

# the Practical Farmer

Practical Farmers of Iowa newsletter

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 1

## FARM FIELD DAY AT ALLEE

The research farm described by ISU President Gordon Eaton at the PFI annual meeting last fall will have its first field day. Although the plots are not at the stage where results are available, PFI members can now see the results of discussion between ISU and PFI members. The experiments have been designed to show differences among farming practices in a way to interest university researchers and to include new techniques suggested by PFI members. Here is a copy of the news release.

### New Farming System Project Highlighted at Allee Field Day

NEWELL, Iowa--A new farming system project that compares three farming systems with different levels of management will be highlighted at the Allee field day Wednesday, July 1, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Keith Whigham, Iowa State University agronomist, will give an overview of the project. Mike Duffy, ISU Extension economist, will explain how to make economic comparisons among farming systems.

Alternative weed control methods

will be discussed by Richard Fawcett, extension weed scientist. Plots at the farm will help demonstrate these alternatives.

Dean Grundman, extension integrated pest management coordinator, will talk about reducing costs and increasing profits by using integrated pest management.

Dennis Dewitt, extension livestock production specialist, and Jim McKean, extension veterinarian, will discuss eliminating sulfa residues in market hogs and the early results of ISU research trials on sulfa withdrawal.

The field day is open to the public. The research center is located one mile south of Newell.

If you have questions you should ask you local extension director or you can call Dean Grundman, IPM coordinator (515) 294-8352.

Although this field day will have mostly experiments in early stages, it is a good time to show the university researchers how strong is the interest for this kind of research. We can be sure that the university will allocate its support for this station and other research like it based on the

interest it can see. Crowds of people at field days are a good indication to administrators that this research is important.

Newell is located in northwest Iowa near Storm Lake.

### PFI BOARD MEETING

The PFI Board of Directors meeting on Saturday, June 6 was an opportunity for each director to catch up on the many activities that have happened since the last board meeting in January. In particular, PFI members have actively promoted PFI goals and sought money through contact with state legislators. For the most part, this was a new experience. PFI does not have a fancy lobbyist with a large expense account to court legislators. We are fortunate to have some friends with experience to guide us through the maze of who to talk to and when.

Dick and Sharon Thompson made a presentation to the House Agriculture Committee (Dick Osterberg, chair). Then, in a different meeting, they made a proposal for money for PFI. PFI has been negotiating for several months for money to hire a person to coordinate research among the farms, promote PFI in the media, and other duties so the directors would have more time to plan long-term PFI directions and to operate their own farms. The exact nature and duties of the coordinator will depend on the source of money (for example the state, or private foundations).

These talks by PFI directors with state officials yielded an allocation in the proposed state budget. This allocation passed both houses but was line-item vetoed by the governor. Directors Dick Thompson and Ron Rosmann

fought to keep the word "Organic" out of the bill because of the polarization and misconceptions that usually go with it. One of the main goals of PFI is to bring action through cooperation, and this requires a broad view. All is not over yet because other sources of money have also shown interest in funding PFI.

### ALDO LEOPOLD CENTER

The State Legislature voted to establish a research center, The Aldo Leopold Center, to study ways to reduce groundwater pollution from farming and to study other conservation practices for agriculture. The governor still has not signed the bill. The money will come from taxes and fees on fertilizer and pesticide use and dealers. This money will be controlled by a committee that will include university people from Ames, Iowa City, and Cedar Falls, as well as some farmers. PFI members could have a good influence on the supervision of this research to be sure that it stays with the original mission of research that will directly help farmers. These farmer members for the committee will probably be selected through conservation districts. Please contact your conservation district director or your state legislator if you are interested.

### 1987 FARM FIELD DAYS

The PFI directors have worked hard to arrange the field days for this year. The field day for the southeast district was held June 22. A description appears in this issue.

On Wednesday, August 19, at 5:30 pm, Tom and Irene Frantzen (515-364-6426) will host a field day on their farm in Chickasaw County, 10 mile north of New

Hampton on Highway 63, 3 miles west on blacktop, 1/2 mile south, on the right side. They will show a reduced nitrogen application.

On Friday, August 21, at 5:30 pm, Ron and Maria Rosmann (712-627-4653) will host a tour of their experiments on conventional vs. ridge tillage, and on two nitrogen rates following manure and cover crops. Their farm is in Shelby County, 2 miles west of highway 44 on 59 at Harlan, 2 1/4 miles north, on the west side of the road.

On Wednesday, August 26, at 1 pm, Todd and Linda Hartsock (712-857-3426) will host a tour of their experiment of ridge till with and without herbicides. Their farm is in Pocahontas County, 1 mile north of Plover, 1 1/4 miles east, on the south side.

