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Spring Guide 2012

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The Sibley Shopper

April 1, 2012

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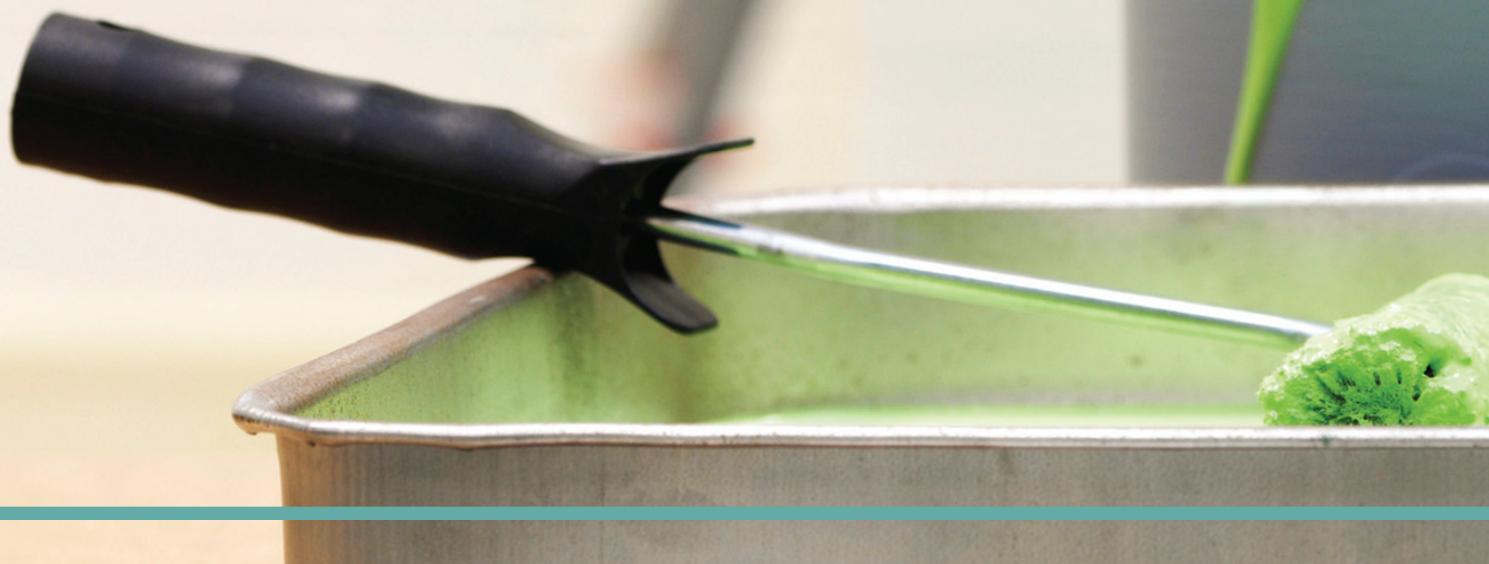
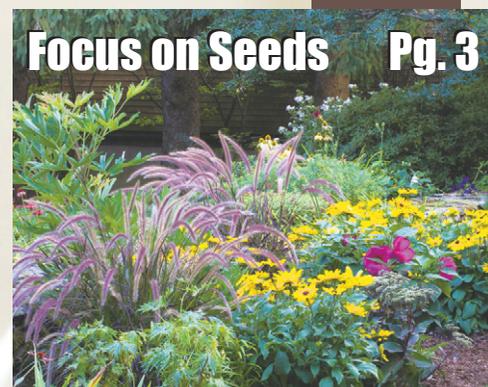
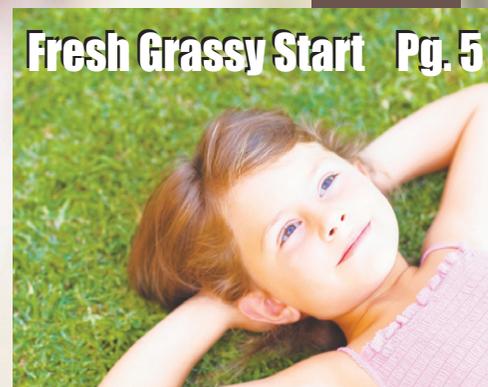
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To rid your garden of weeds, focus on seeds

ARA Content

Every garden is filled with them: millions of unseen weeds. They are dormant seeds that lurk just below the soil surface, ready to spring to life with just the briefest exposure to light.

