

## From Your General Manager

Scot Janssen



Spring is here in a big way! This is exciting because it is something else to talk about besides COVID 19 news. The last half of April we have had an excellent run of field work getting done. In parts of NCC trade territory corn planting is complete and a lot of soybeans are in the ground.

We have had to change some of our processes and procedures because of COVID 19. I want to thank you for your patience during this pandemic. The spring rush always brings an increase in anxiety as we race against time to get the crop in the ground fighting with "Mother Nature" along the way. The NCC employees are here to help you maximize your operation's profitability. Thanks again and be safe!

We are planning to begin construction at our "green" site in Lansing. This would include a "one stop" dump pit, 20,000 bu./hr. leg, and a 105' diameter grain bin which will hold approximately 725,000 bushels. This new construction is part of a phase one project that we have been working on for quite some time. The plan is for this new construction to be up and running this fall.

I would encourage you to keep checking your bins. We are hearing some horror stories of grain going out of condition. I feel we have not seen the normal winter grain movement because of the weather and the price. Don't assume everything is fine in your bins. We are offering free price later if you need to move some or all of your grain.

We are putting a major emphasis on our accounts receivable. Our fiscal year end will be here soon and we want to make sure accounts are current. We thank you for your cooperation in keeping your account current.

I want to remind you that treated seed **cannot** be dumped in with regular grain. This mixing is a very serious offense. If you are caught with treated seed, your load will be rejected. One treated seed will contaminate the load. This is something no one wants to mess with. If you used your truck or wagon for transporting seed, make sure you clean them out before you haul grain to town.

We at Northern Country Coop appreciate your business and wish you a safe planting season.  
THANK YOU!

## Precision Ag

Dave Vaughan



Spring is fast arriving! First of all, I want to remind everyone to stay safe in the mad rush of spring field work and planting. Things are changing very rapidly in the world that we live. We are now limited to phone, email and texting to stay in contact with each other. The education system has changed, for now, as there is no teacher standing in front of the class going over the lesson plans they had prepared the previous week. Now the teacher is in front of a camera or has the lesson prerecorded and the students log onto the computer, watching it in a program called Zoom.

I had the opportunity to be part of these changes as I had prepared a 2-hour class lesson plan to be presented to students of a local community college that are the future generation of agriculture. My "in the classroom lecture" had to be recorded in the office. Then it was put on the internet for students to watch online.

One of the things that has not changed is the economic loss due to low soil pH. I took the time to break down the fertilizer cost for crop removal of 220 bu. corn and 60 bu. soybeans. The total N-P-K cost came to \$154.53 per acre. If the soil pH in that area was at 6.0 pH, then \$28.41 of that fertilizer would not be available to the plants. That is 19.3 percent of the fertilizer budget for that spot in the field that will never be available to the plants until the soil pH is corrected.

I also had the opportunity to show the students how we can place the fertilizer at higher rates in the lowest testing fertility areas of a field and not apply it to the high testing soil fertility areas. Thus, increasing the yield on the low end of the yield spectrum. This reallocation of resources is so critical to profitability in this time of low commodity prices. Now is the time that grid sampling your farms is so critical to maximize your return on investment.

Closed May 25th Memorial Day

## Grain Marketing

Shawn Mauer



What a difference a few weeks make. As I'm writing this, we just got a nice shower which should aid in helping the crops come out of the ground. It seems most of the corn is planted in our trade territory and soybean planting is off to a great start. Not bad for the 28th of April.

"Due to these uncertain times..." - seems every commercial in the media incorporates this phrase, and it certainly applies to our commodities markets also. Last week, crude futures traded negative for the first time in history and corn futures flirted with territory not seen since late 2008. Cash markets had to absorb the rapid deterioration of demand from falling ethanol production and the rethinking of a, somewhat tight, corn supply in the eastern corn belt. Initial thoughts that feed demand would improve have been put in doubt by Covid-19 health issues closing pork and beef packing plants and throwing the supply chain into disarray.

