



In This Issue...

- Government of Canada Invests in Innovation for Organic Farmers
- Pasture Calving a Great Fit for Organic Beef
- Farrowing Crate Designs with “Freedom” in Mind
- 2011 Fall-seeded Grains and Oilseeds for Production Insurance Plans
- Winter Wheat Variety Trials
- Worker Hygiene and On-farm Food Safety
- The Online Gardener’s Handbook 2010
- New/Revised OMAFRA Factsheets
- New Web Links
- Events
- Agricorp—2011 Fall-seeded Grains and Oilseeds

Welcome to “ON Organic”

Hugh Martin, Organic Crop Production Program Lead, OMAFRA

Summer of 2010 is now a memory, I hope it was a good one. Fall harvest continues and we start to prepare fields for the next crop – tillage, cover crops, fall planted crops, etc. It is also a time to start to develop your winter calendar for winter meetings and courses and what is the important information you need for your farm in 2011.

I also want to encourage you to go to the OACC website for information on the new Organic Science Cluster. Research is vital the sustainability of the organic sector. On their site there are also two other links that you may find interesting:

- Top 10 Recommended Readings: http://www.oacc.info/top_ten.asp
- Organic Gems on the Internet: http://www.oacc.info/Links/internet_gems.asp

Thanks to the contributing authors and to OCO and EFAO and others who pass it on to other colleagues in the organic sector. We always appreciate your comments.

Subscription to this newsletter is easy and no cost. For details go to the webpage: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/subscribe/index.html#organic>

The newsletter is also posted on the OMAFRA website at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/organic/news/news/organic.html>

The French version of these newsletters is available at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/french/crops/organic/news/news/organic.html>

The OMAFRA Organic pages are linked from: <http://www.ontario.ca/organic> and <http://www.ontario.ca/biologique>

The ON Organic Team

Hugh Martin – editor, OMAFRA, Organic Crop Production Program Lead
Jack Kyle – OMAFRA, Grazier Specialist
Dorene Collins – OMAFRA, Customer Service and Marketing Program Lead
Hugh Berges – OMAFRA, Manager Horticultural Technology
Katie Meagher – OMAFRA, Marketing Specialist
Mario Mongeon – OMAFRA, Livestock Specialist
Linda Cooper – OMAFRA, Client Service Representative

Government of Canada Invests in Innovation for Organic Farmers

Truro, Nova Scotia, September 1, 2010 - The Government of Canada is investing in cutting-edge research to grow market opportunities and maintain a bright future for the Canadian organic industry. An investment of \$6.5 million will bring together scientific expertise from academia, industry and government to develop more efficient and profitable processes for organic farmers, Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz and MP Scott Armstrong (Cumberland-Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley) announced today.

"Demand for organic products is growing and this Government wants to help our hardworking Canadian farmers capture as much of this market as possible," said Minister Ritz. "By creating this all-star team, we can maximize the investment and focus Canada's organic expertise on the research that shows the most promise in delivering a profitable, competitive edge to farmers."

The Organic Federation of Canada will manage this investment to address the priorities of organic producers. The research will focus on soil fertility, grain cropping, greenhouse production and food processing. This cluster will also help develop a recognizable, high-quality brand to help establish Canada as a leader in organic production and help farmers expand their businesses.

"The Organic Science Cluster project, funded by the Government of Canada, is a major event in the development of this relatively new but rapidly growing segment of Canadian agriculture - organic food," said Ted Zettel, president of the Organic Federation of Canada. "The Organic Federation of Canada congratulates Minister Ritz and his staff on the foresight and leadership they are providing, in responding to new market demands with this exciting research project."

"The Government of Canada knows the value of investing in a sector that gives so much to Canadian families and our economy," said MP Armstrong. "This investment will benefit organic farmers, as well as conventional farmers here in Nova Scotia and across Canada, who will have access to research results that could improve their cost effectiveness and environmental management."

In partnership with the OFC, the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada (OACC) was instrumental in raising an industry contribution of \$2.2 million for this project.

"In this challenging period of declining oil supplies, increasing climate change and economic shifts, research results in organic agriculture offer options for all farmers and consumers," said Dr. Ralph Martin, Founding Director of the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada. "As Canadian consumers look for more organic products, this research will help Canadian farmers to benefit from this opportunity."

