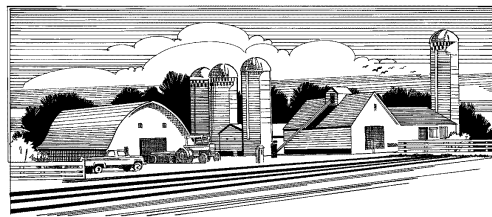


Ag Scene

Polk County UW-Extension Office 715-485-8600
<http://polk.uwex.edu>



January 2009

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This information is provided to you through cooperative efforts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, UW-Extension and Polk County. For more information, contact the Polk County UW-Extension Office at 485-8600.

Ryan Sterry
Agriculture/Horticulture Agent

Greetings



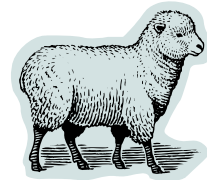
While it has been a cold and snowy winter so far, now is a good time to start thinking about warmer weather and green fields in preparation for the next growing season. Inside is a listing of upcoming meetings and events. Take a look and consider how some of these educational opportunities can help you and your business.

In 2008 the hot topic was volatility in the commodity markets, and I don't expect that to change soon in 2009. Making decisions is difficult with market uncertainty, but that is not a good excuse to do nothing. Now is the time to plot what your response will be to price changes and relationships between input costs and commodity prices. Today farmers need to manage for the margin: getting a good selling price alone is not enough with current input costs. Don't fall into that easy marketing trap of doing this year what you wish you had done last year. Learn from what happened last year, but realize market conditions have changed. At our Dairy Decisions Workshop in December, the discussion on both the dairy and crops side emphasized that you don't need to make dramatic changes to your business. Instead, ensure your inputs are going to where you'll get consistent results and the best return on your dollar.

I hope to get a chance to see you at our upcoming events this winter!

The Post Office has changed the way they deliver mail to incorrect addresses. The sender will be responsible for having correct addresses on mail or the piece will be returned to the sender (i.e. Extension Office) with a \$.50 fee per item. This is huge for the Extension Office which sends out many bulk rate newsletters and first class mailings to its clientele. Please make every effort to provide us with an accurate address. We will not mail anything to individuals whose mail is returned to our office until their address has been corrected. We will try to contact these individuals to let them know we have an incorrect address, but until corrected, no mail will be sent to that individual or family. It is your responsibility to make sure that our office has correct mailing information.

Indianhead Sheep Breeders Association Shepherd's Clinic and Trade Show



Indianhead Sheep Breeders Association is presenting its **15th Annual Shepherd's Clinic and Trade Show** on Saturday, February 7th, 2009 at the Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College Conference Center in Rice Lake, Wisconsin. The clinic has been a highly successful educational, promotional and social event with over 200 in attendance last year. Registration is from 8:00 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. with continental breakfast.

The all-day event features concurrent educational sessions for beginning to experienced shepherds on a wide variety of topics, a trade show, a silent auction, an all-day hands-on youth program, and a roast lamb and chicken luncheon program including a greeting by Wisconsin's *Alice in Dairyland*, a live auction, awards and scholarship presentation.

Featured speakers include:

- **Woody Lane**, Livestock Nutritionist and Forage Specialist, Lane Livestock Services
- **Dave Thomas**, Professor and Sheep Specialist, University of Wisconsin
- **David Rowe**, General Manager, Mid-States Wool Growers Cooperative Association
- **Holly Neaton**, DVM and Sheep Producer, Watertown Veterinary Clinic
- **Bill Keough**, Sheep Nutritionist, bk Sheep Nutrition
- **Yves Berger**, Dairy Sheep Specialist, UW Spooner Agricultural Research Station
- **Todd Taylor**, Shepherd, UW Arlington Agricultural Research Station

- **Claire Mikolayunas Sandrock**, Ph.D.
Candidate, University of Wisconsin
- **Jim Schultz**, Sheep Producer, Weed Eden Farm
- **Dave Ruid**, Assistant District Supervisor, USDA Wildlife Services

Topics presented will be in the areas of sheep nutrition, wool quality and economics, sheep health, udder morphology, forage options, pasture lambing, predation, orphan lambs, dairy sheep economics, and many more.

