react.

Kickback often occurs when cutting with the nose of the saw. During this process, only one or two cutters engage in the wood at a given time and the chain will jam. This will cause the saw to kickback rapidly, backward and upward.

Prevent kickback injuries by:

- holding the saw firmly with both hands;
- keeping the thumb around the top handle;

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Information Center

1-800-832-5441 or 441-7188 (Lincoln area)

To listen to a NUFACTS message, call the number above on a touch-tone phone, then enter a three-digit number listed below. Call 441-7180 to receive a brochure with all the message topics.

ACREAGE

- 448 Quality Soybean Seed
- 451 Protecting Stored Grain
- 637 Before You Invest
- 638 Investment Considerations
- 647 Investment Tips for Beginners

...and more than 400 additional topics.



NUFACTS (audio) Information Center

NUFACTS audio message center offers fast, convenient information. In the Lincoln area call 441-7188; for the rest of Nebraska call 1-800-832-5441. When directed, enter the 3-digit number of the message you wish to hear.



Acreage & Small Farm Insights Web Site

Visit our Internet web site at: <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/ianr/dodge/acreage/index.htm> to learn about Extension programs, publications and links to other acreage and small farm information.



"Part-time Farming" video

"Part-time Farming" will help develop your country environment and improve your quality of life. Just one hour of "Part-time Farming" provides tips that will save you costly mistakes and precious time. Call 402-441-7180 to order your copy.

Commercial handling of fresh culinary herbs

All the post-harvest principles that apply to leafy green tissues apply to the handling of fresh herbs. Temperature is the single most important factor in maintaining quality after harvest. Optimum post-harvest temperature for fresh thyme, oregano, rosemary, mints, sage, parsley, cilantro, savory, marjoram, dill, and tarragon is 32 degrees F. A shelf life of three to four weeks can be achieved at this tempera-

ture. With a temperature of 41 degrees F, a minimum shelf life of two to three weeks can be expected. If herbs are harvested early in the morning, the need for cooling is minimized. If harvested later, the appropriate cooling method depends on the type of herb. Most respond favorably to room and forced air cooling. Herbs have also been successfully vacuum-cooled.

Prevention of excess

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Food & Fitness



Enjoy Nebraska Foods!

Alice Henneman, RD, LMNT, Extension Educator

Create a holiday roast tradition!

The best of family traditions include loved ones home for the holidays and each get together is filled with the delicious smells of great food coming from the kitchen. For dinner, make juicy, succulent roast beef one of your family traditions.

Preparing a prime rib for your holiday dinner sounds like a big job, but it couldn't be easier. Follow these steps to making a savory prime rib from Ann Marie Bosshamer, Nebraska Beef Council.

1) Select your prime rib. Ask your meat department manager to help you find the perfect roast. A prime rib is named on the meat label as a "Rib Eye Roast."

2) All you need is a shallow roasting pan, a roasting rack and a meat thermometer.

3) Heat oven to 350 degrees F. Place roast, fat side up, on the roasting rack in the shallow pan. Insert meat thermometer into the thickest part, not touching bone or fat.

4) Season beef as desired and place in the oven. Do not add water.

5) Remove roast when thermometer reaches 5 to 10 degrees below final desired doneness, 135 to 140 degrees F for medium-rare or 150 to 155 degrees for medium. (Final temperature after standing 15 minutes following removal from oven should be 145 degrees F for medium rare and 160 degrees F for medium.)

6) Tent roast loosely with aluminum foil and let stand for 15 minutes. The roast temperature will continue to rise and you can carve across the grain. Enjoy!

The Beef Council has a "Savor the Season...with Beef" holiday recipe brochure. For your free copy, call the Beef Council at 1-800-421-5326. Here's a recipe from Ann Marie that you might enjoy.

Classic Beef Rib Eye Roast

Makes 8 to 12 servings

Total preparation and cooking time: 2-3/4 to 3-1/2 hours

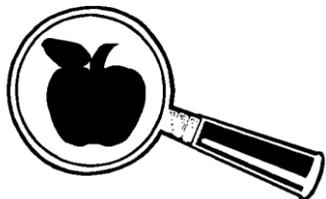
6 to 8 pounds well-trimmed beef rib eye roast

Seasoning:

- 6 large cloves garlic, crushed
- 1-1/2 teaspoons dried thyme leaves
- 1 teaspoon cracked black pepper

Heat oven to 350 degrees F. Combine seasoning ingredients. Press evenly into surface of beef roast. Prepare roast as described above. Roast approximately 2-1/4 to 2-1/2 hours for medium rare; 2-3/4 to 3 hours for medium. (Follow temperature guidelines given earlier.) (AH)

Focus on Food



Alice Henneman, RD, LMNT, Extension Educator

Q: Does pumpkin pie need to be stored in the refrigerator?

A: A pumpkin pie is a form of custard and like custard must be kept in the refrigerator. Foods which contain eggs, milk, and a high moisture content—like custard and pumpkin pie—must be kept refrigerated. Bacteria love to grow in these types of foods.

Q: What temperature should I keep my refrigerator and freezer?

A: Cold temperatures help keep harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying. A refrigerator temperature of 40 degrees F or lower will slow bacterial growth.

Keep your freezer at 0 degrees F or lower. Freezing will stop most bacterial growth so frozen foods keep longer than those at refrigeration temperature. Freezing does not kill bacteria, so it's still important to handle food safely.