On Wednesday, August 26, at 3 pm, Bob and Diane Graaf (712-359-7787) will host a tour of their experiments on ridge till with and without herbicides, on two nitrogen application rates on corn, and on commercial herb production. Their farm is located 6 miles east of Pocahontas on highway 3, 3 miles south on N-65, 1/8 mile west on gravel, on the south side of the road.

On Wednesday, August 26, at 5 pm, Harlan and Sharon Grau (712-272-3692) will show their experiment of ridge till with and without herbicides. Their farm is in Buena Vista County, 2 miles north of Newell on M-54, 1/4 mile west, with a large yellow house.

On Wednesday, September 9, at 5:30 pm, Tom and Maria Hanks (515-961-4793) will lead a tour of their experiments on ridge till with and without herbicides, and on two nitrogen application rates on

corn. Their farm is located in Warren County, 6 miles east of Indianola to county S-23, north 1/2 mile, first house on east side.

On September 11-12, Dick and Sharon Thompson (515-432-1560) will host a field day on their farm. On Friday the 11th, hours will be from 8 am to noon, and from 1 to 5 pm, with a lunch available. On Saturday the 12th, hours will be from 1 to 5 pm. The tour will feature ridge till with and without herbicides, and aerial seeding of cover crops. Their farm is located in Boone County, 1 1/2 miles east of highway 17 on E-26.

These on-farm research experiments are randomized and replicated 6 times. The farm field days are sponsored by Practical Farmers of Iowa and are open to the public with no charge.

#### SOUTHEAST IA. FIELD DAYS HELD

The Monday, June 22 farm field day for the southeast district was the first PFI event of the summer. Participants toured two operations representing very different philosophies of farming.

Allan and Connie Schnoor, of rural Donahue, farm organically. The bulk of their purchased inputs are biological inoculants. Rather than focusing on N, P, and K, they attempt to build-up soil humus and accelerate the cycling of nutrients in the crop residues.

Allan Schnoor expressed to the group his belief that the most useful type of residue breakdown occurs in the top 2 inches of soil, not deeper and not on the surface. He practices shallow tillage to encourage this. The soils of the farm vary from clayey to sandy, and Schnoor views humus as the solution to most of their problems. The

fields we saw certainly had good structure, with decomposing manure and residues evident.

Small grains play an important part in the rotation, and their straw is an important source of residue for incorporation. Both rye and oats are grown. The Schnoors are also trying a few acres of adzuki beans for the organic specialty market. In another field, Allan Schnoor seeded winter rye into drilled soybeans. He hopes the rye will provide weed control without competing excessively. Spring seeded, the rye should eventually burn-up without producing seed.

On Rod Treimer's farm, near Durant, three demonstrations are underway -- an herbicide comparison, a nitrogen study, and a tillage demo. Area Extension agents used some of Treimer's bean field to lay-out small plots of 14 herbicide combinations. Greg Brenneman, of the Extension Service, did most of the explaining on this experiment.

Treimer's nitrogen study compares two rates of N in corn after corn: 160 lbs/acre and about 120 lbs. The 160 lbs represents his customary rate, based on his yield goal and calculation of crop needs. We walked back-and-forth through the field but were not able to detect any visible difference between the two treatments. It will be interesting to see what the yields are. The strips are laid-out in randomized, replicated pairs, so there should be good statistics behind the results.

We talked some about the economics of fertilization and the rationality of economics. The more N applied, the less efficiently the crop uses it. What's not used is pretty much lost. Local people commented that there is a nitrate problem with the drinking water in that area. Fertilizer plants may be partly responsible, but there is enough blame to go around.

We swung back by the herbicide experiment as Extension was winding-up their talk to another group. Southeast district head Mark Mays took the opportunity to pitch Practical Farmers to these folks and invite them to a slide presentation in the barn. There we looked over the Mays' new ridge cultivator and PFI President Dick Thompson gave a talk on "ridge-till without herbicides." There was good discussion during and afterwards. When it got completely dark, everyone went home.

#### CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence to the PFI directors' addresses is always welcome.

District 1 (Northwest) Gary  
D'Agrosa, Box 212, Boyden, 51234.  
712-725-2175.

District 2 (North Central) Dick  
Thompson, RR 2, Box 132, Boone,  
50036. 515-432-1560.

District 3 (Northeast) Dennis  
Harkrader RR 1, Box 284,  
Fredericksburg, 50630.

District 4 (Southwest) Ron Rosmann,  
Rt. 1, Box 177, Harlan, 51537.  
712-627-4653.

District 5 (Southeast) Mark Mays,  
RR 2, Box 45, Wilton, 52778.