Corn and soybeans are waiting for a positive story and there just isn't one at this point. Weather might become one later, but not now. Maybe China, if they step up to the plate and make huge purchases instead of a few cargoes here and there. All of this negativity doesn't mean corn has to go dramatically lower. Although corn under \$3/bu. is possible. Funds are short around 200,000 contracts of corn which is large, but not a record. It certainly makes it rough to find reasons for corn to go up more than the little rallies that can happen for no reason. Whether based on technical, rumors, or a fund frenzy. The bottom line is, it's hard to find a true bullish scenario on corn that doesn't involve a major U.S. crop failure this summer.

If you haven't checked your grain bins lately, I would suggest you do so to check on the quality of the grain. Feel free to haul some in for the free price later which will need to be priced by August 31, 2020.

Thank you for your patronage and everyone stay safe and healthy.

## Western Edge

Brian Jacobs



As of today, I am still glad we live in this great U.S.A. Although the Corvid 19 pandemic, social distancing and everything else that goes with it, has caused us to adjust the way we do business and live our lives. I still feel we live in a society that can make these changes and become stronger from it. It is amazing how everyone can work together for the betterment of the people around us. Thank you to everyone who has adjusted their lives, so we can continue our daily operations.

We have had an awesome spring season so far! Corn planting is all but done and a fair amount of beans have already been planted. For the most part, we are only a half day behind on fertilizer and chemical applications. We appreciate the early orders and advance notice. It certainly makes planning a day a whole lot easier. The Western Edge has an almost new Miller row-crop sprayer for your spraying needs. This sprayer has 120 ft. booms and uses the Aim Command pulse nozzles system which maintains a very consistent spray pattern throughout a wide variety of field speeds. We also have float tires on this machine for putting down pre-emergent chemicals on corn and beans. Please give us a call for your spraying needs.

Grain markets have tanked, is an understatement. Everyone has a long list of "what ifs", but honestly, I don't think anyone has a clue as to where these markets might go. For sure, hindsight is twenty-twenty, but we need to concentrate on where we are at today. For the vast majority that still have grain stored on the farm, it is important to make sure we maintain quality. Check your bins! I think it will be important to take advantage of any up-ticks in the market and be prepared to sell, if we get any sort of a weather market.

As always, thank you for your business and let's hope for an enjoyable summer.

## Livestock Specialist

Brent Young



The world definitely has changed in a month. Hopefully, this finds everyone healthy. We won't beat a dead horse and review all the negatives that have happened. We can't change the past. We just need to look ahead to the future.

Spring planting is coming fast and a thing to consider, if forage is needed, is to plant a small grain. It can be used for a cover crop for an alfalfa seeding or without. Without alfalfa you have many options later. Direct seeded alfalfa in August, and sorghum or millet to be harvested this fall or seeded to winter rye are some options. Small grains make great feed and can stretch other forages as well.

Since we are talking about forage, first crop hay will be coming fast. We got most of our tonnage for the year at this time, but quality is usually the poorest. When it gets closer let me know so we can look at quality as it is standing in the field to maximize both tonnage and quality. Some of you also have some winter rye which will be harvested about that time as well. Like alfalfa being chopped, it needs to have moisture to ferment, be packed well to avoid spoilage and be chopped at a length to insure good packing.

Heat will be here soon. Are your fans and sprinklers ready to go? Do we need more fan capacity? Don't forget cooling for dry cows and pre-fresh cows as well. Make sure to provide extra water spaces if needed. Baby calves dehydrate fast in heat, so make sure free choice water is available. Free choice is good for all sizes of cattle.

On the cattle side, calving for the most part has been going fairly well. Some have started to rebreed cows. Pastures are starting to green up and hopefully cows will be enjoying them shortly. Before cows move to grass make sure they have been on a good mineral program to help with grass tetany. The wind and rain mineral is a good source of magnesium to help against this. Creep feeding will start for some with the early calves. Creep feeding gives you bigger calves come weaning, and helps save some body condition on momma which generally helps her breed back quicker. There are different options depending on what you want to do.

The fed market is what it is. I do believe we will see brighter days later this year. It may be a good opportunity to place some cattle even though it doesn't look profitable at this point. Keep your yards current if you can to avoid the over fats. Provide extra water space and salt, as well, during summer heat.

I know the last few weeks have been a challenge. Keep your head high and remember you are an essential part of feeding the world! Enjoy a steak at home with a root beer float. Stay safe and give the ones you're sheltered in with an extra hug.