Keep an appliance thermometer in your refrigerator and freezer to be sure they stay at the recommended temperatures. You can buy a thermometer at a discount, hardware or grocery store. (AH)

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1998 Nutrition Education Program—adult program impact in Lancaster County

The Lancaster County NEP staff taught 4,656 nutrition education lessons to 1,481 adults who care for 5,754 family members. This is a 28% increase from the number of families enrolled in 1997.

IMPACT

NEP graduates have changed targeted behaviors as measured by the National EFNEP Evaluation Reporting System. The following behavioral changes of program graduates indicate impact.

Behavioral Changes	1998 NEP Lancaster County (EFNEP/FSNEP)	National Data as reported by USDA EFNEP, July '98
Percent of graduates who showed positive changes in program's educational goals		
Food Resource Management: Plan meals, use grocery lists, do not run out of food or cut children's meals because of not enough money.	90%	84%
Nutrition Practices: Make healthy food choices, prepare food without adding salt, read nutrition labels for fat and sodium, feed children breakfast.	94%	89%
Food Safety: Thawing and storing food properly	80%	67%

Nutrition Education Program
for Limited Resource Families
Maureen Burson
Extension Educator

Most important, are the positive comments which participants provide.

"The grocery store tour helped us understand how to shop for food in America." —Even Start Literacy Program Participants.

"We used to leave raw meat and leftovers on the counter before we learned about food safety." —Residents of St. Monica's.

"The recipes you shared last month were fantastic. They were simple so I could have my children help prepare the meal." —WIC participant.

The Nutrition Education Program (NEP) includes the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), and the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program (FSNEP). Additional funding is provided by Lincoln Housing Authority and University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension in Lancaster County. (MB)

How can you tell when food is "done"?

Alice Henneman
Extension Educator

According to a survey published in *USA Today*, "knowing when a dish is done" is one of the top cooking concerns. Around 36% of the population have trouble with this aspect of cooking.

Here are some tips to help assure that food is done, but not overcooked. In many cases, "doneness" helps ensure safety as well as quality. For greatest safety, use a thermometer to test temperatures.

Cakes. Insert a clean toothpick near the center. It

should come out perfectly clean. The cake will be lightly browned and starting to shrink from the sides of the pan. If pressed with a finger, the cake should spring back into shape. Very rich cakes and chocolate cakes may dent slightly and still be done.

Cookies. In general, cookies are baked until they are *lightly* browned. Help assure uniform doneness by baking cookies of similar shape and size on the cookie sheet.

Custards. Bake until a metal knife inserted near the center comes out clean. For

softer top-of-stove custards and sauces, heat until they reach 160 degrees F. At this temperature, the mixture should coat a metal spoon.

Eggs. Cook eggs thoroughly so both yolks and whites are firm, not runny.

Fish. Fish flakes with a fork when it is done.

Meat. Cook ground meats (beef, veal, lamb and pork) to an internal temperature of 160 degrees F (cook ground poultry to 165 degrees F). Steaks and roasts cooked to an internal temperature of 145 degrees F are medium rare, 160 degrees F are

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- 331 How Long Should You Keep Commercially Canned Foods?
- 362 Cutting the Fat in Favorite Recipes
- 370 Walking for Weight Control and many more...

Nutrition and Food Safety Web Site

Visit our internet web site at: <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/ianr/lanco/family/safety.htm>

FREE monthly FoodTalk e-mail newsletter

To be added to the mailing list, e-mail Alice Henneman at ahenneman1@unl.edu

Diabetes Study Course

Call Alice Henneman (441-7180) for more information.

Jean's Journal

Jean Wheelock
FCE Council Chair



Where does time go? It speeds by so quickly that it's hard to believe that the holiday season is nearly here.

Our achievement night was a BIG success. A huge "thank you" to Clarice Steffens and her club, the Salt Creek Circle, and her committee who did a super job with the program, decora-

tions and desserts. Each club mentioned what their club is doing as a community project. We may be a small group, but the variety of ideas presented was tremendous. We can make a difference!! Some projects included money/items for the center for abused women; Lincoln Regional Center; Friendship Home; Cedars Home; food bank; Headstart; Project Linus; Lancaster Manor; items such as crayons and books for LAP; and lap robes. Our

community is made better by having people such as our FCE members. With the holiday season fast approaching, lets all remember that many of us have plenty of things rather than buying surplus "things", give to those who truly need.

I hope everyone can be blessed with health, happiness and good friends throughout the new year.

Happy Holidays!

Family Living



January FCE leader training

The January FCE and community leader training lesson, *Decision Making, How To Get Involved*, is scheduled for Thursday, January 7, 1 or 7 p.m. LaDeane Jha, extension educator will present the lesson. This lesson will help participants learn how to actively become involved in the decisions being made within their neighborhood, civic organizations or community(ies).

Anyone interested may attend. Non-FCE members should call 441-7180, so packets can be prepared. (LB/LJ)



by Lorene Bartos, Extension Educator

To remove candle wax from table linens, first remove any wax buildup using a dull knife. Place the stained area between clean paper towels and press with a warm iron. Replace the paper towels frequently to absorb more wax and to avoid transferring stains. Once the buildup is removed, treat any remaining spots with a pretreat laundry product. Then, launder in the hottest water safe for the fabric, using a bleach that is safe for the fabric. (LB)

Kids and holiday stress

If the holidays are such a time of joy for kids, why is your older one sulking and the younger one sobbing? It could be a case of overload. There is so much expectation and stimulation, that kids become confused and uncertain of how to react. Here's how to make sure this time of "peace on earth" remains that for your kids.