Pre-registration fees are \$20 for ISBA members, and \$25 for non-members. The youth program fees are \$10 for youth and interested parents including an off-site lunch (\$30 max. per family). There is an additional charge of \$10 for the clinic and trade show and \$2 for the youth program at the door or after January 31st. Fees include continental breakfast, refreshments and lunch. Discounted rooms are available at the nearby Rice Lake Best Western for Friday night. Reserve by calling 715-234-7017 and mention the Indianhead Sheep Breeders Association Shepherd's Clinic.

Additional information, pre-registration, sponsorship opportunities or trade show reservation information is available on-line at www.indianheadsheep.com or by contacting Greg Glunz at 715-268-6286 or Jeff Kieffer at 715-339-4223.

Dairy Promotion and Holstein Breeders Annual Meeting – Mon., Feb. 2, 7:30 pm

The Polk County Dairy Promotion committee and Holstein Breeders will again be having a joint annual meeting on **Monday, February 2nd at 7:30 p.m.** at the **Government Center in Balsam Lake**. On December 1st the Dairy Promotion committee met to start planning activities for 2009 and designate representatives to work with the school districts in Polk County. Officers for '09 will be

Grant Burdick, President; Gwen Dado, Vice-President; Karrie Melin-Swenson, Treasurer; and Sara Byl, Secretary. If you are interested in getting materials or milk donated for an event contact the Extension Office to find the representative for your area. New ideas and follow-up with the school districts will be part of the February 2nd agenda.

2009 Shepherds Clinic and Trade Show Registration Form

Youth Program (parents welcomed)

Number attending @ \$10.00 ea.

(\$30.00 maximum per family, additional youth at no charge)

_____ Total: _____

Clinic and Trade Show (ISBA Member)

Number attending @ \$20.00 ea.

_____ Total: _____

Clinic and Trade Show (Non-member)

Number attending @ \$25.00 ea.

_____ Total: _____

Grand Total: \$ _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Registration includes continental breakfast, roast lamb/chicken luncheon at the Clinic and Trade Show. Continental breakfast, transportation and off-site lunch are included with the youth program registration.

Adult Registration is \$10.00 additional and Youth Program Registration is \$2.00 additional after January 31st and at the door. Clinic and Trade Show registrations are limited to the first 200.

Please send registration and check by January 31st. Make checks payable to Indianhead Sheep Breeders Association (ISBA) and mail form & payment to:

Greg Glunz – ISBA Treasurer,
1661 65th Avenue
Osceola, WI 54020

Indianhead Sheep Breeders Association Membership Form

Circle one: 1 year - \$15.00 2 years - \$28.00 3 years - \$40.00

1 year Associate Member (outside 22 county area) - \$10.00

Make checks payable to **Indianhead Sheep Breeders Association (ISBA)**

Name: _____ Farm Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Sheep Breeds: _____ Check No. _____ Date: _____

UW Will Hold Ag Outlook Forum on January 16



University of Wisconsin-Madison economists and commodity specialists will be joined by Larry Salathe,

Senior Economist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of the Chief Economist to review the financial condition of the state's farm sector and the outlook for agricultural commodities important to the state at the second annual Agricultural Economic Outlook Forum on Jan. 16, 2009.

The event will be held from 12:30-4:30 p.m. in the Ebling Symposium Center of the Microbial Sciences Building, 1550 Linden Dr. on the UW-Madison campus. The event is free and the general public is encouraged to attend. New this year, the forum will also be available via webcast in cooperation with county UW-Extension offices and to the general public. The Polk County UW-Extension office is hosting the webcast at the Government Center in Balsam Lake beginning at 12:30 p.m. and will include local discussion among participants.

The event will begin with a general overview of how Wisconsin's farmers fared in 2008, a look at the nation's and world's economy and how that will influence agricultural trade. Speakers will then talk about the supply and demand outlook for key Wisconsin commodities, including dairy, corn and soybeans, livestock, and fruits and vegetables, as well as for the products and services that farmers purchase.

The forum site at www.cals.wisc.edu/agoutlook09 will provide live video of the forum and will also be archived for future viewing. Please visit this site for additional details -- parking, agenda, and reception for the event.

The forum coincides with the release of the 2009 edition of "Status of Wisconsin Agriculture," published by the UW-Madison Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics. The event is presented by the UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and UW-Extension, Cooperative Extension in partnership with the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation and Wisconsin Farmers Union.

