

# CUSTOMNews

Representing Custom Farming in Wisconsin | FALL 2019



WCO member Michaelson Custom Service, Balsom Lake, Wis. Photo by Fae Holin.

## Silage safety - revisited

By Keith K. Bolsen, Professor Emeritus, Kansas State University



I will begin my 50th year of working in the silage industry on January 1, 2020. This includes 32 years as a professor at Kansas State University, where

I conducted over 300 research trials on silage production and management, and 18 years as a silage consultant for dairies, feedyards, and companies who provide silage-related products and services.

There are two things I know for sure about silage: it is 365 days a year and it is not safe! I found out about silage safety the hard way on Saturday afternoon, June 16, 1974. We were making dough-stage

wheat silage at the K-State Beef Cattle Research Farm. The silo blower plugged for about the eighth time that afternoon, and I started to dig the forage out from the throat of the blower. The PTO shaft was making one more very slow revolution. Zap! When I pulled my hand from the throat of the blower, I knew that I had made a terrible mistake. The blower blade cut the ends off of three fingers on my right hand. Why did the accident happen? I was tired, frustrated, losing the harvest window, in a hurry, and not paying attention.

Every silage-related accident is avoidable, which is why my wife, Ruthie, and I started the Keith Bolsen Silage Safety Foundation two years ago. Our

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## UPCOMING DATES:

**Crew of the Year**  
Applications due Dec. 1

**Pesticide Applicator Training**  
Monday, Feb. 17  
Chula Vista Resort

**Forage Symposium**  
Feb. 17-19  
Chula Vista Resort  
Wisconsin Dells, Wis.

## CONTACT WCO:

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(608) 577-4345



# From the President's Cab

By Bryce O'Leary



Hello everyone, as I write this in late October, silage harvest is at a standstill due to a rain delay. This year has brought many challenges for everyone in agriculture, I have told my co-workers many times that we

are having more fun than anyone is legally allowed to have. When the curtain finally comes down for the 2019 crop year, everyone will have learned many new lessons and survived many tough situations.

Forage Symposium is just around the corner and the education committee has been working hard to bring a program that is informative, educational and enjoyable for everyone. Once again, we have a custom farmer from outside our region to tell us how things are done in his large-scale business.

Patricio Aguirre Saravia is coming to Wisconsin all the way from Argentina and he brings a very different view of the work. There will be topics on hemp harvesting, handling stress, the value of silage bagging, new harvesting equipment and NIR technology. Again, this year, we will offer a commercial pesticide applicator training and test. So, save the dates of February 17-19 and join us at the Chula Vista in Wisconsin Dells.

With all the challenges of harvest this season, be sure send your nominations in for the new Crew of the Year award. Many of our crews have gone above and beyond to get through the harvest and this is your chance to honor their dedication and hard work to get the cow chow put up!

We also have positions up for election on the board of directors. Anyone wanting to be more involved should run for a position. We have a great team and I assure you; this isn't a run-of-the-mill group. We get things done, have fun and encourage new ideas.

Finally, as this season comes to an end be sure to thank your customers and coworkers for their patience and understanding through the challenges of the season. We are all in this together and working together makes everything go better. 🍷

-Bryce



## Policy center *issues to watch*

### ATCP 51 (livestock citing)

**revision** - This rule covers things like property line and road setbacks, odor management, manure storage facilities and more. At press time, final changes were being submitted to the DATCP Board on Nov. 7. The rule could negatively impact those seeking to expand existing farms or build new facilities. 🍷

**MAC Credit** - Senate Bill 387 will expand eligibility for the Manufacturing & Ag Tax Credit (MAC) to include crop insurance receipts. The current law definition of "gross production receipts" only includes commodity sales. But when farmers' crops are destroyed due to circumstances beyond their control, the crop insurance payment cannot be claimed under credit. SB 387 changes that. 🍷