- Pick your battles. Stand firm on the important stuff and let the rest slide.
- Schedule quiet time. Usually kids act up because they are overtired. Make sure they get breaks from noise and confusion.
- Set your priorities and don't get lost in the trivia. Keep family rituals even if it means sacrificing another party.
- Don't spend too much. Set an example for children.
- Give kids a role in preparations.
- Invite kids to think of others and plan special things to do for them.
- Stick to a schedule as much as you can.
- Go with the flow when your routine falls apart.
- Lower your standards. If your kids eat too much candy, or miss two hours' sleep one night, it doesn't ultimately matter.
- Hang onto small rituals. When the kids do go to bed late take time for the rituals that make them feel secure. It's OK to skip the bath—but don't skip the bedtime story and the hugs and kisses.

Remember the holidays are supposed to be a joyous time—for the kids as well as adults. Sometimes in our rushing around, we forget that this holiday is for them to be involved and to enjoy. (LJ)

Enroll for Money 2000+

Looking for a way to increase your financial bottom line by the end of the year 2000? *Money 2000+* may be your answer.

What is Money 2000+?

It is an educational program sponsored by University of Nebraska Extension to help you increase your savings—and reduce your debt—all by the year 2000.

What happens in Money 2000+?

As a Money 2000+ enrollee, you decide how much you want to increase savings (and investments), and how much you want to decrease your debt. You receive a bi-monthly newsletter to help you keep on track with special "bonuses" in many issues. You will have discounts towards educational programs and materials related to finances and family life. It may be possible for us to form a group to support one another in reaching our goals.

Will I have to share personal financial information?

No one must share their personal finances in Money 2000+, but if you choose to do so, that's your decision.

What makes Money 2000+ different?

The state coordinator for Money 2000+ will contact you every

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The best toys are versatile

LaDeane Jha
Extension Educator

In general, the best toys are the most versatile. "Open-ended" toys, including blocks, dolls, playhouses, even cartons, pots and pans, are valuable in that they can be used over and over, in numerous ways, by children

of various ages. Often toys that become classics fit the above description. Classic toys are enduring, they encourage your child's involvement, are "child-powered" and, of course, fun. Do you remember playing with some of these favorites as a child—jacks and balls, jump rope, paper dolls, kites and

marbles. Imagine the times you've played with a Yo-Yo, Etch-A-Sketch or Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head. These are among many of the great toys that have become classics and never go out of style. What are some of the toys you consider classics? Are they open ended? Do they allow for imagination and creativity?

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35 Years: Elsa Amen, Helpful Homemakers; Janet Broer, Beltline; Sondra Block, Salt Creek Circle



15 Years: Helen McMahon, Willing Workers; Lynn Bush, Busy Bees



25 Years: Lorraine James, Helpful Homemakers



40 Years: Janice Ruliffson, Helpful Homemakers; Margaret Blacketer, Helpful Homemakers



20 Years: Mary Colter, Beltline; Kay Madsen, Live & Learn; Judy Schutz, Live & Learn; Kay Eggers, Live & Learn



4-H & Youth

4-H Bulletin Board

- ✓ Teen Council meeting is Sunday, January 10, 3-5 p.m. All teens interested in joining 4-H Teen Council are invited to attend, or call Tracy at 441-7180. (TK)

1999 Kansas City 4-H Youth Conference

The 1999 Kansas City 4-H Youth Conference—"Reach Out From the Heartland: Globally and Culturally" is being held March 12-15, 1999 at the Adams Mark Hotel in Kansas City, Missouri. Conference highlights include an ethnic enrichment evening, a wide variety of workshop choices, choice of tours to global and high-tech corporations, choice of service-learning opportunities, evening recreation/dances and more.

Registration is due January 8, 1999, and is \$240 for the weekend. This includes bus transportation from Lincoln to Kansas City, conference fees, meals and lodging. For more information, contact Tracy at 441-7180. (TK)

Speech VIPS wanted

It is time to start organizing the 1999 Lancaster County Speech Workshop and Contest. We are looking for people to serve as committee members to bring new and exciting ideas. This is a short-term commitment. If you would like to become a part of the fun, please call Deanna at 441-7180 and sign up today. (DK)

Upcoming livestock progress shows

The time will be arriving that many show fliers will be coming in the mail. This year, I have decided to post them on the Lancaster County web site, the address is <http://ianrwww.unl.edu/ianr/lanco/4h/news.htm>. For those of you who do not have internet access, I will also post them in my office. For more detailed information on the shows, please call Deanna at 441-7180. (DK)

4-H Volunteer Forum

Mark your calendar for February 5 and 6 and plan to attend the Nebraska State 4-H Volunteer Forum in Grand Island. This forum is a conference developed by a committee of 4-H volunteers from across the state. Network with other 4-H leaders, exchange successful 4-H programs among 4-H leaders and be introduced to new areas and projects. There will be numerous workshops offering hands-on learning experiences and new ideas and programs designed to enhance your club. Anyone interested in 4-H is welcome to attend. Scholarships are available through the 4-H Council. For more information, please contact Tracy at 441-7180. (TK)

Got jars?

Gallon size, wide-mouthed glass jars will be needed for several upcoming 4-H projects. If you have any that you would like to donate or recycle, please bring them to the Lancaster County extension office at 444 Cherrycreek Road. (DK)

Become a National 4-H intern

National 4-H Council is looking for college age students to serve as program assistants. It's an excellent opportunity for youth to learn more about the nation's capital. Program assistants will conduct field trips and workshops, facilitate, implement and assist groups and group coordinators during programs offered at the center. Program assistants receive compensation and free room and board at the National 4-H Center. Applications are due January 15 for summer (mid-May to mid-August). To request an application or information, call the National 4-H Center at (301) 961-2801. (DK)



4-H Lock-In

Join us in "Bedrock" for a blast into the past!