AgSource DHI Foundation Polk-Burnett Fund Group Scholarship

\$500 scholarships may be made available by the AgSource DHI Foundation for students enrolled in post high school education or planning to pursue post high school education.

- Applicant's family must reside in Polk or Burnett County or be a present or past member of the Polk-Burnett DHI AgSource.
- Preference may be given to students in Ag related majors/programs.
- Preference may be given to students of farm families.

- Scholarship proceeds will not be given until student has successfully completed one semester.
- Applicants may be entering or already enrolled in post high school education programs.



If you are interested in applying call the Extension office for an application, or visit our website <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/polk/> and look for the AgSource Scholarship Application link under Highlights. All applications are due on March 31, 2009.

Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmer's Classes

The Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers course is being held at the Village Hall in Frederic for terms II and III. Classes are held from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Thursdays from January 22 to March 12. Course delivery is done through interactive video and audio, with discussion following the presentations. Cost is \$15 per session, with lunch on your own. Contact Otto Wiegand at 1.800.528.1914 or Ryan Sterry and 485.8600 to sign up. The course is part of the UW-Madison Short Course pasture-based program; however, most of the information pertains to all types of livestock operations.

Term II Schedule

January 22: FSA beginning farmer loan opportunities, enterprise budgets and record keeping

January 29: A successful business start-up model, farmer driven marketing strategies

February 5: Lessons learned from farm start-ups

Term III Schedule

February 12: Low cost milking parlor design and wintering strategies

February 19: Principles of organic dairying and herd health

February 26: Farm and grazing management, environmental stewardship

March 5: Emerging markets: biomass for renewable energy, grass based, & organic

March 12: Bringing it all together: farmer perspectives on starting your own business

Cattle Feeders Workshop to be held January 22

The University of Wisconsin-Extension Livestock team will be hosting a Cattle Feeders workshop Thursday, Jan. 22, 2009, at the Spring Valley Banquet Hall in Spring Valley. Registration and a meal will start at 5:15 p.m., with the program starting at 6:15 p.m. The workshop will provide valuable information to both Holstein and beef breed cattle feeders. The program builds on the information provided in the 2008 workshop of Producing Quality Holstein Steers.

Current economic conditions have increased the need for producers to carefully manage risk and production. Topics focus on managing production and price risk.

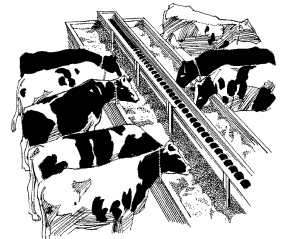
Topics and speakers include:

-- Managing Feeder Calf Health from 450 pounds through Finish; Dr. Charlie Stoltenow, North Dakota State Extension Beef Veterinarian. Dr. Stoltenow will address receiving programs for feeder cattle and managing common health problems from receiving through finish.

-- Low Cost and Effective Cattle Handling Facilities and Housing; Dr. David Kammel, UW-Extension Bio-Systems Engineer. "You can't manage what you can't catch!" Dr. Kammel will share information on using and remodeling existing facilities and putting in place low cost, safe and efficient cattle handling facilities. He will also present information on utilizing existing facilities for housing finishing steers.

-- Risk Management Tools for Cattle Feeders; Dr. Brenda Boetel, UW Extension Livestock Economist. Dr. Boetel will present information on risk management tools available for cattle feeder to manage price risk on their cattle. She will also share information on input price risk tools as well.

This program is partially supported by a grant from the USDA Risk Management Agency. A nominal fee for each location to cover meals and local expenses for the program will be collected. Please pre-register by contacting the St. Croix County Extension Office at 715-684-3301.



Check Your Grain Bins



Many cash grain producers struggled last fall with harvesting wet grain, and I still see a few corn fields standing out in the country. While spoilage has not been an issue thus far, producers should be proactive and continue to monitor their bins closely this winter. Wet grain and temperature swings make a perfect recipe for spoilage problems.

Aeration to control temperature is the most important element of grain storage. Yes, wet grain will store well if it is cold enough but only for a limited time based on moisture and temperature. For example, corn at 24% moisture will store for a month or so if the *grain* temperature stays below 40 degrees F. Remember wet grain will heat, so you need to check the grain temp, not the outside air temp. In Iowa, where dryer availability is limited, some producers have resorted to freezing their corn. This can work as long as the temperatures are cold and the grain is clean. Trash in the grain creates more clumps, which restricts air flow.