## Forage Symposium Feb. 17-19

Watch your mail and email for registration materials for the annual Forage Symposium. Registration opens early December. **Mark your calendars for Feb. 17-19** again at the Chula Vista in Wisconsin Dells. If you need to obtain or renew your Commercial Pesticide Applicator certificate, please register for the training on Feb. 17. This event is a WCO, MFA and PNAAW partnership. 🍷

## Welcome new members!

The following list represents individuals/sponsors who joined WCO from July - November 2019

- Brent Cook, Cook's Countryside Trucking LLC
- Ed Reichling, Fliegl - R Equipment
- Strong Microbials, Inc



Got dump carts? We hope so!  
WCO member United Ag Enterprises, Seymour, Wis.  
Photo submitted.

## Silage Safety (continued from p. 1)

foundation's goal is for everyone involved in a silage program on farms, dairies, feedyards, and custom silage operations to return to his or her family safe every day.

I encourage accident survivors to tell their stories in hopes that others will feel compelled to take actions to prevent injury ... or worse ... in their own silage program. *The following testimonials are published on the foundation's website:*

**Ted Gramm's** family cattle operation in west-central Minnesota used a custom operator for the first time and over-filled a bunker silo with corn silage. The feed-out face was 15 to 16 feet high. Ted was doing chores and calving cows in the late afternoon on a Sunday in early March 2001. Ted recalls, "It hadn't been a good day; it was gloomy, I didn't get to go to church, and I was feeling down about a lot of things.

My family knew that I probably wouldn't make it home for supper." When Ted was ready to feed silage, he noticed that a tire had come down off the pile. He walked up and grabbed the tire, and that was the last thing he knew ... the avalanche hit him. In Ted's words, "Only by the Powers from Above did my brother drive in the yard, see me get buried, and knew where I was. He managed to find me and pull me out." Ted suffered displaced ankles and had surgeries on both knees. Ted continued, "These types of things are real ... they happen. During the minute or so that I was buried I could see my kids around the table. A lot of things flashed through my mind. Footnote: Ted fully recovered from his injuries and is a sales supervisor for Purina in Hancock, MN.

**Kenneth Sampson** of Westfield, WI was injured last July while removing spoilage

from the surface of a bunker silo of first cut alfalfa silage. He was standing in the payload bucket, which had been raised to within about 2 to 3 feet of the top of the 20-foot high silage face. Kenneth slipped on the slick floor of the bucket. He landed on his right knee first, breaking it and then severely bruised his left knee before he landed on his left shoulder, breaking it. Kenneth said he was lucky not to have hit his head or been impaled on the pitchfork, which had been thrown into the air during his fall. Kenneth was lying in the bucket by himself, in extreme pain, and without his cell phone.

After about 15 minutes, Kenneth managed to stand up, grab the plastic on top of the bunker, and pull himself out of the bucket and onto the silage. Kenneth said later that he had been removing surface spoilage from the bunker silos for about 13 years. On the day of the accident, he was complacent and thinking about the next job he had to do on the dairy. Footnote: Kenneth is in physical therapy and recovering from his injuries. He expects to return to work in a few months.

Those affected by a silage-related accident never forget the impact a pile of silage or a piece of equipment had on their lives. However, dairies and feedyards can put silage safety guidelines in place that help prevent a negative outcome and a personal tragedy in their silage program.

Our mission is to build awareness through the

foundation, which is non-profit and funded through donations and gifts. We provide silage safety educational resources free of charge to anyone who requests them. This includes 'Silage Safety 101' handbooks in English and Spanish, PowerPoints, and videos.

I have given presentations on silage safety in 15 states, and our foundation has distributed over 9,000 handbooks. The handbook presents eight common hazards encountered in managing bunker silos and drive-over piles, and detailed accounts of case study accidents involving each hazard. Guidelines for the way each hazard can be eliminated, reduced, or controlled are outlined and discussed.

