

CUSTOMNews

Representing Custom Farming in Wisconsin | SUMMER 2017



Travis Erickson along with his father and brothers own and operate Four Star Ag in Neillsville. Read their profile on page 3.

Certification event highlights industry challenges

This past March, a group of WCO members attended the third annual Safety Certification Program training held at Liberty Hall in Kimberly. New this year, the program focused on business development topics. Solid business practices are the cornerstone of a professional custom farming operation and professionalism and safety go hand in hand.

This year's topics included: knowing your rights when hiring & firing, small business health insurance, using social media for business promotion, and job descriptions and performance reviews.

Jamie Ackley from Smith Custom Farming shared her experience working with her business Facebook page during the social media session at the event. The Smith Custom Farming page has more than 1500 followers thanks to Jamie's strategic management of the platform. Jamie has used the page to recruit employees, promote innovative farming techniques,

and build relationships with her local community.

This meeting along with accredited sessions at the Forage Symposium lead to WCO Safety Certification.

It's been a tough year for the dairy community and farmers are always looking for ways to manage their cost of production. It's inevitable that someone may try to undercut professional custom farming services. But even when times are tough, progressive farmers prioritize quality feed, produced safely. If you are certified, make sure your clients know. Show them your certificate, explain the program and display the window clings in your equipment.

Participation in programs like the Safety Certification Program have been shown to actually reduce incident rates. Insurance companies are willing to offer discounts to businesses who participate so make sure to check with your provider. 🇺🇸

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

North American Manure Expo
August 22-23
Arlington, Wisconsin

Forage Symposium
February 19-21, 2018
Chula Vista Resort
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

CONTACT WCO:

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From the President's Cab

By Bryce O'Leary



Hello everyone, another season is in full swing in the harvesting business. Again this year WCO has been proactive in promoting the business and safety of our industry. In March, our business development workshop was very well attended. A group of excellent presenters provided discussions on hiring & firing, small business health insurance, using social media for business promotion, and we closed with another great presentation by Tom Wall (The Dairy Coach) about job descriptions and performance reviews.

Then spring came and everyone hit the fields (or should I say mud holes and ponds). I hope everyone was able to work through planting and hay harvest without any major disasters.

In June, WCO sponsored a manure pit safety program organized by the Grant and Lafayette County UW Extension team. This spring, WCO member Jason Lindner of Greenwood lost his life in a manure-handling accident. We continue to honor the life of Mike Biadasz who was overcome by manure gases last summer. We remain committed to promoting safety as part of our core mission and we were thankful for the chance to get involved in this great event.

As you prepare for the big push of corn harvest, take the time to review your safety protocols with all of your employees. Again this year we will be offering the Employee of the Year award, so as you make your way through the season, take note of your exemplary employees and consider nominating them for the award.

Please note, in 2018, our annual Forage Symposium will be held on February 19-21 at the Chula Vista in the Wisconsin Dells. The PNAAW group has decided to host their own conference in January, so please make sure you attend the correct event (or attend both if you choose). We know the date shift may cause confusion; the program, trade show and camaraderie will be excellent as usual.

If anyone is having any problems or concerns with the IOH law do not hesitate to contact me or Bill Arneson. Have a safe season and be sure to stop and enjoy the sunsets when ever you get a chance. 🇺🇸

-Bryce

Policy Center *issues to watch*

Implements of Husbandry legislation is very important to the custom farming community. The current IOH regulations put in place in 2015 will expire in 2020.

However, Farm Bureau, along with other ag groups, is pursuing a change in the budget to remove the sunset language from laws. The change would be included in the transportation segment, which is likely to be

one of the last parts finalized due to the divide of opinions on transportation funding.

WCO has been asked to provide feedback on the current IOH regulations in preparation for this possible change. If you would like to voice your opinion and help guide our comments, please contact Bill Arneson, WCO Safety and Regulations committee chair at tanks55@hotmail.com or (608) 574-7874.

Forage Symposium Date Change!

Due to scheduling conflicts, we have moved the Forage Symposium to February for 2018 only. **Mark your calendars for Feb. 19-21, 2018** again at the Chula Vista in Wisconsin Dells. Our 2019 date will return to our normal time in January.

Join the WCO Board

At the 2018 Forage Symposium, WCO will elect two operator representatives (south east and south west regions). Contact us if you have interest in running.

Welcome new members!

The following list represents individuals/sponsors who joined WCO from March - July, 2017

- Dairy Business Association
- Joe O'Hearn, O'Hearn Bros. Bagging LLC
- Wade Riffey, Riffey Farms
- Robert Smurawa, RS Grains LLC
- Steve Ward, S&J Ward Farm
- Cory Witt, Witt Farms



Tom Wall spoke about employee management at the March Business Development event.

Employees and technology are key to success

By Whitney Beahr, WCO Communications

Located in Neillsville, Wisconsin, Four Star Dairy and Four Star Ag are owned by Roger Erickson and his sons Travis, Tony and Tyler Erickson. After selling their dairy farm a few years ago, the Erickson family kept their land, purchased surrounding land and ventured into custom work to expand their business. "Four Star Dairy is our field work business while Four Star Ag is our manure hauling business," said Travis Erickson.