The Canadian organic sector has grown considerably in the last 10-15 years. Retail sales of organic food products in Canada were valued at over \$2 billion in 2008.

The Organic Cluster is delivered by the Growing Forward framework under the Agri-Innovations program, a \$158 million five-year program announced to support industry-led science and technology projects.

For more information on Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's programs visit www.agr.gc.ca.

Details on the Organic Science Cluster projects can be found at http://www.oacc.info/OSC/osc_welcome.asp

Pasture Calving A Great Fit For Organic Beef

By Tom Hamilton, Beef Program Lead – Production Systems, OMAFRA

Introduction

For beef cow-calf producers, calving represents the most stressful time of the year. Getting a live, healthy calf from every cow is key in having a successful operation. This makes both calving ease and of new born calve health at the top of the farmer's list of issues. Traditional calving systems involve calving in a barn or yard in March and April. While these confinement systems keep the cows handy for checking, a lot of herds experience a high level of assisted/difficult calvings, and many run into scours (diarrhea) outbreaks with the young calves.

Since one of the challenges of organic livestock production is the requirement to treat sick animals without the use of conventional antibiotics, preventing disease is a high priority. Research conducted over 5yrs at the New Liskeard Agricultural Research Station compared conventional calving in barns and yards with calving on pasture. The conventional herd calved during Feb-Mar

while the experimental herd calved during Jun-Jul-Aug on pasture. Each group contained similar cow breeds and types and were bred to the same AI sires. Researchers kept careful records of birth weights, the number of cows who were assisted when calving and the health treatments which were required by the calves from birth to weaning.

Research Results

Results of calving related traits are shown in Table 1. The differences between the two management groups for each trait were all significant ($p < .05$).

Table 1. Calving Characteristics of Management Groups

Characteristic	Winter in Barn	Summer on Pasture
Birth Weight (lbs) ¹	105.6	99.5
Calving Ease Score ²	1.4	1.1
% Assisted Births, Heifers	63	17
% Assisted Births, Cows	18	3

¹Adjusted for age of dam, sex of calf and birth type

² Scale of 1-4, 1=unassisted, 2=easy pull, 3=hard pull, 4=surgical

Cows calving on pasture had calves with lighter birth weights and had fewer and less severe calving problems. Only 17% of the heifers which calved on pasture were assisted, compared with 63% of heifers which calved in calving pens in the barn group. As well, only 3% of pasture calving cows received assistance, while the barn group were assisted 18% of the time.

Weaning rates and calf treatment rates are shown in Table 2. Calves born on pasture required significantly fewer treatments for health problems (principally scours) than calves born in the in the barn/yard system, who went out to pasture around the 20th of May. The winter born calves had a treatment rate which was 4.7 times greater than the summer born calves. First time mothers who calved on pasture were 12% more successful at bringing home a calf at weaning time compared with those that calved in the barn system. There was no significant difference for weaning rate between the mature groups of cows.

Table 2. Health and Management Characteristics of Management Groups

Characteristic	Winter	Summer
Calf Treatment Rate (%)	33	14
Treatments Per Calf Born	2.8	0.6
Weaning Rate, 1 st Calvers ¹	80	92.2
Weaning Rate, Cows ¹	96.3	92.7

¹ Weaning rate = # cows weaning a calf / # of pregnant cows retained

The researchers also collected data on the time spent caring for the two groups (from calving to weaning), and the cost of drugs which were used in disease treatments for calves from birth to weaning (Table 3). The summer calving group used 23% less straw than the winter calving group, and also required 27% fewer hours of operator labour.

As would be expected by their lower treatment rate, the cost of drugs for pasture born calves was much less (70% less) than for barn born calves.

Table 3. Some Variable Costs for the Management Groups

Characteristic	Winter	Summer
Annual Bedding Cost (\$/cow)	48	37
Calving Season Labour ¹ (\$/cow)	41	30
Calf Drug Cost (\$/calf born)	\$4.21	\$1.28

¹Labour for pen or pasture checks, calving pen maintenance, calf processing and calf treatments.