When:

January 15th, 8 p.m. to 8 a.m., January 16th

Where:

Lancaster County Extension Office

Cost:

\$10.00 per child

Bring:

- toothbrush/toothpaste
- sleeping bag/pillow
- active wear/sleep wear (sweats)
- a friend interested in 4-H!

Presented by Lancaster County 4-H Teen Council • Sponsored by University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension in Lancaster County

4-H Lock-In Registration Form

Name: _____

Male Female Age _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Special Needs/Other Information: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Make checks payable to:
Lancaster County 4-H Teen Council

Return registration to:
Attn: Tracy Kulm
University of Nebraska
Cooperative Extension
in Lancaster County
444 Cherrycreek Road
Lincoln, NE 68528-1507

Questions:
Contact Tracy at 441-7180

Registrations due by January 8, 1999 — Thank You!

HORSE BITS

Some Christmas gift ideas (for the horse lover)

As I become more familiar with the horse industry, I am frequently astounded by the number of supplies I didn't even know existed. So how could I possibly come up with a Christmas wish for you horse lovers?

Here's a list of equine supplies, at various prices. I hope at least one of these suggestions can help someone out. So, start dropping some hints...it's almost Christmas!

- The horse cap* \$6.99
Soak in water (or water-based fly spray) to keep your horse comfortable in hot weather.
- Horse head hitching post* \$14.95
Crafted of heavy duty cast iron to last generations.
- Horse statue U.S. mailbox* \$69.95
- Welcome mat* \$9.95
"If we're not home, we're riding."
- Classic weathervane* \$29.95
Tells you which way the wind is blowing while proclaiming your love of horses.
- Soapie ponies* \$2.95
Scent free glycerin soap with a horse toy inside.
- Measuring cane* \$18.95
Combination walking stick and measuring standard that folds into the hardwood cane. (EK)

Equine winter skin problems

An equine skin disease seen during wet winter months is "rain scald" or "rain rot". The disease usually results from a bacteria which is spread from horse to horse by direct contact, contaminated tack and grooming equipment, or external parasites. It occurs during periods of frequent rain or snow, when the horse's hair coat remains wet for a long time. During dry weather, the bacteria remains dormant, but can be spread to other horses.

For horses to develop rain rot they must acquire the bacteria from a carrier, have breaks in the skin such as those caused by biting insects or minor wounds, and be exposed to moisture that allows bacteria to reproduce and spread. Longer winter hair coats protect bacteria and maintain the moisture needed for the bacteria to reproduce.

The first indication that a horse is affected with rain scald will be numerous clumps of matted hair measuring 1/4 to 1/2 inch in diameter scattered over a horse's back and croup. Crusty scabs form under the hair clumps. In the early stages of the disease, rough, raised bumps often can be felt before they can be seen.

The most important aspect of treatment is removing all factors that predispose the horse to infection, such as excessively wet hair, biting insects and skin trauma. Winter skin needs to be kept clean and dry.

Infected horses must be groomed to remove the crusts that contain the bacteria. Grooming might be painful and often requires that the horse be sedated. Scabbed areas are painful and, when forcibly removed, uncover a moist, reddish ulcer in the skin.

Soaking crusty lesions with medicated shampoo in order to soften them before attempting removal might be necessary.

Once the crusts and infected hair have been removed, the horse should be rinsed with providone-iodine to kill remaining bacteria. Application of betadine will assist the drying out process.

Shampoos and rinses should be done daily for at least 7 days, followed by treatment once or twice weekly until all clinical signs are gone. In severe cases, administering antibiotics for 5 to 7 days might be necessary.

Tack used on infected horses should not be used on other horses. All tack, grooming equipment and electric clippers should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected to prevent spread of the disease. Good hygiene is always the best safeguard against the disease. (EK)

4-H & Youth



Free chicks

In January, we will begin the Lancaster County Embryology unit with the schools and we will have baby chicks available to the public for free!

Chicks will be hatching on or about January 26, March 2, April 13 and May 18.

If you are interested in receiving any of these chicks, please call Ellen at 441-7180. (EK)

Holiday gift ideas

If you need great gift ideas, here they are! The Lancaster County Citizen Washington Focus group will be selling prepaid phone cards and Village Inn pie certificates during the holiday season. The phone cards cost only \$10 and are good for 30 minutes. The pie certificates will sell for \$10 also. If you would like to purchase either of these two items, please call Deanna at 441-7180. All proceeds will be used to offset costs of the youth's trip to Washington D.C. this coming June. (DK)

1999 4-H Teen Council officers

- President: Valerie Lemke
- Vice President: Megan Bergman
- Secretary: Jessie Schrader
- Treasurer: J.R. Schepers
- Historians: Brenda Fiala and Connie Lemke
- Leader: Marilyn Schepers

If you would like to become a member of the 4-H Teen Council, call Tracy at 441-7180. (TK)

Guinea pigs are great pets

Another name for the guinea pig is cavy. The cavy is really a small rodent native to South America where Indians used these little creatures for pets and sometimes, for food. The name guinea pig may have come from the fact that they were commonly sold in England for the price of one guinea. A cavy is shaped like an eggplant with feet. It has no tail.

