

# CUSTOMNews

Representing Custom Farming in Wisconsin | SUMMER 2018

Modern agricultural equipment is at the center of right to repair discussion and policy.

## Hot topic in machinery: The right to repair

By Greg Fehring and Dr. Brian Luck, biological systems engineering, UW-Madison



Greg Fehring



Dr. Brian Luck

Technological advancement generally benefits the underlying industry. This is especially true in agriculture involving farm equipment companies who make high tech machinery.

New technologies in agricultural machines have yielded improvements in efficiency, power, control and safety across the industry. However, these machines are going to have issues and break down at some point in their lifetime.

For years, farmers and custom operators have taken matters into

their own hands by understanding the equipment which they are using and repairing it themselves. Timing of field operations is critical in agricultural production and an equipment malfunction can equate to crop quality and yield losses, directly effecting the farmer's bottom line.

Today's machines are controlled with electronics which monitor and interact with every aspect of the machine ensuring proper function and efficiency of operation. It takes a very different type of tool to fix issues within these systems and this is the basis of an ongoing argument between equipment manufacturers and equipment owners referred to as "right to repair".

As with any issue, there are two sides and two very different viewpoints surrounding right to repair. The goal of this brief article is to present both sides in a fair and concise manner and make you aware of the issue. Let's start with

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## UPCOMING DATES:

Proposals to speak at  
2019 Forage Symposium  
Due Sept. 1

Forage Symposium  
February 18-20, 2019  
Chula Vista Resort  
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

## CONTACT WCO:

Membership or Sponsorship:  
execdir@wiscustomoperators.org  
(608) 577-4345



# From the President's Cab

By Bryce O'Leary



By the time this newsletter reaches your mailbox second crop will be finished in most of the state. This season has presented some of the usual challenges like too much rain, too many cloudy days, trying to harvest first crop while finishing planting corn and beans. But nothing compares to the record snow fall that hit much of the state in April. Like every year, we tell ourselves that this is part of the fun that goes with the business of farming.

Most of the crops in my area (south east) are looking good but the jury is still out on what this year will be. Milk prices came up slightly, then promptly fell again. The same happened with other commodities. Customers who entered the MPP program through FSA have received payment for February, March, April and May milk. It's a challenging time, but hopefully everyone has been able to work with their customers to keep everyone in business.

Speaking of staying in business, make sure to add Pizza Hut pizza to your summer picnic menu. This spring, the company announced that it would use 25% more cheese on its pan pizzas.

On June 7, a decision was published that allows custom operators to be exempt from the electronic logging device or ELD mandate and hours of service as long as the haul is 150 miles or less from the point of origin.

This translates into being able to run the trucks the hours needed to get the harvest done. Although my understanding of this ruling is that it does not exempt us when moving between jobs.

On June 21, WCO sponsored the new Iowa-Wisconsin silage conference put on by the Iowa and Wisconsin Extension service. The conference was held in Dubuque, Iowa.

Lastly, planning has already started for the Forage Symposium, Feb. 18-20, so if anyone has any topics they would like covered please let the committee know. As the season moves forward be sure to take time to enjoy family friends and sunsets. 🍷

-Bryce

## Policy center *issues to watch*

**Elections:** Tuesday, Aug. 14 Wisconsin primary. Elections will take place for Governor, U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, odd-numbered Wisconsin State Senate seats and all Wisconsin Assembly seats. Candidates had to file by June 1, so we know who will be running.

The final two in each race will compete in the Nov. 6 general election.

**Campaigning:** Candidates are out in full force at dairy breakfasts, community events, and county fairs. Make a point to talk to these people - let them know the issues that matter most to you. When appropriate, WCO engages with elected officials on issues that impact our community.

**ELD Exemption:** On June 7, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration published its guidance in the Federal Register clarifying the age exemption with regard to electronic logging devices, making it officially effective as of today for the next five years.