What Does This Mean for Organic Beef Production?

A spring-summer pasture calving system offers several major advantages for organic beef producers, relative to a conventional system of Mar-Apr calving in confinement. One major advantage is the improved health of new born and young calves born on pasture. It is likely that clean, fresh grass contains far fewer disease causing microbes than bedded packs or pens, which inevitably get contaminated with manure during the winter and spring. Even with excellent management, calves born in confinement are much more prone to disease outbreaks such as scours and pneumonia. Less disease means fewer treatments are required, and fewer calves treated with non-acceptable antibiotics, requiring their removal from the organic production chain.

Another advantage is the lower levels of operator labour and bedding costs required to manage a pasture calving system. Operators spend less time and money caring for a given number of cows and calves with a pasture calving system. This results in improved profits and the potential to expand the cow herd while maintaining a given work load.

Farrowing Crate Designs with 'Freedom' in Mind

By Tonya Grunt

In the United Kingdom, the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (FAWAC) has for many years, been raising concerns for the welfare of farm animals. The livestock industry in the United Kingdom and rest of the European Union have responded to these concerns and implemented, over the last few years, a series of measures to protect and improve farm animal welfare. It seems to be a matter of time before North American livestock producers will have to take further steps in the same direction.

One of the newer inventions that have interested European swine producers are freedom farrowing crates which allow the sow to move around more freely while still protecting the piglets from being crushed. In this article, we compare two designs of freedom farrowing crates that are available in Europe and accommodate for the five freedoms of an animal set out by the FAWAC (i.e. freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition; freedom from discomfort, pain, injury and disease; freedom to express normal behaviour; and freedom from fear and distress).

It is important to note that none of the freedom farrowing crates we looked at was ideal or that one was preferred by producers over the other. There is still much research needed to determine the full effects of these new designs, not only on the sows and piglets, but also on management for producers.

Danish manufacturer, Ikadan has developed a new farrowing pen based on the traditional design of the sows confined movement and space. The VIP farrowing pen™ (figure 1) allows the sow to move around more freely while still protecting the piglets from being crushed.

The design includes a diagonal pen for the sow to lay with open space on either side for the piglets to move around. The diagonal design enlarges the sow's available space to move. The rails, located on the outside of the sow's crate

provide added protection for piglets. With greater space, the sow is able to perform motherly instincts to her young and as a result piglets grow at faster rates.

Ease of management has also been taken into consideration with this new system. The height of the panel which guides the sow when lying down can be modified. A huge benefit that is recognized by most producers is that the VIP farrowing pen™ does not require any additional space, replacing a traditional crate with the dimensions 320cm x 240cm for 2 pens. The design team has been very successful in terms of the farrowing pen meeting current demands for improved animal welfare.



Figure 1: VIP farrowing pen developed by Ikadan; <http://www.ikadansystem.com/default.asp?ID=675>

Midland Pig Producers (MPP) has also introduced a new



Figure 2: Side view of 360° of Freedom designed by Midland Pig Producers; <http://wattagnet.com/g/16172.html>

freedom farrowing crate design they call 360° of freedom™ (figures 2 and 3). The model has been given many positive reviews and is available in the United Kingdom and many other countries worldwide. What is unique about the design is that it allows the sow's movement to be restricted when



needed. Once piglets are born, sows are restricted from turning around and after four days are released to move around the pen. With the ability to turn around, the sow can take part in motherly behaviours which increases sow fertility and well being.

Figure 3: Top view of 360° of Freedom designed by Midland Pig Producers; <http://wattagnet.com/Pig/16172.html>

From a management perspective, the crate is easily modified due to the adjustable penning bars. Producers have access to the sow through vertical poles located on the side of the crate which allow them to be protected and safe while monitoring and working with the sow. As a result, both piglets and sows are more visible due to the pens' open side.

While not generally used in North America, freedom farrowing crates can have application in many niche and organic production systems. Whenever evaluating new technology, producers should take into consideration that the system or product may need to be adapted for the production practices, climate, etc. we have in North America. As consumers place greater demands on swine production practices we will see more innovations and technologies developed, like the 360 degrees of freedom™ and the VIP farrowing pen™, that allow for high production efficiency, ease of management and put more emphasis on animal welfare.