Symptoms of corn going out of condition include crusting of the top layer due to sprouting and molding, soggy surface corn due to condensation and moisture absorption and hot spots within the top few feet of the bin. Farmers have only a limited number of options to counteract corn storage problems. The primary one is to check the bins twice a week.

Tim Jergenson, UW Extension Barron County, created the following grain bin check list:

- Look for signs of moisture accumulation. Grain moisture can increase during storage, especially near the exposed top surface. Look for signs of crusted grain; wet, slimy grain; and heating.
- Smell the grain. A musty or moldy odor indicates the beginning of a storage problem; a fermented or sour odor indicates a serious problem.
- Use a long, slender rod to pinpoint problems. Poke into the corn in several places to find hard, compacted, or moist areas.

- Measure grain temperature. Attach a grain thermometer to the end of a metal rod to detect hot spots, or record temperature of the first air that comes through the grain. The thermometer can be left at an 8-ft. depth to get a weekly temperature check. A rise of only 3-4 degrees indicates a possible problem; monitor temperature daily.

If the moisture content of the corn is higher than 14.5-15%, or if crusting or rewetting has occurred, producers should remove the affected grain immediately by drawing out the core of the stored grain. The corn removed can be re-circulated back on top of the pile or marketed. If corn is going out of condition, marketing the corn may be the best option because it probably will not store well into the spring.

If temperatures in stored grain begin to rise noticeably, a hot spot may be developing. The aeration fans should be turned on immediately. On bins with corn of questionable keeping quality, it may also be advisable to operate the aeration fans for a few hours every week during cold weather periods. Four to five days of freezing temperatures with aeration will be needed to stop the spoilage process in a typical corn storage set-up.

Farm safety studies have shown an increase in grain-entrapment fatalities when farmers are working with spoiled grain. To avoid farm accidents when handling grain follow these precautions:

- Watch for falls off ladders, and never enter a bin while grain is being unloaded. It only takes 3 or 4 seconds to become helpless in flowing grain.
- Before entering the bin, lock out the unloading augers.
- Bridged grain and cavities may collapse and trap a person quickly. Beware of plugged unloading spouts and steep grain piles; dislodge either of them carefully with a long pole.
- Because mold spores are airborne, they can be inhaled, causing irritation and severe illness. A dust mask capable of filtering fine particles should be worn while inside the bin.

Don't forget about lime

By Kevin Schoessow, Area Ag Development Agent for Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Co.

In the current fertilizer price climate, it may be tempting to ignore lime recommendations and focus solely on fertilizer prices and application rates. Farmers should avoid this temptation. Maintaining pH at the target level for the most sensitive crop in the rotation is the cornerstone to a good fertility program. If the pH is not suitable for crop production, yields will suffer and applied fertilizer will not be used efficiently.



The best way to confirm pH levels is by taking a representative soil sample from the field and submitting it to a soil testing laboratory for analysis. From these results you will get a lime recommendation that indicates the amount of lime material that needs to be applied to correct the soil pH. Depending on soil type and how acid the soil is this can vary anywhere from as little as 0 or 1-2 tons/acre up to 8-10 tons/acre of 60-69 grade ag lime.

Based on UW-Extension research and recommendations, corn grain, corn silage, grass or legume-grass hay and pastures, sunflowers, trefoil, triticale and wheat have a target soil pH level of 6.0. Red clover and soybeans have a target pH of 6.3 while alfalfa has the highest target pH of 6.8. Buckwheat, millet, oats, and rye have a target pH range from 5.6 to 5.8.

Perhaps the most neglected fields in terms of receiving lime are rented fields and fields that are in permanent hay or pastures. It is not uncommon to see soil test pH levels well below the target pH of 6.0 on these fields.

The most common lime material is quarried limestone; however, materials containing carbonates, such as fly ash, sludge or wood ash can be used. Even if you cannot afford to apply all the recommended lime to a field, you will still get the most return and higher yield potential over the rotation by applying some. Research shows that N, P and K fertilizers and other soil nutrients are more available to plants as the pH goes up. For the most efficient use of soil nutrients and applied fertilizers, lime is the best investment over time.