Weeds can choke a garden, robbing it of space, nutrients and water. Allowing weeds to mature compounds the problem, as they are naturally prolific seed producers. They grow aggressively and can be tough to get rid of, because pulling weeds brings more weed seeds to the surface.

The good news is that seeds can also be key to winning the war on garden weeds.

To break the weeding cycle, the experts at Preen suggest a strategic approach that stops weeds before they start, by preventing their seeds from germinating in the first place.

"If weeds don't grow, you don't have to pull them," says Preen's Maryanne Bayoumy. "For gardeners, a simple annual weed prevention routine can free up a lot of time."

Start with a clean slate

Early spring is the ideal time to launch a weed prevention program, Bayoumy says. "But it's never too late, or too early,



Following a weed prevention routine results in a weed-free garden that is more attractive and easier to maintain.

to start. Different types of weeds germinate at different times throughout the growing season: spring, summer and fall."

First, remove existing weeds to start with a clean slate. The old garden proverb that "one year's seeds yield seven years' weeds" is based on the ability of many mature weeds to produce tens of thousands of seeds - per plant, per season. There are weed killers, but even dead weeds need to be removed if

you do not want unsightly brown patches in the garden. So you may find it cheaper and easier to simply remove existing weeds by hand.

Mulch is the first line of defense

Weed seeds begin to grow when exposed to light. Even a minuscule flash of sunlight is enough to activate them. A 3-inch layer of mulch helps block light and retain moisture, keeps soil and plant roots cooler, adds organic matter and a nice tidy look to the garden. Popular mulches include shredded wood bark, cocoa hulls and pine straw.

Stop weeds before they start

Mulch deals with weed seeds in the soil, but the mulch itself may contain seeds, plus new seeds are continually carried into mulch and garden soil by wind, birds or animals. For a "one-two punch" against sprouting seeds in the top layer of soil and mulch, apply weed preventer on top of mulch. Once watered in to activate, it bonds to soil particles and is effective for three to four months, before biodegrading. It does not wash away or leach into groundwater.

The campaign continues

As different weeds' seeds germinate throughout the growing season, it is good to refresh mulch and weed preventer as needed in mid-summer or early fall to keep the prevention barrier at full force.

Next spring, restart your weed prevention routine. Following an annual anti-weed routine can result in considerably fewer weeds over time. And time is what it is all about: no weeds, no time wasted weeding!



Spring is a perfect time to begin a pre-emergent weed prevention routine, but it is never too late to begin because different types of weeds germinate at different times.



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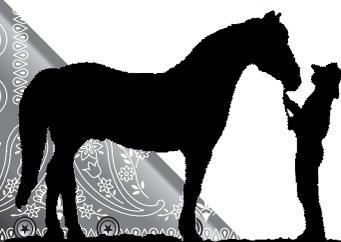


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Give grass a fresh start this spring

ARA Content

Grass is an extraordinary plant, the unsung hero of backyards everywhere. With proper care and feeding, grass can help clean the air, cool the ground, reduce erosion and provide one of the softest outdoor play surfaces. With all of these amazing benefits, it pays to start the spring season off right by giving grass a boost.

The drought and heat of last summer, combined with uncharacteristic winter temperatures in many regions, may have taken a toll on the lawn, but getting it back on the road to recovery is easy. Moderate temperatures and increased precipitation in spring are perfect for repairing, seeding and feeding grass. Well-nourished grass withstands harsh conditions better, and provides a lush, durable place to play while squeezing out unwanted weeds by blocking access to sunlight. Follow these tips to take your grass from tired to terrific.

Seed

Fill in bare or thin spots with grass seed to encourage a thick lawn, helping prevent weeds from invading your lawn by blocking access to sunlight. Use a high-quality seed appropriate for your region, to fill in thin spots and thicken the lawn. To repair larger areas, use a grass seed with a coating.