Learn more about the Keith Bolsen Silage Safety Foundation at: [www.silagesafety.org](http://www.silagesafety.org) 🇺🇸



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## Nominate your crew - Crew of the Year; Applications due Dec. 1

By WCO

Teamwork is critical during the harvest season. For custom farmers, pulling together, putting in the hours, supporting your crew and going the distance to complete the task at hand is what harvest is all about. It's tough to find good employees, and at the same time, there are men and women employed by custom farmers who make significant contributions to their crew.

New this year, the Wisconsin Custom Operators, Inc. (WCO) will honor an entire crew from a custom farming operation who demonstrate excellence in the areas of safety, efficiency, customer service, environmental stewardship, profitability and community engagement. This award

is particularly focused on acknowledging and recognizing crew contributions that go above and beyond.

The decision to honor a "crew" versus an individual "employee" is based on the large emphasis custom farmers place on crews, or teams, in their work culture.

The crew - made up of both full-time and part-time employees - of a WCO member - are eligible to participate in the annual award selection process. The winning crew will receive \$1,000 divided evenly among all members, as well as other prizes and apparel.

"We all know how hard it can be to maintain a custom farming business. We also know the value of having good

employees," said Ray Liska, WCO vice president. "We revamped the award to reflect the importance of a steadfast crew to any custom farming operation."

Applications for the WCO Crew of the Year Award will be accepted through Dec. 1. New this year, an entire crew, from a WCO member-business will be honored. The person making the nomination does not have to be a member of WCO. That means that farmers, clients of operators and fellow operators can all make nominations.

Visit the WCO website for more information including eligibility, criteria and application. 🇺🇸

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The crew at Vander Kinter Farms LLC worked into the night hours to finish before a rainstorm during the 2019 harvest season.  
*Photo submitted.*

## Board of Directors 2019

- President – Bryce O’Leary
- Vice President – Ray Liska
- Secretary – Josh Bartholomew (corp. rep)
- Treasurer – Isaac Lemmenes (corp. rep)
- North region – Derek Ducat
- South West region – Bill Smith
- Director at large – Jesse Dvorachek
- Honorary Representatives:  
Dr. Kevin Shinnors, UW-Madison  
Dr. Matt Digman, UW-Madison  
Dr. Brian Luck, UW-Madison

**In 2020, WCO will elect two operator directors and one corporate director.**

## Board nominations

WCO is looking for board of director nominations. Elections will take place at the annual meeting on Feb. 19, 2020, held in conjunction with the Forage Symposium. Directors must be members of WCO and serve three-year terms with no more than two consecutive terms.

- The board meets four times per year:
- February - At Forage Symposium
- March - At WCO Safety event or conf. call
- July - At WI Farm Tech Days
- December - Stand alone meeting

If you are interested in running or know someone who is, contact: [execdir@wiscustomoperators.org](mailto:execdir@wiscustomoperators.org) or (608) 577-4345.

## Join a committee

If you are looking for a small but important way to get involved, consider joining a committee:

- Education/Conference
- Media
- Scholarship & Awards
- Safety/Regulations

## WCO Annual Meeting

The annual member meeting of the Wisconsin Custom Operators will be held Wednesday, Feb. 19 at 8 a.m.

The business meeting will include election of directors, committee reports and financial overview. All paid operator members may vote for directors.

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## Health concerns from grain dusts during harvest: One assistive technology tool to help



*By Amanda Harguth AgrAbility of Wisconsin*

With the fall harvest in full swing, and if you produce corn, soybeans, or other crops in Wisconsin, dust exposure while working is inevitable. Breathing in grain dust can affect the health and overall comfort for grain farmers and others who work in the grain industry. Exposures can occur: in the combine, in bins, while unloading, during drying or processing and while grinding/mixing grain and other feed products.