Northwest Graziers Conference March 14

The Northwest Graziers Network will hold its Annual Conference in Spooner on Saturday, March 14 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The new host for this year's event is Cornerstone Christian Church located at 106 Balsam Street, just one block off HWY 63 on the north side of Spooner. ABDI Graziers of Ashland are co-sponsoring the event.

Jim Gerrish will be the featured speaker. Jim's experience includes over 20 years of beef-forage systems research and outreach while on the faculty of the University of Missouri, as well as 20 years of commercial cattle and sheep production on his family farm in northern Missouri. His research encompassed many aspects of plant-soil-

animal interactions and provided the foundation for many of the basic principles of Management-intensive Grazing. Before moving to Idaho, Jim was deeply involved in the Green Hills Farm Project, a grassroots producer group centered in north-central Missouri and emphasizing sustainability of family farms.

The remainder of the conference program is coming soon. The cost of the conference is \$20, including lunch prepared using locally produced food. For more information or to register contact UW Extension in Spooner at 1.800.528.1914 or Lynn Johnson at 715.268.8778.

Learn To Write your Own Nutrient Management Plan

Nutrient management is a hot topic in agriculture. Because of its implications on water quality, new standards have been adopted that will, in some cases, require producers to have a nutrient management plan in place in the near future. These plans are also being required for many government cost sharing programs.

With that in mind, we are holding a Nutrient Management Farmer Education Program. Participation in this program allows you to prepare your own nutrient management plan tailored specifically to your operation. At the completion of this program you will have:

- Cost sharing of \$2.00 to \$3.00 per acre to help off-set soil testing costs.
- A written nutrient management plan that meets all federal, state and county nutrient management standards.
- An updated soil conservation plan.
- A \$300 scholarship to attend three nutrient management workshops held in Polk County during February.

This program is an excellent opportunity to stay one step ahead of the game. With this training you will be qualified to write and update your own plan.

This could eliminate the need to hire a planner if a plan was required for your farm in the future.

One of the main goals of this program is education on nutritional needs of crops, crediting of nitrogen sources and environmental impacts of manure applications. In addition to writing your own plan, this program is an excellent opportunity to learn more about crop and nutrient management.

Producers who have participated in the past have indicated that their plans helped them protect water quality, demonstrated to non-farm neighbors that farmers are interested in protecting the environment, and in some cases, saved money on their fertilizer bill.

This program is a joint effort between the Polk County Land and Water Resources Department and UW-Extension. **Funding is limited** and available on a first come, first serve basis. If you wish to participate, call the Land and Water (715.485.8699) or Extension office (715.485.8600) soon.



Private Pesticide Applicator Training



Farmers that wish to purchase and apply restricted-use herbicides or pesticides on their land need to have a private pesticide applicators license from the state Dept. of Agriculture. There are two options for becoming licensed: attend a training session conducted by UW-Extension and take an open book

exam (50% passing), or self study the training materials and take an open book exam (70% passing) by coming into the Extension office.

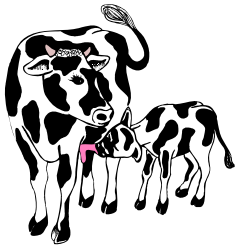
The Polk County UW Extension office will be holding a Private Pesticide Applicator Training (PAT) session from **10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 24**, at the Government Center in Balsam Lake. Everyone taking the class is required to purchase the PAT training manual (\$30) before the class. Books are available at the Extension office. Call 715-485-8600 to register.

There will also be a training session on Wednesday, February 18, at the Barron County Court House. To register for the Barron County class, call 715.537.6250.

UW Research Update: Dairy Producers Use of Sexed Semen

During the winter of 2007-08 UW-Extension Ag Agents surveyed 347 farms (309 primarily dairy farms, 38 custom heifer growers) on their use of sexed semen. The dairy producers were asked to answer questions on the lactating herd and heifers separately. While researchers are still hashing out the best situations to use sexed semen and how the economics work out, we wanted to get a better idea of the producer's perspective.

When asked the number one reason for using sexed semen, nearly half (48%) said that it was to expand the herd from within. The second most important reason was to produce more females from their best cows (24%). Service number was the number one criteria in determining when sexed semen would be used (30%). Not far behind was genetic merit of female (29%), followed by type of breeding (detected heat vs. timed AI) at 15%.