Feed

Grass needs nutrients to grow strong, deep roots that can endure harsh conditions and grow in thick to help block ac-

ing new grass to promote root growth and seedling development.

When seeding or feeding, use a spreader for larger areas to direct lawn food only



cess to sunlight for weeds. If the lawn does not need reseeding, use a high-quality lawn food. This lawn food can be used in any season on any grass type, and delivers balanced nutrients for strong, thick grass. Use a starter fertilizer when plant-

where desired – on the lawn and off hard surfaces – and out of storm sewers. This spreader combines the accuracy of a drop spreader with the speed of a rotary spreader.

Mow

Set your mower at the highest setting and leave grass clippings on the lawn. Mow frequently to avoid removing more than one third of the grass height, and do so when grass is dry to avoid damp clumps that could smother grass. Leaving clippings on the lawn recycles nutrients stored in the clippings keeping the soil cooler, encouraging deeper root growth and enriching the soil with organic material.

Keep these simple mowing tips in mind every time you head out to trim the grass: Mow your grass at the highest setting, keep grass clippings on the lawn and water only when needed.

Water

Grass that is fed and kept at a taller height develops deep roots which are better able to conserve water and withstand periods of heat and drought. Rely on rainfall as the primary source of water. During periods of drought, the lawn can go without water for an extended time. Even though the lawn may look brown and wilted, it will recuperate after the rain returns. If you do choose to irrigate the lawn, water less frequently for a longer period of time rather than short frequent waterings.

These tips for a great lawn will provide a foundation for a fun-filled summer in your own backyard.

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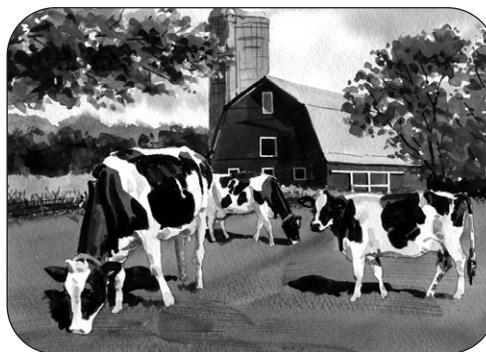


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From rotten melons, to new gardening product

By Karin Ramige
McLeod Publishing, Inc.

Just a couple of years ago, Chris Schroeder was new to gardening, now she is the inventor of a new gardening product, the Rot-Not™.

After she, and husband Dan, moved from a house with a small lot in Shakopee to a 20-acre hobby farm just outside of Green Isle, the couple started their first 12 foot by 12 foot garden.

At the end of the growing season they found that the melons and squash were rotten. "I didn't know I had to turn them," Chris said.

She asked fellow gardeners at a local farmers market how to remedy the problem. The common answer was to set the melons and squash on cinder blocks.

After carrying one or two cinder blocks to the garden, she knew there must be a better solution.

She then cut up laundry detergent bottles to help prop the produce off of the ground. "That just wasn't sturdy enough," she added.

This began an in depth search online for a product for this particular problem and found nothing.

With good old paper and pencil, Chris drew out what she needed. An 8.5-inch-by 4.5-inch durable plastic apparatus to help keep the produce off the ground.

Not sure where to go from her notebook, Schroeder saw an ad on TV for InventHelp™.



Following a weed prevention routine results in a weed-free garden that is more attractive and easier to maintain.

With financial help from her mom, Kathy Hisle, she contacted InventHelp™ and started the process.

InventHelp™ did the patent search to ensure there wasn't another product like it out there, registered the name, and helped with a lot of the legal aspects involved.

In 2009, Chris was invited to INPEX in Las Vegas, one of the largest invention

trade shows sponsored by InventHelp™.

At the show, Chris was approached by a Chinese company that offered to produce the mold and product for a reasonable price.

It was important to Chris that the product be produced in the United States and be free of plastic with toxins and other foreign materials.

She then met with a company in North Minneapolis that wanted \$35,000 to make the mold.

The search continued until she met with Brian Jilek of Suburban Mold & Machine, Inc. in Glencoe.

Together Schroeder and Jilek worked to make the mold locally in a price range that was reasonable.