# Counterintuitive To Say The Least

By: Doug Frodl



I can honestly say that if you would have asked me at any point in my career of ways to slow pigs down instead of making them grow faster and more efficiently, I would have said that is counterintuitive and doesn't make sense. Why would a person want to do that? Well, thanks to Covid19 and the ripples it has created over the past few weeks I have spent more time formulating and then re-formulating diets with a wide array of ingredients and combinations of ingredients, that have led me to spend a lot of time trying to answer that question. As I have been working through some of the diet/formulation changes, I have also been wondering about other options a producer could consider that would be the best fit for their operation. I will try to explain a few of them and provide the pro's and con's associated with them.

Given the goal to slow pigs down the table below gives some examples of what could be done and the pro's and con's of each.			
Actionable Item	Impact	Pro's	Con's
Tighten feeder settings	Low	Will limit feed intake	Could increase fighting
		Little stress associated with it	Could lead to more ulcers
			Could lead to more HBS
Restrict feedings	(Could be) Great	You are in control of caloric intakes	Creates more variation
		Increased fighting	
		Could really slow growth	More ulcers
			More HBS or even ileitus
Feed straight corn	Mid	Constant feed in front of pigs 24/7	Creates more variation
			No VTM component
			Leg/structure issues
			Pigs will be fatter
Increase fiber levels	Mid	Constant feed in front of pigs 24/7	Ingredients are hard to come by
		Still have the VTM component	Creates more variation
			Takes time to slow them down - not instant
Lower energy levels	Mid	Constant feed in front of pigs 24/7	Ingredients are hard to come by
		Still have the VTM component	Takes time to slow them down - not instant
			Creates more variation
Lower amino acid levels / VTM levels or widening Ca:P ratio	Low	Little stress associated with it	Takes time to slow them down - not instant
		Constant feed in front of pigs 24/7	Cheapens up the diet cost BUT will increase cost/# gain
Increase particle size	Low	Little stress associated with it	Takes time to slow them down - not instant
		Will help flowability	
		Constant feed in front of pigs 24/7	
Increase barn temp's		For every 2 Degrees above thermoneutral zone ADFI drops by .1#/day	Could increase LP/Utility costs
			Warmer air carries more humidity/diseases
Crowding above 265# - Mkt.	Low	Helps w/ pig flow (to a degree)	Increased fighting
		Slows growth slightly	Creates more variation
Mixing of pigs	Low	Slows growth slightly	Increased fighting
			Creates more variation
Remove toxin binders, additives, etc.	Low	Slows growth slightly	Could worsen health
		Lowered feed cost/ton	

All of the changes above will have a negative impact on growth and performance and these suggestions are intended solely as a guide to consider and do not constitute any guarantee of performance. Variability in management, environment and breed may dictate changes in the animal's behavior, requirements and performance otherwise.

The other thing to consider is how these changes will not only impact the pigs needed to sell in the short-term, but how this will slow the pig flow, thereafter, down. I don't think anyone has a crystal ball that tells them when we will need to have the normal flow of pigs into packers, so how hard to push and when to stop pushing will be an elusive question to answer.

All of these changes will slow pigs down and will cause other ripples in an operation due to flow and associated things and are to be considered carefully with your management team. My suggestion would be to spend some time thinking through all the options and proceed with extreme caution while executing flawlessly.

The times we are in are absolutely uncharted territory for everyone. Here at Northern Country Coop we are here to help you make the best decision for your operation. Please do not hesitate to contact either Jim Yoch or myself if you want help "thinking thru" things. NCC is willing to make adjustments to your feeding program coupled with ingredient availability and truly value your business.

Thank you for your business and we will get through this together.

**Contact DON HOFLAND at 507-438-8086**  
**if you, or someone you know, is interested in running for a seat on Northern Country Coop's Board of Directors.**  
 The three seats are currently held by Alan Akkerman in Lansing-Brownsdale area, David Huper in Alden area and Rick Smith in Adams-Rose Creek area.

**MEET THE NCC SUMMER INTERNS**  
 Kolton Arndorfer—Shelby Blake—Devan Hackenmiller—Dakotah Patterson—Emily Snyder