Farmers currently using sexed semen were asked to rank their satisfaction level for several factors. On a scale of 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), farmers were most satisfied (mean = 3.87) with the percentage of female calves born. Intermediate satisfaction levels were achieved for conception rate (mean = 3.10) and sire availability (mean = 3.09). The biggest dissatisfaction with sexed semen came from the higher price (mean = 2.92).

Nearly equal percentages of farmers said the number one reason keeping them from using sexed semen is that they are simply un-interested (25%), poorer fertility (24%), or the higher price (23%). Many producers (42%) had reasons other than semen price, dissatisfaction with sex ratio, or poor fertility for discontinuing the use of sexed semen. Nearly a third (31%), though, had quit because of poor fertility.

For more results of the survey go to:
www.uwex.edu/ces/dairyrepro/topics.cfm

The Northern Wisconsin Beef Producers with cooperation from Central Livestock Association has a portable 36 foot handling system for all livestock producers to rent. The cost to rent is \$125.00 per day, with free time for pick-up and return. The equipment must be power washed at the end of use at each farm before returning it. If interested, contact Rudy Erickson at 715.772.4798 or rumarfarm@wwt.net

UW Variety Trial Results

Several 2008 variety trial results publications have been released recently. Corn, soybeans, alfalfa, oat, and barley variety trial results are all available. These results are an excellent way to help in the decision making process of selecting varieties for 2009.

These trials provide results from multiple locations throughout the state along with some varieties

being tested for multiple years. The results should be particularly interesting considering the significant differences in growing conditions across the state last growing season. These results are all available on my website at:
www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/polk/ag/index.html



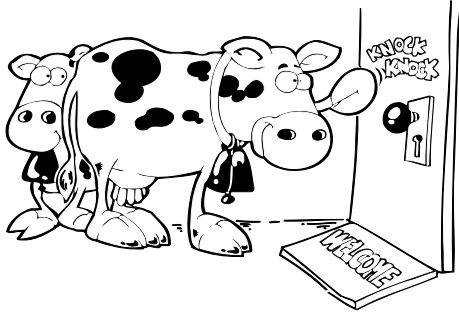
UPCOMING DATES

- January 13: Gaining the Competitive Edge: 2009 Dairy Roadshow, 10 am – 3 pm, Bremer Bank, Amery.
- January 15: Quickbooks Recordkeeping Class, 10 am – 3 pm, UW River Falls. Call 608-263-5665 to pre-register.
- January 16: Ag Outlook Forum, 12:30 – 4:30 pm, Government Center, Balsam Lake.
- January 22 – March 12 (Thursdays 11 am – 1:30 pm): Wisconsin School for Beginning Farmers at the Village Hall in Frederic.
- January 22: Cattle Feeders Workshop, 5:15 am meal with program at 6:15 pm, Spring Valley Banquet Hall.
- January 23 – February 13 (Fridays at 10:30 am): Northern Safari of Ag Specialists, Spooner Ag Station. Topics include Managing Fertilizer, the New Farm Bill, Zone Tillage Cropping Systems, and Low-Cost Milking Parlors and Small Scale Bio-Digesters. Call 1-800-528-1914 for more information.
- January 27-28: Rice Lake Farm Show, Red Cedar Mall, Rice Lake.
- January 29: Heart of the Farm, 10 am – 3 pm, Chippewa Falls, contact Jenny Vanderlin at 608-263-7795.
- Through January 31: EQIP sign up, contact the NCRS office at 485-3138.
- February: Farmer Written Nutrient Management Classes start.
- February 2: Polk County Dairy Promotion and Holstein Breeders Association Annual Meeting, 7:30 pm, Government Center, Balsam Lake.
- February 7: Indianhead Sheep Breeders Shepherd's Clinic, 8 am – 4 pm, WITC, Rice Lake.
- February 24: Private Pesticide Applicator Class and Exam, 10 am – 3:30 pm, Government Center in Balsam Lake.
- March 14: Northwest Graziers Network Winter Conference, 9:30 am – 3:30 pm, Spooner.
- March 31: AgSource Scholarship Due.

University of Wisconsin – Extension
Polk County Office
100 Polk County Plaza, Suite 210
Balsam Lake, WI 54810

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Ag Scene



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Requests for reasonable accommodations for disabilities or limitations should be made prior to the date of the program or activity for which it is needed. Please do so as early as possible prior to the program or activity so that proper arrangements can be made. Requests are confidential (ADA requirements).