Guinea pigs are gentle. They live a long time, as long as seven years or more. They are odorless, but their cage may become smelly if you forget to change the litter. Cavies are inexpensive to feed, resistant to disease and pleasant to handle. A cavy may be described as a clean cuddly hairy lump that whistles. Care must be taken against falls. A guinea pig can be severely injured if dropped.

Guinea pigs come in many colors and patterns. There are English, Peruvian and Abyssinian.

Guinea pigs are not very fussy about where they live. They do need to be dry, out of a draft and not too cold. You will probably keep your guinea pig indoors in a cage or glass-sided house. Your pet will need at least two square feet of space. Since guinea pigs are not climbers, a secure wire screen top is necessary only for safety from other animals. You can use wood shavings, coarse sawdust, shredded newspaper or hay for litter on the bottom of your pet's pen. Change it as often as necessary.

Cavies are unhappy and uncomfortable at temperatures below 40 degrees or over 90 degrees. Be sure your pet has plenty of cool water. Your pet will appreciate a snug little house made by cutting an opening in one end of a shoe box turned upside down without the lid. It will not last long because guinea pigs like to chew up anything they can get their teeth into—even the wood of their cage. This chewing is necessary for the proper wearing down its teeth.

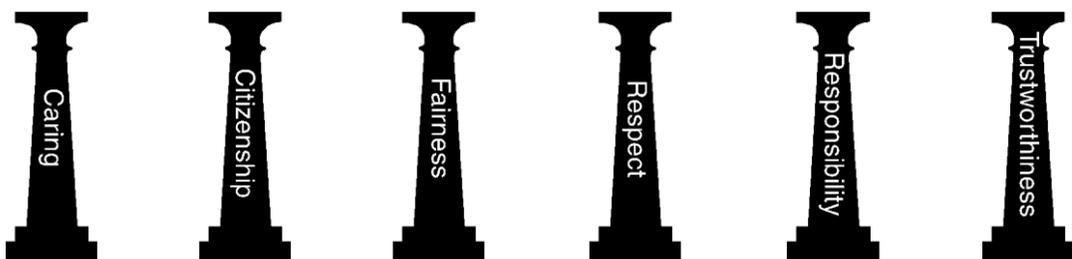
Cavies are vegetarians. That means they eat only plants and fresh produce. Any vegetables, fruits and green forage plants may be offered. Be sure they are washed clean and crisp. A guinea pig will refuse to eat certain vegetables like onion, peppers and potatoes. They may enjoy occasional feedings of whole grains such as corn, oats, wheat or milo.

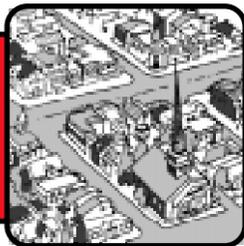
And...you will want to play with your pet regularly and gently, feeding it from your hand and stroking its fur. It will be far happier if you do. (ALH)

Character Counts! training



A great opportunity for training in the national character education program, Character Counts!, will be Tuesday, January 19, 1999, 9 a.m.-Noon. This training will prepare you to use the Character Counts! curriculum in your own educational settings. Learn about trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, caring, fairness, citizenship and decision-making. If you have questions or are interested in attending please contact LaDeane Jha or Karen Whitson at 441-7180. Registration Fee: \$5.00. (KW)





Community Focus



Alice and Ted Doane live in the country near Waverly. Alice was recognized during an October meeting of the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners.

Lancaster County "Volunteer of the Month" is Alice Doane

Alice Doane has been a strong positive supporter of Cooperative Extension for many years. Alice has been active in both the adult and youth programs. She and her husband, Ted, served as volunteer 4-H leaders for approximately 20 years and continue to support the 4-H program.

Alice served as the Family and Community Education (FCE) Club Council vice president and president for two years each. She gave countless hours of time and energy to keep this program going during its restructuring years. She currently serves on many FCE committees, planning county wide events. She is presently serving a three year term on the Lancaster County Extension Board.

Many NEBLINE readers will recall the "Alice Analysis" articles she wrote during her term as FCE president.

Alice gives many hours to help build the extension program through developing leadership skills in youth and adults.

She is also active in many other community organizations (Waverly, Grange, Methodist Church, senior center and Make It With Wool Contest state coordinator). Hosting international visitors and school tours to their farm is a highlight for the Doanes.

Alice is a super volunteer and goes beyond the call of duty to help and recognize others and is always there with a helping hand. (GB)

Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP) new to Lancaster County

Need assistance in establishing a small business? Do you find yourself asking the following questions?

- I have a great business idea, but what do I do?
- What should I charge for my product/service?
- Why am I always short of cash?
- How do I find more customers?
- Do I know where I want my business to be three years from now?
- What is the best use of my advertising dollars?

The Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP) works with small rural communities to locally help develop small and start-up businesses. As a project of the Center for Rural Affairs located in Walthill, Nebraska, REAP offers business management training and modest credit assistance for start-up and established small businesses.

To find out more about REAP, contact Jeff Reynolds, Senior Business Specialist for REAP at P.O. Box 274, Plymouth, NE 68424, phone number 402-656-3091. (GB)

Y2K FAQs

1. What is the year 2000 problem?

Many of the world's computers using two digits to keep track of data on January 1, 2000, will recognize "double zero" not as 2000 but as 1900. This glitch could cause them to stop running or to start generating false data.

2. Will the Y2K problem affect the average American?

The year 2000 problem poses a serious threat to the global economy in which Americans live and work. Our economy is dependent on the electronic processing and exchange of financial and other data. Any failure--the inability of a stock market in another country to open, difficulties a bank may have in completing transactions, slowdowns in local commuter traffic due to malfunctioning traffic signals, power companies' being unable to provide electricity to some of their customers, major food spoilage resulting from failure of computer-operated food storage, or delivery refrigeration systems--may cause disruptions in the lives of the American people.