2011 Fall-seeded Grains and Oilseeds

See last two pages of the newsletter for details of this year's program for winter wheat and spelt crop production insurance.

Deadlines Approaching for Production Insurance Plans

Agricorp offers Production Insurance for over 90 crops. As an organic producer, you may insure your crops under any of these plans. Specialized organic plans are available for winter wheat, winter spelt, soybeans, processing sweet corn, fresh market cabbage and fresh market carrots. It's time to renew or apply for the following Production Insurance plans:

- winter wheat (including organic winter wheat plan) - **Apply by November 1**
- organic winter spelt - **Apply by November 1**
- asparagus - **Apply by October 30**
- fruit crops (includes grapes, apples, peaches, nectarines, pears, sweet cherries, sour cherries) - **Apply by December 20**

Please refer to the attached Information Sheet for Fall Seeded Grains and Oilseed Crops for rates and details. For more information on all plans, please visit Agricorp.com or contact us at 1-888-247-4999.

Winter Wheat Variety Trials

Each year research staff from U of Guelph, OMAFRA as well as the seed companies cooperate on variety trials for winter wheat variety information. While these are not done under organic management they give a good indication of yield trends between varieties and also disease ratings. Organic growers should especially look for varieties with resistance to fusarium head blight. When looking at the data look for the multi-year averages where possible to get the best data.

The decision is what type of wheat to grow and which variety in that class is most appropriate for your farm. For soft white winter wheat Ava continues to be the best combination of yield and fusarium head blight resistance and also offers some resistance to leaf and stem rust. White wheats however are much more susceptible to sprouting than red wheat varieties. The best soft red winter wheat variety will depend on your priorities. Pioneer 25R51 has the best fusarium head blight resistance but only average yields. Emmitt has better yields but the fusarium and rust disease resistance numbers not quite as good. Similarly 25R39, Branson and 25R56 all have some merits and some issues. Similarly for the hard red wheats AC Morley has the best fusarium rating but is lower yielding than Wentworth which is highly susceptible to fusarium head blight and likely not suitable for organic production systems. Harvard, Princeton and Keldin all have merits in this class.

The complete report on the 2010 research trials can be found at: http://www.gocereals.ca/variety_trial.php

Worker Hygiene and On-farm Food Safety

By Jan Schooley, On-Farm Food Safety Program Lead

Worker hygiene is an important part of an on-farm food safety program. It is one of the key practices that helps prevent the transfer of human pathogens to food. And worker hygiene is all about clean hands.

It is easy to underestimate what hands can do in terms of food safety. Major outbreaks of foodborne illness have occurred because produce was handled by hands that were contaminated with pathogens. Prevention is the only way to reduce this risk on the farm. Hands need to be cleaned after breaks, after visits to the toilet, before handling product, packaging materials or surfaces that touch food.

The Online Gardener's Handbook 2010

By OMAFRA Staff

An Integrated Approach To Successful Gardening

The Gardener's Handbook is a reference guide for home gardeners that provides useful tips on growing vegetables, fruit, ornamental plants and lawns. The guide covers topics ranging from recommended planting times to descriptions of common garden pests and how to prevent and manage them.

In April 2009, the government of Ontario implemented a province-wide Cosmetic Pesticide Ban, which limits the availability of many pesticides to homeowners. There are many non-chemical options available to homeowners for controlling pests. The goal of this manual is to provide homeowners with information needed to keep gardens healthy, including the maintenance of healthy, pest-resistant plants; the identity and biology of pests commonly found in gardens; and the various cultural, natural and other options available for managing them. The first sections of this manual provide general information on plant production and causes and symptoms of damage. We recommend that you read this section first. It provides a basis for the remainder of the publication, which is divided into four commodity sections: vegetables, fruit, ornamental plants (trees, shrubs, and flowers) and lawns. In the vegetable and fruit sections, host plants are listed alphabetically, followed by detailed information about corresponding pests and diseases. In the lawn and ornamental sections, it is the disease and pest problems that are listed alphabetically.