Schroeder then found Taurus Engineering and Manufacturing, Inc. in Faribault to produce the product.

These partnerships not only accomplished the goal of having the products produced in the United States, but all within 60 miles of Green Isle.

Rot-Not's™ are made of 100 percent recycled plastic and can be reused from year to year.

As melons, squash, pumpkins and gourds start forming, place them on the Rot-Not™ while the stems are long enough and flexible.

As the product started coming off the production line, last summer, Schroeder was able to secure a booth at the Sibley County Fair to promote the Rot-Not™. She hopes to be there again this year. She was also invited to the McLeod County Master Gardeners Horticulture Education day, on March 31, at the McLeod County Fairgrounds.

What else is next for Rot-Not? Schroeder

Rot-Not™
continued on page 9

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Rot-Not™

continued from page 7

er would like to see the product go world-wide.

“Belly rot’ isn’t a problem that is specific to Minnesota, its an international problem,” Schroeder commented.

She has applied to the ABC television program *Shark Tank*, and started the vendor registration process with large retailers such as Target.

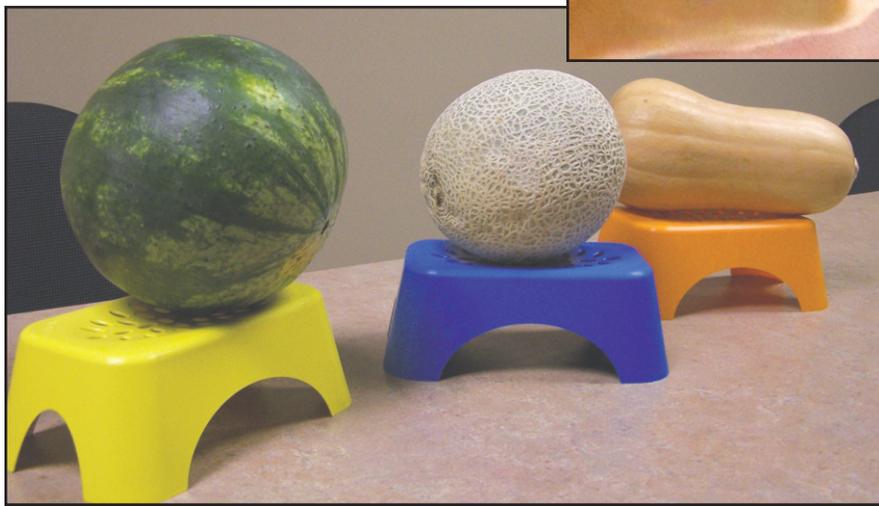
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Schroeder is also currently working with retailers in North Dakota, Idaho,

Massachusetts, and Texas.

Today, while the Schroeders are not working full time for the Minnesota Department of Transportation or promoting Rot-Not™, they are getting ready to plant their 60 foot by 180 foot garden.

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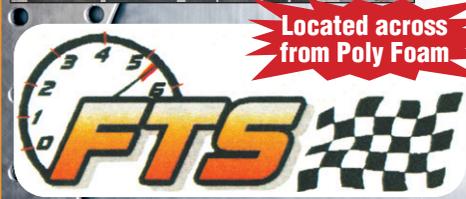
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Private well owners urged to have their water tested

More than 1 million people residing in more than 400,000 households in Minnesota rely on private wells as their source of drinking water.

While wells can provide high quality drinking water, state health officials observe that most wells are rarely tested on a regular basis for things that can make consumers of the well water sick, such as bacteria, arsenic or nitrate.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) estimates that at any given time, as many as 25 percent of private wells in Minnesota have detectable levels of total coliform bacteria, an indication that surface contamination has entered the well or water system. National Groundwater Awareness Week was established more than two decades ago to bring attention to the important role that groundwater plays in the health and well-being of people.

Properly maintaining wells that tap into groundwater is critical for protecting personal health and the health of the resource. This year's observance, was a good time for well owners to put "Test Well" on their "to-do" list, say state well management specialists.

MDH recommends that private wells be tested once a year for total coliform bacteria, an indicator of bacterial contamination. Testing for nitrate is recommended every two to three years – more often if nitrate has been detected previously in the

well or if an infant under the age of 6 months will be consuming the water.