3. How can I tell whether things I own contain small computers or embedded chips?

The truth is, you can't. But there is a chance that products that require some kind of time-tracking to make them work

might have a chip or small computer that could affect performance. The manufacturers of the products you own and use should be able to tell you if they will still function without adjusting for Y2K.

4. What's a "chip", and where is it embedded?

Some common appliances, machines, and tools, are "embedded" within the things we use every day, and contain all the information that tells these objects when and how to perform. Chips are programmed at the factory, and, to be frank, no one knows if they will stop working when the clock passes midnight on December 31, 1999.

5. What are some of the possible personal Y2K problems?

Things that might be affected by the Y2K problem:

Home:

telephones
answering machines
microwaves
VCR's
television systems
cameras and camcorders
Safety Systems:
burglar and fire alarms
security cameras
security systems
fire control systems

Office Systems:

calculators
copiers
fax machines

desktop computers
laptops and notebooks
mainframe computers
photocopiers
postage machines
time clocks

Building Systems:

air conditioning
building management systems
climate control systems
door locks
elevators, escalators
heating and ventilating
lighting systems
programmable thermostats
sprinkler systems

6. How potentially widespread is the problem?

Due to increased dependence on computers and automated systems in virtually every field, all U.S. economic sectors are at risk. For example, many people engaged in supplying the Nation's food rely on such systems, including farmers and ranchers who use automated feeding, watering, and milking equipment; food processors whose production and packing assembly lines and billing systems are computer dependent; and food retailers who rely on machines for ordering, keeping inventory, refrigerating, and registering sales.

7. Is the Y2K a problem without a solution?

No. The technical "fix" is straightforward, but the complexity of many of our systems

continued on page 12

Aging in America

One of the profound trends underway in America today is the aging of our population. About 35 million people, one in every eight, is 65 years of age or older. The number of people in this category has more than doubled since 1960. It will double again by 2040.

The aging of America will have an important impact on all aspects of American life. Some responses will come in the private sector. Health care, housing and leisure activities are some of the areas that seem sure to receive attention.

Other needs will best be responded to in the public sector. As it turns out, health care and housing also top the agenda here, simply because not all

citizens will be able to provide fully for themselves through the private sector. All levels of government will be affected both by the need to provide services for seniors and the ability to generate taxes and fees from this group of citizens. It's not necessarily going to be an easy match.

A 1996 U.S. Census report, 65+ in the United States, notes that a relatively brief "window of opportunity" exists currently for state and local policymakers to plan to address the challenges and opportunities of the "age wave." But it will vanish soon if planning is not coordinated among the array of state/local organizations that have responsibility for various programs.

A first step is to attain the best projections possible on number of seniors to be served and their age ranges. The needs of 65 year olds typically are much different than 85 year olds. The latter group is growing rapidly in many communities.

At the federal level, Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security, the major entitlement programs for seniors, are among the fastest growing categories of federal spending. In 1997, the federal government spent nearly \$500 billion on these programs. States also made significant contributions, especially for Medicaid.

Many people assume that the long-term care needs of the elderly are covered by Medicare.

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Lincoln Public Schools is ready to recycle!

Each year LPS goes through an estimated 7,000 tons of waste and pays more than \$132,000 to dispose of it. Currently, many schools and buildings across the district have some sort of recycling program but this year LPS has taken a major step toward coordinating a comprehensive system across the district.

Lincoln Public Schools Foundation was awarded a two-year "Waste Reduction and Recycling Incentive" grant from the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

This grant provides funding for a part-time coordinator as well as equipment. LPS Foundation has contracted personnel services from the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension in Lancaster County.

The goal is to develop a model for waste management and recycling in public schools and administrative offices that can easily be replicated throughout the LPS system. Pilot schools have been selected and information will be gathered via waste assessments to develop a waste minimization program

This information will create a database to better understand waste generation and management and will help establish measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

The recycling program will also include an educational component. LPS will integrate an economical and environmentally sound waste minimization program into the LPS environmental education curriculum.

Within the two-year grant period, the program will be refined and implemented throughout the district. (GB)

Holiday legends, traditions and fun

continued from front page

things as candles and decorated shepherds' crooks. On the final night a house offers a place to stay and a party begins with guitar music, dancing and food. It ends with a pinata. Luminaries are a Mexican tradition that many of us have adopted in recent years and Santos or creche figures are an important part of a Mexican Christmas. The figures are used to recreate the nativity scene at the town's

church. At midnight, on Christmas Eve, all the people in the town make a grand procession to the church to lay gifts before the manger and to celebrate Midnight Mass.

Hanging Christmas stockings, holly, lights, Santa Claus, Father Christmas, plum pudding with a hidden coin, Boxing Day, church bells, turkeys, gift giving, coal in wooden shoes are just a few of the many traditions

that are a part of holiday celebrations throughout the world. They all have stories to be explored and this is a wonderful time of the year to add to your understanding of the holiday traditions of the season.

The traditions, rituals and legends associated with the holiday season are important to us. They give meaning to the holidays and become the stuff that memories are made of.



The use and care of home humidifiers

continued from page 3

organisms and minerals, from their water tanks into indoor air.

Proper care and cleaning of ultrasonic and impeller humidifiers are important to reduce potential exposures to microorganisms, such as bacteria and molds. Microorganisms often grow in humidifiers equipped with tanks containing standing water. Breathing mist containing these pollutants has been implicated as causing a certain type of inflammation of the lungs.