Both businesses keep busy throughout the year with Four Star Dairy managing 5,000 acres that are planted with a variety of crops including corn, soybeans and alfalfa. Four Star Ag hauled 40 million gallons of manure this spring, with higher numbers expected during fall pumping.

When asked about challenges this year with farming Travis's immediate response was the weather.

"The rain has been our biggest challenge this year, but we worked through it." Working long days and

nights, Four Star Dairy planted their crops in a timely manner though the rain made it much more difficult.

"There were days where we had several sixty foot planters out because the fields had been too wet to plant before," said Travis.

And as all farmers know, when the weather breaks, it is all hands-on deck to get the job done before it rains again - which wasn't much time seeing that it rained every or every other day this spring.

It was because of their hardworking employees that Four Star Dairy and Four Star Ag were able to cultivate, plant and haul manure this spring despite the extremely wet weather.

"We have an exceptional group of guys working for us right now," says Travis. "It takes a lot of good help to keep ahead of the game in farming. I can't thank my employees enough because without them, this operation wouldn't be possible."

Four Star Dairy has also embraced

advances in technology. "Technology has totally changed the way we run our business," said Travis. "We rely on the data taken from our fields. During the winter, we analyze our harvesting maps and yield maps to see what did and didn't work that year."

The most satisfying part of farming for Travis is watching how the crops progress throughout the year. With research, testing and technology, the farmer plays a larger role in the growth stage of the crop.

"We have a guy who uses drones to check the fields, and just yesterday we applied fertilizer to the fields that were lacking," he said. "I could see by driving down the road today the improvements in the corn within 24 hours, and the drones show the color change even better. With the advancements in technology, we have seen improvements in our crop quality and in our operation overall." 🇺🇸





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Membership incentive program

Don't forget - WCO has a membership incentive program! If you sign up a new member and they list your name on the paper application or online, you receive \$25 towards your 2018 membership. Sponsors can participate also. Simply list your company name on the "referred by" line and earn money towards your 2018 sponsorship.

Incentive not to exceed cost of membership or sponsorship. We already have members and sponsors taking advantage of the program. 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.

Associate Members (\$50/year) support the custom farming industry, but do not engage in custom farming themselves.

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Manure safety essential for farmers and operators

By Kory Stalsberg, UW-Extension Dairy and Livestock Agent, Lafayette and Grant County



Kory Stalsberg

UW-Extension along with WCO, Lafayette County Farm Bureau, Rural Mutual Insurance and Cottonwood Dairy, offered an educational program to help both farmers and emergency response personnel understand the hazards of manure storage and handling systems.

The workshop was held at Cottonwood Dairy LLC, located just outside of Wiot, Wis, on Monday evening, June 12. 73 individuals from local farms, emergency management offices, sheriff departments, fire departments and DNR offices participated in the two-hour training.

Manure storage and handling systems have changed in recent years due in part to larger farms, new technologies and application restrictions. These manure storage and handling systems have potential hazards to workers and

rescuers. The gasses produced by manure as it decomposes require extra precautions when working with manure storage and handling systems.


Cheryl Skjolaas, UW-Madison/Extension agriculture safety specialist, demonstrated the use of gas monitors to determine the safety of a situation for rescue personnel. She also pointed out particular areas around manure handling systems where gases are most dangerous.

Jeff Nelson, UW-Madison machinery specialist and volunteer fire fighter, discussed the hazards of confined space and manure gas safety procedures. Confined space and safety equipment for use with manure storage and handling systems was displayed. This equipment included gas monitors, ventilation equipment and fall protection. Hazards associated with electrical equipment and specific manure handling equipment were also discussed.

Nationally, 143 fatalities involved livestock manure storage structures

over the years. The most frequent (34%) activity at the time of death was conducting repairs or maintenance activities on manure handling equipment, such as pumps, while the second most frequent activity (22%) was attempting to perform a rescue of another person entrapped or overcome in a manure storage space.

Unfortunately, Wisconsin documented the first open air, non-enclosed manure storage fatality in Portage County in 2016. Additionally, manure gasses claimed 60 head of beef cattle in 2016 in Wisconsin. In 2015, confined space within a manure handling system in Chippewa County claimed the life of a father and son. Approximately one-third of all documented incidents involving manure storage facilities are first responders attempting to aid an initial victim.

To learn more about manure handling and gas safety and to watch a webinar on this important topic go to fyi.uwex.edu/agsafety 



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“
It takes a lot of good help to keep
ahead of the game in farming. I can't
thank my employees enough because
without them, this operation wouldn't
be possible. ”

-Travis Erickson, WCO Member

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

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

**Important note from
DATCP:**

**Regarding the use of Nitrogen
Inhibitor/Stabilizers (Instinct)**

Mixing a nitrogen inhibiting
pesticide with a fertilizer
does not create a treated
substance, it creates a
pesticide-fertilizer mixture.

Someone who commercially
applies the pesticide-fertilizer
mixture, such as a contract
manure hauler, is considered
a commercial pesticide
applicator and needs to be
certified and licensed.

**To read to complete factsheet,
go to datcp.wi.gov and search
nitrogen inhibitor stabilizer**