In addition, MDH recommends that every well be tested for arsenic at least once. Testing your well is up to you. Getting your well tested is a relatively simple process. Your local county health department may provide or arrange for testing services.

Commercial (or private) laboratories providing water testing services are usually listed in the Yellow Pages under "Laboratories – Testing." You should check to make sure the laboratory is certified to perform tests that you want. The laboratory will provide directions for collecting and submitting water samples for testing.

The costs for analysis are usually in the range of \$20 to \$40 per test, depending on what is tested. More information on well testing can be found at: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/wells/waterquality/test.html>.

People with questions about well water contaminants – or other well related issues – can obtain advice from MDH, their local health department, or local MDH-licensed well contractors. Well specialists are available to answer questions at MDH district offices in Bemidji (218-308-2100), Duluth (218-723-4642), Fergus Falls (218-332-5150), Marshall (507-537-7151), Rochester (507-206-2700), St. Cloud (320-223-7300), and the Twin Cities (651-201-4600).

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Guest column:

Understanding the impact of pesticides and choose those with the least impact

Karl Foord,
UMN Extension educator

Often see recommendations to use the pesticide with the least impact when controlling pests. However, prior to spraying every effort should be made to avoid pest outbreaks by using the best management practices for a particular crop. For example, most fungi need a period of wetness for their spores to germinate. Managing systems to permit maximum airflow reduces drying time on leaves and reduces the opportunities for fungal spores to germinate.

For the purposes of this article let us assume that all best efforts were made and a spray as the last resort was required. How would you go about choosing the one with the least impact?

The first question might be impact on whom, with the second being how one would measure such impact.

At a University of California Davis website a series of pesticides is listed. Each pesticide is rated according to its impact on aquatic live, beneficial insects, honeybees, and humans. The human impact is separated into acute and long term impacts. Acute being what can happen to you today, and long term being what can happen over a number of years due to continued exposure at lower dosage rates.

Each chemical is given a potential hazard rating based on a series of other documents and warnings on the chemical's

label. These are complicated but can be accessed at the website previously mentioned.

The ratings range from no risk, no known risk, and very low risk to very high risk or no data available. For those pesticides labeled for strawberry, the impact information has been consolidated into a table where the materials have been ranked from lowest risk to those of highest risk (table 1).

For example if you encountered slugs (mollusks) in your strawberries, the less impactful of the two active ingredients would be iron phosphate and not metaldehyde. So looking for a product with this as the active ingredient would be the first choice.

If you encountered tarnished plant bug in your strawberries, you would want to choose an insecticidal soap as a first choice over malathion. If you were forced to go to malathion, you would realize that you would want to avoid any situation where the spray could get into surface water. You would also want to be particularly sensitive beneficial insects and honeybee pollinators and not spray when they are active, most likely after dark.

This table should permit you to select the least impactful chemical, and to apply it in a manner producing the least impact through an understanding what organisms were at risk from the application.

Benefits of Affordable Care Act to rural Americans

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently discussed how the Affordable Care Act is building a stronger health system in rural communities and providing better care for farm families and the agricultural community.

"No one should have to go without health care because of where they live, and for too long, rural Americans have been getting the short end of the health care stick," said Vilsack.

"The Affordable Care Act is helping millions of young people access health care, strengthening Medicare, and training thousands of new doctors to serve rural areas to give middle-class families the health security they deserve."

Two years ago, President Obama signed the act into law and the law is giving Americans more freedom in their health care choices, lowering costs, and improving the quality of care, he said.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act:

- 2.5 million more young adults have health insurance on their parent's plan.
- 3.6 million seniors with Medicare in 2011 alone saved an average of \$600 on the cost of their prescription drugs. And everyone on Medicare can get preventive services like mammograms for free.
- Insurance companies must spend at least 80 percent of your premium dollars on health care and quality improvements and not overhead, and cannot raise your premiums by 10 percent or more with no accountability.
- It is illegal for insurance companies to deny coverage to children because of a pre-existing condition. And in 2014, discriminating against anyone with a pre-existing condition will be illegal.