The federal government has not concluded that the dispersal of minerals by home humidifiers poses a serious health risk. However, researchers have documented that these humidifiers are very efficient at dispersing minerals in tap water into the air. In addition, some consumers are bothered by a "white dust" that may appear on surfaces during the use of these devices. Most importantly, minerals in tap water may increase the development of

crusty deposits, or scale, in humidifiers. Scale can be a breeding ground for microorganisms.

Using water with lower mineral content will reduce exposures to these materials. Use bottled water labeled "distilled." While distilled water still contains some mineral content, it is likely it will contain lower mineral content than most tap water. Distillation is the most effective method for removing minerals from water.

It is important to use a humidifier only when conditions require it, to use the correct moisture setting for existing conditions and to clean it thoroughly. To clean, empty the tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and refill the water in portable humidifiers daily to reduce any growth of microorganisms. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for changing water in console humidifiers. Be sure to unplug the unit from the electrical socket first.



Commercial handling of fresh culinary herbs

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Herbs can be packaged in bags designed to minimize water loss. When herbs are packaged this way, it is particularly important to maintain constant temperatures, to reduce condensation inside the bag and the consequent risk of fungal or bacterial growth. The bags may be partially ventilated with perforations or may be constructed of a polymer that is partially permeable to water vapor.

Ethylene gas is another factor which limits the shelf life of leafy tissues. Ethylene causes yellowing of leaves and an increased rate of deterioration. It is possible to routinely find ethylene in the environment

surrounding fruits and vegetables during commercial handling.

Careful handling to avoid physical injury to the leafy tissue of the fresh herbs is also important. Rigid clear plastic containers such as those sometimes used for sprouts may be used for soft herbs. "Pillow packs" (plastic bags which are partially inflated when sealed) may be an alternative packaging technique. Growth of microorganisms can also be reduced by proper temperature management and good hygienic practices in the field and packing station. Chlorinated water can reduce microbial load if water is used during handling. (DJ)



Holiday visitors

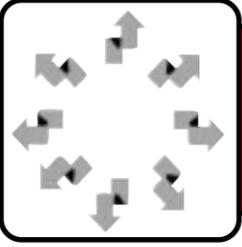
The holidays often bring visits from family and friends who live far away. This causes stress as everyone adapts to changing activities, meals and sleeping patterns. Young children do not understand the importance of ties outside their immediate family and cannot be expected to demonstrate affection for someone they haven't seen before. Children need time to accept and approach adults and other children.

Children can be helped in adjusting to visitors. Begin by letting them know ahead who is coming and what changes can be expected. A child's routines should be adhered to as much as possible. This provides structure and gives a child a sense of security. Try to let them sleep in their own beds and maintain regular bedtimes. If many changes are made your child's behavior may be disrupted.

Remember some of your guests may not be used to having children around. Give them cues about how to approach your child. For example, some children find giving and receiving kisses uncomfortable—it does not matter who the person is.

By preparing children and visitors for holiday visits a much smoother and happier time will be had by all. (LJ)

Miscellaneous



Beef home study course begins fifth year

continued from page 4

discusses goal setting, personnel and family issues, financial and production records, as well as business plans and record keeping systems. This 10-lesson course was developed by a team of ranchers, bankers and cooperative extension faculty.

Those enrolling are encouraged to answer questions on the weekly quizzes. After returning the quizzes to the county extension office, the quiz will be graded and returned to the class member. The enrollment fee includes all educational materials plus a 3-ring binder to help organize lesson material. Each person completing the lessons and quizzes will receive a certification of completion from the University of Nebraska. Contact the Lancaster Cooperative Extension Office for more information and the registration form. (WS)



Landlords need to reduce cash crop rental rates for '99

continued from page 4

payments, and instead even raise the payments as has been the trend for the last five years. But most landlords want to do what is fair and right and are willing to renegotiate.

If landlords and tenants have good working relationships and rental rates have been kept current in the past, it stands to reason that now is the time to think downward. Lessening rents can contribute to long run partnerships that can be a win-win situations.

Most of the negotiating with 1999 rental rates are still underway, but average rates are expected to be down by 5 to 10 percent.

The key to establishing affordable rates is communication. Producers and landlords need to communicate their situations. Both should consider their options such as switching to a crop-share lease or a more flexible cash leasing.

Source: Bruce Johnson, Ph.D. agricultural economist, NU/IANR (WS)



How can you tell when food is "done"?

continued from page 6

medium, and 170 degrees F are well done.

When you cut into thoroughly cooked meat, there should be no trace of pink in the juices. Large cuts of red meat, like roasts and steaks, can stay slightly pink in the center if they have reached at least 145 degrees F. DO NOT serve any large cut at this lower temperature if it has been scored (cut or poked with a fork) or tenderized before cooking, thus forcing any surface bacteria into the center. Cook scored and tenderized meats to 160 degrees F.

Pasta. Cook pasta until it's "al dente", tender yet still firm.

Poultry. Cook whole poultry (chicken and turkey) to 180 degrees F; poultry breasts and roasts to 170 degrees F. When poultry is pierced with a fork, the juices should be clear, not pink.



The best toys are versatile

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Do they pose a challenge? Are they fun?

With properly chosen toys as tools, a child can be encouraged to imagine, create and explore. Toys often allow the child's first glimpse of adult life. A fire truck will often initiate play of being a fireman. This is also true with a set of dishes or mixing pans.