Most people will have some

reaction to dusty conditions during grain harvest. Often, this will be a nuisance reaction or irritation, but in some cases, more problematic health problems are possible. At low levels that a healthy person might encounter during the harvest season, developing a cough might be common, other symptoms include:

- » chest tightness and/or wheezing
- » slightly sore/irritated throat
- » nasal and eye irritation
- » a feeling of being stuffed up and congested all the time

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Both chronic and acute bronchitis can also be common among those who handle lots of grain throughout the day as the main passages in the lungs get inflamed. Grain dust can also be a significant problem for those with asthma.

AgrAbility of Wisconsin has been promoting success in agriculture for farmers and their families living with a farm injury, disability, or limitation since 1991. AgrAbility of Wisconsin is a partnership between the University of Wisconsin Extension and Easter Seals Wisconsin.

One of our main focuses after enrolling someone in the program is an on-site farm visit with one of our Rural Rehab Specialists and providing assistive technology ideas and modifications that can be used to help a person with a disability maintain independence and a productive lifestyle.

Grain farmers don't typically wear disposable filtration masks because they are cumbersome and uncomfortable to wear. One assistive technology solution would be the RZ Mask, it's an affordable product that is designed for comfort while still providing the filtration that is needed.

The RZ Mask features dual exhalation valves that allow the expelled air to escape and removes moisture with a product that can be worn comfortably. They are ideal for all climates and can be used all day. There are two different types, the Neoprene mask is made for cold weather protection and the Mesh mask is more breathable, keeping the user's face cooler in warm conditions.

The comfortable RZ Mask allows expelled air to escape and removes moisture. It's perfect for harvest when grain dust is heavy.



Other features of the mask include an adjustable nose clip that allows the mask to be custom fit to your face and ensure a proper seal and the high flow filters that create nearly a zero air obstruction and are ideal for any user working up a heavy breath without sacrificing safety.

These masks are a great assistive technology tool for everyone who works in agriculture or the outdoors, especially during harvest season when grain dust is more persistent. To learn more about the RZ Masks or order your own, visit their website [www.rzmask.com](http://www.rzmask.com).

If you or someone you know is looking for some assistance with a disability or having limited work conditions on your farm; reach out to AgrAbility of Wisconsin to become enrolled in our program. Our phone number is 608.262.9336 and our

email is [agrability@wisc.edu](mailto:agrability@wisc.edu). Feel free to visit our website [www.agrability.bse.wisc.edu](http://www.agrability.bse.wisc.edu) to learn more and review additional assistive technology examples.

Sources: Shutske, J., Esker, P., & Kirkhorn, S. (n.d.). Human Health Concerns from Grain Dusts and Molds During Harvest. Retrieved September 26, 2019, from <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/agsafety/confined-spaces/grain-storage-and-handling/human-health-concerns-from-grain-dusts-and-molds-during-harvest/>.

RZ Mask. (n.d.). RZ Reusable Air Filtration Masks 888.777.9422. Retrieved from <http://www.rzmask.com/>.

Kratochwill, J. (n.d.). PowerPoint Presentation. 🇺🇸

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## Membership incentive program

Don't forget - WCO has a membership incentive program! If you sign up a new member you receive \$25 towards your 2020 membership. Sponsors can participate also. Simply list your company name on the "referred by" line and earn money towards your 2020 membership or sponsorship.

Incentive not to exceed cost of membership or sponsorship. Help WCO grow our membership base!

## Welcome to WCO

**General Members (\$50/year)** derive their income (whole or part) from custom farming. Receive full voting rights and featured on website with business information.

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## Asking a question can save a life

By Maria Woldt for WCO



There is a stigma surrounding mental health, and farmers and farm service providers can be somewhat dismissive of the topic.

As farmers, we often have the mindset that hard work fixes everything. But when someone is experiencing chronic, long-term stress, just “working harder” isn’t going to fix the problem.

