

Sustainable Agriculture

Volume 7, Issue 6 – June 1999

Alternative swine systems is focus of U of M endowed chair

James Van Der Pol, a farmer from Kerkhoven, Minn., has been named to the School of Agriculture Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems at the University of Minnesota.

He will expand on work of previous chairs to address issues facing Minnesota's swine industry. Van Der Pol has 20 years of experience in alternative swine production practices, including pasturing and low-cost housing. In his one-year term in the endowed chair, he will work directly with the University's Alternative Swine Production Systems Program.

The alternative swine program began in July 1997 with a grant from the Minnesota Legislature. The program has been working to develop research and educational programming to assist swine producers in using alternative methods. Van Der Pol will split his time between the University's West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris and the St. Paul campus. He will work with faculty to develop an expanded research agenda. With the swine industry currently experiencing problems of overproduction and low market prices, Van Der Pol believes that the time is ripe for the University to enhance alternative swine work.

"Many farmers who want hog production to complement their farming are looking for something different in terms of their production and marketing techniques," he says. He says hogs can help farmers diversify, which can increase their financial and biological stability.

Ultimately, he hopes that generating and sharing new ideas between farmers and the University can lead to a better future for rural Minnesota. Interested parties are encouraged to interact directly with Van Der Pol as he continues to develop the chair program.

In addition to farming, Van Der Pol has produced and hosted the public television program "The New Farmer's Almanac" since 1995.

The School of Agriculture Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems was created in 1995 with funding from the Alumni Association of the former U of M School of Agriculture, the Minnesota Legislature, and the University of Minnesota. The chair program identifies major issues in agriculture and selects individuals and teams to address them.

The program's goal is to extend the School of Agriculture's legacy of providing agricultural leadership in Minnesota. The Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) manages the chair, with support from board members of the School of Agriculture Alumni Association. For more information, call MISA at 800-909-6472 or Van Der Pol directly at (320) 589-1711.

New legislation supports organic agriculture; cuts farmer demonstration program

Minnesota's Legislature and governor continued the Minnesota tradition of innovation in government by passing the Organic Agriculture Promotion and Education Act during the recent Legislative session. The new act supports the growth of organic agriculture in Minnesota and marks the first time an organic certification cost-share program will be implemented in the U.S.

Administered by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the bill will provide \$50,000 per year to reimburse farmers for up to two-thirds the cost of organic certification and provides additional funds for organic market and program development.

The bill also supports the growth of organic agriculture in the state through countering existing barriers such as lack of awareness by farmers, Extension agents and regulatory officials. It adds members to the Minnesota Organic Advisory Task force, adds organic farmers to a number of technical and loan panels at the Department of Agriculture and directs the University of Minnesota Extension Service to direct more time to supporting organic agriculture in the state.

The Energy and Sustainable Agriculture's popular research and demonstration grant program that funds on-farm, farmer-driven research did not fare as well at the Legislature. In some last minute action at the capitol, grant program funds were cut by \$100,000 for this coming year.

For more information, contact Prescott Bergh, (651) 215-0367 (e-mail prescott.bergh@state.mn.us) or Mary Hanks, (651) 296-1277 at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. — Prescott Bergh

Gary Lemme accepts Michigan position

Gary Lemme, head of the University of Minnesota West Central Research and Outreach Center at Morris, will be leaving Minnesota in late August to become associate director of the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station.

Lemme worked to build research and Extension programs at Morris to reflect the area's diversity in commodities and production systems. Based on dialogue with area citizens, programs were added or redirected to emphasize grazing, water quality, farm profitability, environmental stewardship and a broad spectrum swine program, including low capital production. Social and biological scientists plus Extension educators work on interdisciplinary teams to address complex issues.

A consistent theme with the Morris programs, Lemme says, is that people are involved in agriculture to provide their families the quality of life and economic security to meet contemporary expectations.

"Gary has done an outstanding job and will be deeply missed," says Phil Larsen, interim dean of the College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences. Lemme may be reached at (320) 589-1711, e-mail Lemme@caa.mrs.umn.edu.

Alternative Swine Production Systems program has new associate director

Wayne Martin is the new associate director for the University of Minnesota's Alternative Swine Production Systems program. The program emphasizes low capital systems such as deep-bedded housing, hoop structures and pasture farrowing. For more information, and to get on the mailing list to

receive information on field days, conferences and publications, contact Martin at (612) 625-6224, or toll-free 877-ALT-HOGS.

Calendar of 1999 events...

These events are sponsored by numerous organizations. More information is available on MISA's website: www.misa.umn.edu.

June 6, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., Browerville. Forestry Tour. Contact Greg Nolan and Marcia Rapatz, (320) 594-6317.

June 11, 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Angora. Forage Mixture Performance. There is a fee. Contact Russell Mathison, (218) 327-4352. In cooperation with Northeast Minnesota Forage and Grassland Council 1999 Forage Field Day.

June 12-13, Willmar. Working-Prairie: Roots of the Past Sustaining the Future. \$2 adults, \$1 children; door prizes and refreshments. Contact John and Leila Arndt, (320) 235-8465.

June 14, 2 p.m., Woodstock. Introduction of Feed Peas and Feed Barley into Whole Farm Planning. Lunch available. Contact Ken Winsel, (507) 777-4262.

June 16-17, Lakeville. Native Minnesota Medicinal Herb Production Feasibility Study. Seminar and field tour. Contact Renne Soberg, (612) 469-2527.

June 22, 8 p.m., Aldrich. Buckwheat Growers Annual Meeting. Contact Tom and DeEtta Bilek, (218) 445-5475.

June 22, Waseca. Southern Research and Outreach Center Crops and Soils Day. Call (507) 835-3620.