In choosing toys a child needs to be considered as an individual. Toys should be matched to the child's interests and stage of development. A challenging, fascinating toy will invite exploration and will help build a sense of competency as the child develops the skills needed for enjoyment of each object.



Enroll now for Money 2000+

continued from page 7

six months to find out how much progress you have made toward the goals you set when you first enrolled. Just knowing someone will check on you can help you stick to your Money 2000+ goals.

How do I enroll?

Call the Lancaster County Extension Office and ask for a Money 2000+ enrollment packet. Return the enrollment form and the \$15 enrollment fee. You will then be sent the first edition of Money 2000+ News and will be kept up-to-date on all future programs in support of Money 2000+. If you have further questions about the program, contact LaDeane Jha at 441-7180. (LJ)

The NEBLINE

Nebraska Cooperative Extension Newsletter
Lancaster County

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Gary C. Bergman, Extension Educator—Unit Leader

NOTICE: All programs and events listed in this newsletter will be held at the Lancaster Extension Education Center unless noted otherwise. Use of commercial and trade names does not imply approval or constitute endorsement by the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension in Lancaster County.

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- Lorene Bartos, Extension Educator
- Tina Brown, AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer
- Corey Brubaker, Extension Educator
- Maureen Burson, Extension Educator
- Brenda Corder, Publication & Resource Assistant
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- Marilyn Waldron, Nutrition Advisor
- Karen Whitson, AmeriCorps VISTA
- Jim Wies, Extension Assistant
- Barb Yllescas, Extension Assistant



Extension Calendar

All programs and events will be held at the Lancaster Extension Education Center unless otherwise noted.

December 13

- 4-H Ambassador Meeting 1:45 p.m.
- 4-H Teen Council Meeting 3-5 p.m.

December 14

- Lancaster County 4-H Shooting Sports Club Meeting 7 p.m.
- Extension Board Meeting 7:30 p.m.

December 15

- 55 Alive Mature Driving Course 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

December 16

- 55 Alive Mature Driving Course 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

December 18

- Private Pesticide Application Training 1-4 p.m.

December 25

- Holiday - office closed

January 1

- Holiday - office closed

January 5

- 4-H Council Meeting 7 p.m.
- Crop Protection Clinic 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

January 11

- Lancaster County 4-H Shooting Sports Club Meeting 7 p.m.
- Extension Board Meeting 7:30 p.m.

Y2K FAQs

continued from page 10

and their interactions with each other make it time-consuming to implement. That makes the Y2K problem primarily a question for management: In the short time left, how can we best marshal the resources to deal with it?

8. What is the Federal Government doing about the Y2K problem?

Federal agencies have been working on this for several years, some as early as 1989. Internally, they are working to ensure that their own mission-critical systems are compliant. Externally, they are making inventories of all their data exchanges with outside business partners, such as State and local Governments with whom the Federal sector works to operate Federal programs, to minimize disruptions. For high-risk areas, agencies are developing contingency plans to ensure that they will be able to conduct business even if their systems or the outside services on which they depend are not available. Most recently, through the Federal Government's President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion, agencies are reaching out to domestic and international organizations that are part of the economic sectors in which the agencies operate in order to

increase awareness of the problem and to offer support.

9. What can you do?

The most important thing is to start asking the right questions about their own distinctive situations and begin gathering the facts. Leaders should find out if there is a problem internally, and if so, the extent of the problem. Individual principals and firms should know what their own business are going to do to address the problem and what the organizations they depend upon—suppliers, service providers, financial institutions, etc.—are doing as well. In addition, contingency plans that address major risks to company operations should be developed.

10. Where can people get more information on the year 2000 problem?

Some of the best Y2K information is available on the Web. The President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion recommends the Year 2000 pages of the Federal Government's Chief Information Offices Council Information Committee on Year 2000. (<http://www.itpolicy.gsa.gov/mks/yr2000/y2khome.htm>). This site is building Y2K information linked to sectors of the U.S. economy. The President's

Council also recommends the Small Business Administration (<http://www.sba.gov/y2k>) site. Industry trade associations are another source of Y2K information.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) home page (<http://www.usda.gov>) provides frequent updates (select the "Y2K" button) on Y2K activities as well as a variety of Y2K information sources, including:

- USDA Year 2000 Program Office, USDA Office of the Chief Information Officer (<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/y2k/index.htm>).
- President's Council on Year 2000 Food Supply Working Group. (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/y2k>).
- USDA National Information Technology Center. (<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/nitc/y2k/index.html>).
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. (<http://www.itc.nrcs.usda.gov/y2k/y2k.htm>).
- * USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service. (<http://www.reeusda.gov/y2k>). (GB)

Phone numbers:

- Office (leave message after hours) 441-7180
- After hours 441-7170
- FAX 441-7148
- COMPOSTING HOTLINE 441-7139
- NUFACTS INFORMATION CENTER 441-7188

OFFICE HOURS: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday



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Aging in America

continued from page 10

That's never been the case. Medicare primarily covers acute care services; its coverage of nursing home care is very limited. Instead, Medicaid is the primary public program to cover nursing home care. It does so for those whose income and assets are below certain levels. While precise Medicaid benefits vary

from state to state, the bottom line is that more than half of all nursing home costs in the country are covered by this program.

In 1996, Nebraska ranked 14th among the 50 states in the proportion of our population that is at least 65 years of age. While statewide the share is

about 14 percent, it is much higher in some small, rural counties. The sooner we start planning to deal with this reality, the better.

Source: Roy Federick, Professor and Extension Economist, Department of Agricultural Engineering. (GB)