Table of Contents

- [Causes of Plant Injury](#)
- [Integrated Pest Management](#)
- [A Word About Soil](#)
- [Vegetables](#)
- [Fruit](#)
- [Ornamental Plants](#)
- [Lawns](#)
- [Appendix](#)

For links go to <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/gardbk/ghtoc.html>

Ideally, workers (and you) should follow these three steps:

1. Wet hands with potable water and apply soap;
2. Scrub the surface of your hands, between fingers and under nails, for 15 to 20 seconds – or about as long as it takes you to sing Happy Birthday to yourself twice.
3. Rinse hands with potable water and dry with a clean, disposable towel.

Conditions in the field, however, are not always ideal. You will need to keep an adequate supply of hand sanitizer and hand sanitizing wipes where soap and water is not immediately available. Hand sanitizers work well to keep pathogens off hands, but sanitizers will not work on dirty hands. Before you or your workers use hand sanitizer in the field, wipe or rub as much dirt as possible off your hands. The dirtier your hands are, the less protection hand sanitizers will provide.

Your hygiene practices need to be communicated to your employees. Your workers need to understand the connection between clean hands and foodborne illness if they are to do their part in preventing the transfer of human pathogens to your produce. You can use videos, available on-line from most Public Health units; signs and posters, available from OMAFRA; training tools such as the handwashing easel, also available from OMAFRA. It is not enough on a food safety program just to tell employees about these practices – you need to write down when training occurred and who was trained, and sign the document.

Your hygiene practices need to be well thought out and written down. Clean hands are important enough to take time to develop a written practice outlining worker training and all the practices expected of everyone handling your produce.

Food Safety Tip:

Lighting is essential for most sorting and packing areas. It is important to remember that lights need to be shatter-proof or in a protective covering. A quick check of your packing and sorting area will allow you to assess how safe your lighting is.

Food Safety Tip:

A successful food safety program involves everyone – but it starts with you. Your attitude is contagious. If you are committed to food safety your employees will follow. The best way to keep food safety in mind is to talk about it. Whenever you talk to employees about food safety they are learning not only how to do safe practices; they are also developing a commitment to food safety on your farm.

New/Revised OMAFRA Factsheets

Temporary Field Storage of Solid Manure or Other Agricultural Source Material, Order No. 10-039; <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/engineer/facts/10-039.htm>

Nutrient Management Act, 2002, Winter Application of Manure and Other Agricultural Source Materials, Order No. 10-043; <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/engineer/facts/10-043.htm>

Guide to Custom Farmwork and Short-Term Equipment Rental, Order No. 10-049. Factsheet update includes the results of the Survey of Ontario Custom Farmwork Rates Charged in 2009.

Storage of Liquid Manure, Order No. 10-051

Ungraded Lumber in Farm Buildings, Order No. 10-055

10-057: *Nutrient Management Act, 2002*, Nutrient Management Strategies and Horse Barns, Order No. 10-057

New Web Links

Both ManureNet Canada and the Ontario Agri-Environmental Archive now have their own domain names. The web sites have been re-located to the Conservation Ontario server (www.conservationontario.ca/).

The new URLs are:

ManureNet Canada: <http://manurenet.ca/>

Environmental Archive: <http://agrienvarchive.ca/>

Events

Organic Week - October 9-16, 2010

This coming October, Canadian Organic Growers, the Organic Trade Association and COG's regional partners will be hosting a nationwide celebration of organic food production!

For more information, <http://www.cog.ca/organic-week/>

October 18th - Making the Transition to Small Scale Organic Produce Farming

This course will be offered as an online module. Participants receive a workbook, individual support from the course facilitator, and opportunities for group networking support. Participants will meet at the Guelph Organic Conference for the course wrap-up. Pre-register by October 5. The course will begin October 18th with an introductory conference call. Workbooks and course details will be mailed out upon registration. Course facilitator: Theresa Schumilas. Sponsored by Canadian Organic Growers, Perth-Waterloo-Wellington Chapter.