As chair of the White House Rural Council, Vilsack is working to ensure that rural Americans are aware of the many ways the new health care law helps them. Specifically, rural families will see improved access to care, new options for those with pre-existing conditions, coverage for young adults so they can take local jobs and contribute to their rural economies, and reduced insurance barriers to emergency services.

Here are a few components of how the law is helping rural families:

- Encourages thousands of new primary care doctors and nurses to practice in rural communities and increases payments to rural health providers.
- Removes insurance barriers to emergency services. Rural citizens can seek care from a hospital outside their health plan's network when there is no time to travel to a hospital that is farther away.
- Gives options for those with pre-existing conditions and forbids insurers from using an unintentional error in your application to cancel your coverage when you get sick.
- Gives seniors freedom to get the care they need, including free preventive care,

lower cost prescription drugs, and Medicare they can count on.

- Gives farm families the flexibility to keep children on their parent's health insurance until they are 26. Having health insurance allows young people to remain locally and contribute to their rural economies.

This has more about how the Affordable Care Act helps Rural America. In 2012, as part of a series of recommendations from the White House Rural Council, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor signed a memorandum of understanding to connect community colleges and technical colleges that support rural communities with the materials and resources they need to support the training of health information technology (HIT) professionals that work in rural hospitals and clinics.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that the needed HIT workforce will increase by 20 percent by 2016. Also due to efforts by the White House Rural Council, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between USDA Rural Development and Health and Human Services (HHS) to improve collaboration and strengthen the healthcare infrastructure in rural communities.

This MOU will connect rural hospitals and clinicians to existing capital loan programs that enable them to purchase software and hardware to implement HIT.

Over the last three years, USDA has worked within existing programs to invest in rural healthcare, providing funding to improve nearly 600 rural health facilities serving more than 11 million Americans.

Programs have funded equipment – like CT scans, MRIs, ultrasound and lab equipment. Since 1974, more than 40 percent of USDA Rural Development's Community Facilities Programs' portfolio has been invested in rural health care facilities.

Over three years, USDA has also awarded grants and loans to help rural health facilities serving 730 counties expand opportunities – though telemedicine – to provide advanced diagnosis for patients or to consult with colleagues at other hospitals.

The Affordable Care Act is giving rural Americans more freedom in their health care choices, lowering costs, and improving the quality of care. Learn more about the new law and how to take advantage of these benefits by visiting www.healthcare.gov.

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Fun Farm Facts

- Mature turkeys have more than 3,500 feathers.
- There are 47 different breeds of sheep in the U.S.
- Pork is the most widely eaten meat in the world.
- The average person consumes 584 pounds of dairy products a year.
- 160 degrees Fahrenheit is the correct cooking temperature to ensure safe and savory ground beef.
- Elevators in the Statue of Liberty use a soybean-based hydraulic fluid.

- Like snowflakes, no two cows have exactly the same pattern of spots.
- The longest recorded flight of a chicken is 13 seconds.
- Twenty-nine cuts of beef meet government guidelines for lean.
- The average dairy cow produces seven gallons of milk a day, 2,100 pounds of milk a month, and 46,000 glasses of milk a year.
- Turkeys originated in North and Central America, and evidence indicates that they have been around for more than 10 million years.

- Agriculture employs more than 24 million American workers (17% of the total U.S. work force).
- Today's American farmer feeds about 155 people worldwide. In 1960, that number was 25.8.
- Raising beef cattle is the single largest segment of American agriculture.
- One pound of wool can make 10 miles of yarn. There are 150 yards (450 feet) of wool yarn in a baseball.
- Soybeans are an important ingredient for the production of crayons. In fact, one acre of soybeans can produce 82,368 crayons.

- The heaviest turkey ever raised weighed 86 pounds, about the size of an average third-grader.
- Cows have four stomachs and can detect smells up to six miles away!
- Cows are herbivores, so they only have teeth on the bottom.
- There are 350 squirts in a gallon of milk.
- Cows must give birth to a calf in order to produce milk.