June 23, Lamberton. Southwest Research and Outreach Center Field Day. Contact Elizabeth Dyck, (507) 752-7372 or (507) 537-6454.

June 24, 10:30 a.m. to noon (Site 1), 1 to 2:30 p.m. (site 2), Dakota County. Applying Manure to Corn at Agronomic Rates to Achieve Desired Yield and Reduce or Eliminate the Need for Commercial Fertilizer Use. Contact Jeremy Geske, (651) 480-7704 or Tim Becket, (651) 480-7781.

June 25, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., Bertha/Eagle Bend. Pasture Walk at Dairy/Grazing Farm. Contact Randy Pitcher or Craig Williams, (218) 924-2134.

June 26, Jordan. Manure Composting and Beneficial Insects. Contact Caroline van Schaik, (651) 653-0618.

June 27, Hensler, N.D. Summer symposium: Creative Marketing; Organic Grain and Vegetable Production. Contact Tonya Haigh, (605) 627-5862 or Theresa Podoll (701) 883-4304.

July 6-8, St. Paul. Exploring Our Global Community: People, Food and Agriculture. Call (612) 625-7061, or see <http://globalag.coafes.umn.edu>.

July 8, Morris. Summer field day, West Central Research and Outreach Center. Contact Jean Spohr (320) 589-1711.

July 8, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., St. Cloud/Rockville. Pasture Walk and Farm Tour, Dairy/Grazing Farm. Contact Joe Molitor, (320) 252-0334.

July 8, 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., Delano. Attracting Parasitic Wasps to Control Cabbage Worms. Contact Uli Koester, Midwest Food Connection, (612) 874-7275.

July 8, 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Spring Valley. Low Input Conversion of CRP Land to High Profitability Management Intensive Grazing-Haying System. Contact Dan & Cara Miller, (507) 346-2261.

July 12, 6 to 9 p.m., Kensington. Converting a Whole Farm Cash Crop System to Sustainable Livestock Production with Intensive Rotational Grazing. Contact Edgar & Dan Persons, (320) 986-2212.

July 13, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. (tentatively), Janesville. Managing Dairy Manure in a Recycling Compost Program. Contact Norman & Sallie Volkmann, (507) 234-5846.

July 13-14, Fosston. Minnesota Alfalfa and Forage Expo. Contact Betty Schiefelbein (651) 436-3930.

July 15, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Madison. Making On-Farm Research More Than Demonstrations. Contact Carmen Fernholz, (320) 598-3010.

July 15, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., Wolf Lake. Farm Tour—Mushroom Production and Market Gardening. Contact Todd and Melanie Nelson, (218) 538-6617.

July 17, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sebeka. Sustainable Living Workshop. Registration required. Contact Steve and Kathy Connell, skatcon@wcta.net.

July 17, Noon to 1 p.m. (lunch), 1 to 3 p.m. (tour), Carlton. Grass and Forage Based Finishing of Beef and Pork. Contact Lake Superior Meats Cooperative, (218) 727-1414.

July 19, Clearwater. Homeplace Organic Beef Farm Tour. Contact Marvin and Laura Bihl, (612) 558-6392.

July 19, 2 p.m., Woodstock. Introduction of Feed Peas and Feed Barley into Whole Farm Planning. Contact Ken Winsel, (507) 777-4262.

July 19-20, Lake Maria Park, Monticello. Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota State Board Retreat and Meeting. Contact DeEtta Bilek, (218) 445-5475.

July 20, Grand Rapids. North Central Research and Outreach Center Small Grains Field Day. Call (218) 327-4490.

July 20, 10 a.m. to noon, Balaton. Reducing Chemical Usage by Using Soy Oil on Corn and Soybeans. Contact Donald Wheeler, (507) 734-5433.

July 22, Grand Rapids. North Central Research and Outreach Center Wild Rice Field Day. Call (218) 327-4490.

July 22, 1:30 to 5 p.m., Aitkin. Living Mulch for Weed Suppression in Strawberry Establishment. Contact Joe Riehle, (218) 297-2521.

July 22, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., Morris. Bio-Based Weed Control in Strawberry Using Sheep Wool Mulch, Canola Mulch, and Canola Green Manure. Horticulture Night at West Central Research and Outreach Center. Contact Emily Hoover or Steve Poppe, (320) 589-1711.

July 23, North Mankato, Land Stewardship Opportunities for Women Landowners Conference, at South Central Technical College. Contact Linda Meschke, (507) 235-3341.

July 29, Lamberton. Second Annual Organic Field Day, Southwest Research and Outreach Center. Contact Elizabeth Dyck or Paul Porter, (507) 752-7372.

July 29, 1 p.m., Grey Eagle. Saturation of Red Clover Field Seed with Honey Bees. Contact Leland Buchholz, (320) 285-5401.

July 30, Madison. Field Day at Earth Rise Farm: Community Supported Agriculture, Two Acres of Garden. Contact Annette and Kay Fernholz, (320) 568-2191.

About this newsletter...

For the past year we've been funded by the Minnesota Extension Service and the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) with support from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

We're always looking for story ideas. Send them to the editor: Jack Sperbeck, 405 Coffey Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108, (612) 625-1794. E-mail: jsperbeck@extension.umn.edu. Other editorial board members: Helene Murray (612) 625-0220, murra@021.tc.umn.edu; Tom Wegner (612) 374-8400, twegner@extension.umn.edu; and Bill Wilcke (612) 625-8205, wwilcke@extension.umn.edu

Our mission statement: To help bring people together to influence the future of agriculture and rural communities to achieve socially, environmentally and economically sustainable farms and communities.