Farmer suicide is on the rise according to the Centers for Disease Control. The cause is somewhat nuanced. White, middle-aged males are at highest risk for suicide according to the Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Combine that with the reality that rural areas have less access to mental health resources, overall health factors are lower and rural populations make less money. A Johns Hopkins study found that more people own guns in rural areas. Access to firearms means that a suicide attempt is more likely to be fatal. Six in 10 gun owners are male according to a Pew Research study.

### Let’s unpack these statistics:

- » **White, middle-aged males**
- » **Rural areas with less access to mental health resources**
- » **Financial stress**
- » **Access to firearms**

Add several consecutive years of low commodity prices, 18 months of bad weather, hectic work schedule and other risk factors like lack of sleep, and you have a recipe for increased stress.

I recently read an op-ed by Gordon Speirs, a respected dairy farmer from

Brillion, Wis. As he described the weather over that last 18 months, I couldn’t help but feel like stress is only going to increase.

Your clients share things with you that they don’t even tell their family. You do your best to listen, you check in regularly with them and you might even help them out in some way. In your role as a trusted service provider, do you know what you might do if someone gave you a warning sign that they were considering suicide?

As an organization, and as friends, we can’t continue to put this topic on the back burner. The risk factors described here apply to most custom farmers too.

Earlier this month, I attended a QPR training organized by Dane County UW Extension. QPR stands for Question, Persuade and Refer — three simple steps anyone can learn to help save a life from suicide. This type of training is not for health care professionals, it’s for ordinary people like you and me. It’s not intended to be a form of counseling or treatment, it is intended to offer hope through positive action.

Just like you have safety meetings for your business, including CPR, the Heimlich Maneuver, and lock out, tag out, staff members trained in QPR learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis.

As you know from WCO’s Safety Certification program, insurance companies feel strongly about occupational safety and health training because it has proven effective in reducing incident rates. Businesses with fewer

incidents are lower risk for insurance providers. Insurance companies are often willing to offer discounts to WCO members who become safety certified and embrace the content of the safety certification program.

Experts in QPR suggest that one in four people should be trained in basic QPR principles for suicide prevention. This means that at least one person on your staff should be trained in QPR and the information should be included in your overall safety training best practices.

If the promise of an insurance discount encourages more operators to consider embracing the QPR method, that’s great! Suicide, like a heart attack, is rare, but it takes training hundreds to save the life of one.

This year at Symposium, we have invited Jeff Ditzenberger to speak about stress and the stigma that surrounds farmers and mental health. Jeff is a farmer and veteran, and has a unique way of connecting to his audience through personal stories. I encourage you to attend his session and listen to his message. Jeff’s session at Symposium will be an introduction to this topic, and if there is interest, WCO and Jeff will host a full QPR training as part of the WCO Certification Program in 2020.

Did you know that almost all efforts to persuade someone to live instead of attempting suicide are met with agreement and relief? You can prevent suicide by asking questions and planting the seeds of hope. See you all in February at Symposium. 🍷

**Please send your photos to WCO**

Photos featured in the *Custom News* are taken by staff or submitted by members and sponsors. We are always looking for high quality images of custom farmers in action. We do our best to feature multiple brands of equipment and diverse custom farming practices.

Please e-mail your high-resolution images (1MB or larger) to [execdir@wiscustomoperators.org](mailto:execdir@wiscustomoperators.org) and we will be sure to feature you on our social media channels and in our publications. Thank you in advance!



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**“ Those affected by a silage-related accident never forget the impact a pile of silage or a piece of equipment had on their lives. However, dairies and feedyards can put silage safety guidelines in place that help prevent a negative outcome. ”**

**-Dr. Keith Bolsen. Read his article on p. 1**

To complete your no fee IoH/Ag CMV permit applications  
(Required as of January 1, 2015), go to  
**wisconsin.gov** and search **“no fee ag permits”**

Questions about IoH definitions and rules? Go to  
**wiscustomoperators.org/resources**