Source: <http://www.farmersfeedus.org/fun-farm-facts/>

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Klobuchar bipartisan provision on restoring hours-of-service

Exemption would make it easier for farmers to transport goods and get products to market during critical planting and harvesting seasons

U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., announced that her bipartisan provision co-sponsored by Senator Pat Roberts, R-Kans., ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, to fully restore the Agriculture hours-of-service exemption across the full food and farm supply chain passed the Senate as part of a larger Surface Transportation bill.

Restoring the exemption would make it easier for farmers to transport goods and get products to the market during critical planting and harvesting seasons. Klobuchar serves on the Senate Agriculture Committee and Senate Commerce Committee.

“During the planting and harvesting seasons, farmers need to be able to get fertilizer and other supplies to their farms quickly and efficiently, otherwise their crops and businesses may suffer,” Klobuchar said. “This initiative will help ensure that unnecessary red tape doesn’t get in the way of our farmers having the resources and tools they need to successfully run their farms and provide the food and fuel our country needs.”

Currently, drivers transporting agricultural supplies during the planting and harvesting periods are only exempt from hours-of-service (HOS) rules – which limit when and how long truck drivers may drive – when they are transporting just one farm supply from just the retailer to the farms, and the exemption does not include any other goods or supplies transported from the farm to retailer or source to the retailer – a critical segment of the farm and food supply chain.

Klobuchar’s provision would fully restore the HOS exemption to agriculture goods transported from source to retailer to farm, allowing for an uninterrupted supply chain that will help ensure farmers get the supplies they need in a timely and efficient manner.

The bill is supported by nearly 50 national and state agricultural organizations including the Minnesota Grain and Feed Association, the National Farmers Union, the National Farm Bureau, the Cooperative Network, and the American Soybean Association.

Farm Policy Facts

- Agriculture employs more than six times as many workers as the U.S. automotive industry.

- Agriculture is one of the few U.S. business sectors to boast a trade surplus, exporting \$132 billion in farm goods in 2011.

- Americans spend just 9.5% of their income on food—less than any other country.

- U.S. farms sold \$369 billion in goods in 2010—that’s bigger than the GDPs of nearly 200 countries.

- The most profitable side of the food business is in processing and marketing, not the farmer’s share. In fact, for every dollar that consumers spend on food, farmers receive just 20 cents.

- Of the \$4.39 retail price of a box of cereal, farmers receive just 8 cents.

- Of the \$3.99 retail price of a bag of potato chips, farmers receive less than 10 cents.

- The United States has the safest, most affordable, and most abundant food supply in the world.

- According to a recent study by Harris Interactive, 95% of Americans think it is important to produce food domestically.

- 96% of U.S. farms are run by families, farmer partnerships, or co-ops.

- The Bureau of Engraving and Printing depends on farmers to produce paper currency—75% of every bill is made of cotton.

- Texas, Missouri, Iowa, Oklahoma, and Kentucky have the most farms.

- California, Iowa, Texas, Nebraska, and Illinois have the highest agriculture sales.

- 13% of U.S. agricultural exports originate in California.

- Commodity policies in the 2008 farm bill cost less than one-quarter of one percent of the federal budget—about 25 cents out of every \$100 paid in taxes.

- Only 11% of funding in the farm bill goes to farm policies.

- More than 84% of farm bill-related spending goes to food and nutrition programs like food stamps, not to farmers.

- Farm policy funding has fallen sharply in the last decade. It was slashed in the 2008 farm bill by \$7.4 billion, and again in 2010 by \$6 billion.

- U.S. farm policy costs Americans just 2.3 cents per meal of 6.9 cents a day.

- Compared to other major agricultural producers around the globe, the U.S. ranks near the bottom of the subsidization and tariff scale.

- Over the life of the 2008 farm bill, total conservation spending increases from \$3.7 billion in 2008, to \$7.15 billion in 2021, more than the amount for traditional farm policies.

- Agricultural land provides habitat for 75% of the nation’s wildlife.

- About 46% of the country is farmland—that’s an area more than ten times the size of California and greater than twice the size of Alaska.