Links to Organic Agriculture Information

Organic Council of Ontario (OCO)

<http://www.organiccouncil.ca>

Canadian Organic Growers (COG)

<http://www.cog.ca>

OMAFRA Organic Agriculture

<http://www.ontario.ca/organic>

Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO)

<http://www.efao.ca>

Organic Agricultural Centre of Canada (OACC)

<http://www.oacc.info>

Agricultural Information Contact Centre: 1-877-424-1300

E-mail: ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca

Northern Ontario Regional Office: 1-800-461-6132

www.ontario.ca/omafra



An agency of the Government of Ontario
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

2011 Fall-seeded grains and oilseeds

New for 2011

This fall, we have introduced a new crop plan for hard white winter wheat. All acres of all winter wheat you plant must be reported and offered for insurance coverage.

How to participate

1. Insure all acres of the crops you are growing in each of the following groups:
 - soft white winter wheat
 - soft red winter wheat
 - hard red winter wheat
 - organic winter wheat
 - winter barley and spring grain
 - organic winter spelt
 - winter and spring canola
2. Follow good farm management practices and report any crop damage immediately.
3. Meet all deadlines in the following table.

Action required	Deadlines		
	Winter wheat and organic winter spelt	Winter barley*	Winter canola**
Last day to cancel your 2010 coverage	October 20, 2010	April 1, 2011	April 1, 2011
Apply for or change your coverage selection	November 1, 2010	November 1, 2010	November 1, 2010
Report your final acreage (if no acres planted, you must report zero to avoid cancellation)	November 1, 2010	November 1, 2010	November 1, 2010
Pay your premium	November 15, 2010	July 10, 2011	July 10, 2011
Report your yields	September 1, 2011	October 31, 2011	October 31, 2011

* Winter barley is insured under the spring grain crop plan. ** Winter canola is insured under the canola crop plan.

Insured perils

The PI plans for grain and oilseed crops provide protection against these insured perils:

- Drought
- Excessive moisture
- Excessive rainfall
- Flood
- Frost
- Hail
- Insect infestation
- Plant diseases
- Wildlife
- Wind
- Winterkill

Good farm management practices must be followed at all times to avoid having claims reduced or denied.

2011 Coverage levels and customer base premium rates					
Crop	Maximum reseeded benefit (\$/acre)	Fixed claim price	Coverage level (%)	Fixed claim price premium rate (\$/acre)	Floating claim price premium rate (\$/acre)
Soft white winter wheat	\$80	\$5.23/bu	75%	\$4.88	\$6.12
			80%	\$6.13	\$7.68
			85%	\$7.58	\$9.50
			90%	\$9.45	\$11.84
Soft red winter wheat	\$80	\$4.59/bu	75%	\$3.89	\$4.87
			80%	\$4.89	\$6.12
			85%	\$6.04	\$7.57
			90%	\$7.53	\$9.43
Hard red winter wheat	\$80	\$5.14/bu	75%	\$4.10	\$5.14
			80%	\$5.15	\$6.45
			85%	\$6.37	\$7.98
			90%	\$7.94	\$9.94
Hard white winter wheat	\$80	\$5.49/bu	75%	\$4.29	\$5.37
			80%	\$5.39	\$6.75
			85%	\$6.66	\$8.35
			90%	\$8.30	\$10.40
Organic winter wheat	\$90	\$9.47/bu	75%	\$5.90	na
			80%	\$7.41	na
			85%	\$9.16	na
			90%	\$11.42	na
Organic winter spelt	\$100	\$0.40/kg	75%	\$5.93	na
			80%	\$7.44	na
			85%	\$9.21	na
			90%	\$12.98	na
Winter barley Winter canola	Premium rates and claim prices are set with the spring grain and canola plans in February 2011.				
The federal and provincial governments pay up to 60 percent of the required Production Insurance premiums and 100 percent of the administration cost of delivering Production Insurance.					
Your individual surcharge or discount will be applied to the customer base premium rate.					

Errors and omissions excepted.

Agricorp reserves the right to make corrections if there are any errors or omissions on this Information Sheet.

For specific legal obligations of Production Insurance, please consult the *Contract of Insurance, Terms and Conditions*. For details on the collection of information and treatment of records, please refer to *Part 1, Section I* of the contract.

Contact us

1-888-247-4999
TTY 1-877-275-1380
(Mon. to Fri., 7 to 5)
Fax: 519-826-4118
agricorp.com
contact@agricorp.com

Version française disponible