Source: <http://www2.farmpolicyfacts.org/index.php/real-facts/>

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SIBLEY COUNTY AGRICULTURAL PROFILE

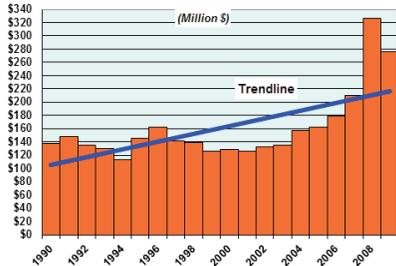
Sibley County:

- Population: 15,226 – ranks 57th in MN
- Total employment: 5,947 jobs
 - Farm employment: 1,136 jobs
 - Non-farm employment: 4,811 jobs

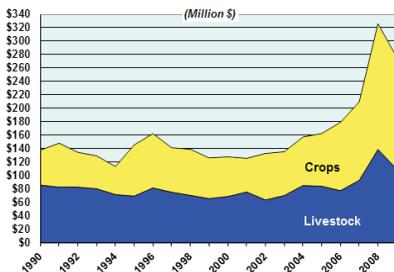
Sibley County Agricultural Rankings:
(Among all MN counties)

- No. 24 in crop production
 - No. 15 in sugarbeet
 - No. 17 in corn
 - No. 19 in soybeans
- No. 29 in livestock production
 - No. 7 in poultry
 - No. 16 in milk cows

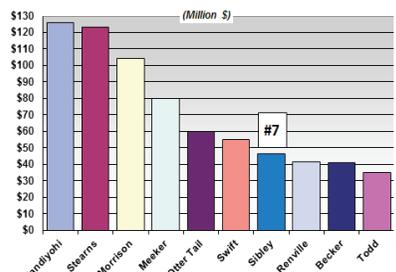
Sibley County Agricultural Marketing



Sibley County Crop & Livestock Marketing



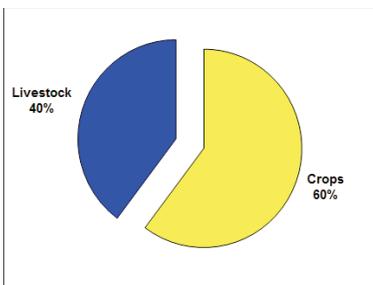
Minnesota Top Counties: Poultry



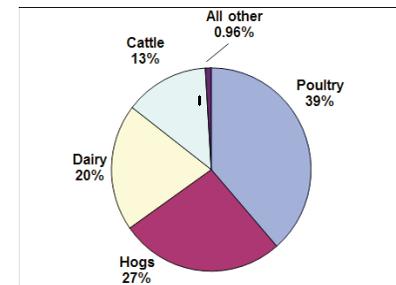
Sibley County: Agricultural Rankings among Minnesota Counties

Item	Quantity	State Rank
MARKET VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS SOLD (\$1,000)		
Total value of agricultural products sold	243,979	20
Value of crops including nursery and greenhouse	124,116	23
Value of livestock, poultry, and their products	119,863	19
VALUE OF SALES BY COMMODITY GROUP (\$1,000)		
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas	117,365	16
Tobacco	-	-
Cotton and cottonseed	-	-
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes	4,575	20
Fruits, tree nuts, and berries	24	55
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod	52	66
Cut Christmas trees and short rotation woody crops	-	-
Other crops and hay	2,099	33
Poultry and eggs	46,267	7
Cattle and calves	16,293	29
Milk and other dairy products from cows	24,217	16
Hogs and pigs	31,931	25
Sheep, goats, and their products	122	43
Horses, ponies, mules, burros, and donkeys	108	31
Aquaculture	-	-
Other animals and other animal products	925	12
TOP CROP ITEMS (acres)		
Corn for grain	171,977	15
Soybeans for beans	102,480	25
Forage - land used for all hay and haylage, grass silage, and greenchop	9,773	54
Vegetables harvested for sale	8,676	11
Sweet corn	4,437	9
TOP LIVESTOCK INVENTORY ITEMS (number)		
Layers	2,567,002	1
Pullets for laying flock replacement	(D)	1
Hogs and pigs	110,317	26
Cattle and calves	31,140	23
Colonies of bees	10,916	3

Sibley County Crop & Livestock



Sibley County Livestock Sectors



Source: USDA/NASS



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