Custom operators are exempt from the ELD mandate if they are within 150 miles of the point of origin. To read the full report go to [fmcsa.dot.gov/hours-service](http://fmcsa.dot.gov/hours-service).

**NR-151:** The new standards for manure application in areas with a particular type of fractured bedrock and shallow soils took effect July 1. WCO will work with other ag groups to help inform farmers and manure haulers about these new standards. 🍷

## Welcome new members!

The following list represents individuals/sponsors who joined WCO from March - July 2018

Dave June, Lindstrom Equipment  
Mike Schalla - Corteva Agriscience

WCO member Blasel Custom Fieldwork, Dorchester, Wis.  
*Photo by Troy Meyer.*



**Right to repair (continued from p. 1)**

the equipment manufacturer point-of-view.

New agricultural machines require precise control of their different systems to operate properly. However, the advanced electronics and software involved makes it difficult to repair these machines. Equipment manufacturers would prefer that highly trained technicians do the repair work to ensure the machine is operating within the parameters for which it was designed. Interfacing with the electronics incorrectly and/or changing parameters of the control system can cause major issues with the machines.

Extreme cases of these incorrect adjustments could result in more costly repairs or the need for machine replacement. From a manufacturer's perspective, this has real monetary implications for warranty repairs on machines. If an untrained individual were to adjust these parameters within the software to make a repair and that caused catastrophic failure, should the company be required to bear the financial burden of the repair if the machine was still under warranty?

Also, by having a certified technician repair the machines, they can ensure the compliance with emissions standards, confirm the vehicle is safe for operation and keeping with other regulatory requirements. With these issues in mind, some equipment manufacturers have implemented a licensing agreement that the customer purchasing the machine signs stating that the customer will not look at or access the software and signals generated by the machine.

Farmers and custom operators require their machines to function at peak performance consistently, and when a machine is needed for field operations it must perform the task.

machine is needed for field operations it must perform the task. In the past, if a machine malfunctioned the first option was for the farmer or custom operator to acquire the needed parts for the repair and conduct that repair on-site to minimize down-time and cost. More severe malfunctions might require the machine to be transported to the local dealership where a certified technician would perform the repair.

Farmers and custom operators would prefer to retain the option to repair their equipment to avoid certain costs such as transportation to and from the dealership, service fees and labor costs associated with repairs that were traditionally performed on the farm. This debate is not limited to the agricultural community. Smart phones are another technology that are discussed within right to repair. There are components within our smartphones that can be replaced and having the ability to replace these components yourself would greatly reduce the repair costs.

should be closely monitored. The cost to own, operate, and maintain agricultural machines hinges on this issue and a fair agreement between interested parties should be reached.

For more information, search "right to repair agriculture" on your web browser. 🐾

References available on request.

Greg Fehring  
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Machinery Systems  
Biological Systems Engineering  
UW-Madison

Dr. Brian Luck  
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and extension specialist  
Machinery Systems  
Biological Systems Engineering  
UW-Madison

**“Farmers and custom operators require their machines to function at peak performance consistently, and when a machine is needed for field operations it must perform the task”**

Instead, service technicians are required to make the needed repairs, or the devices are discarded for newer models.

The right to repair debate around agricultural machines will have an impact on WCO members. Some states have implemented legislation to address these issues and those actions

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## WCO supports new Iowa/Wisconsin silage conference

By WCO Communications

Dairy experts from across the Midwest came together on June 21 to present at the Iowa-Wisconsin Silage Conference in Dubuque. Experts from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, as well as from the University of Wisconsin, University of Nebraska and industry provided information on a wide range of topics dealing with growing and using silage.

Education is at the core of WCO, and we believe strongly that we must support industry events that enhance this goal. WCO contributed as a sponsor, but we also helped drive attendance by promoting the event to members via email and on our social channels.

Planning stand-alone events takes bandwidth, time and funds. Partnering on events like the winter Forage

Symposium and this summer silage conference will drive more value for WCO members.

Sessions were presented by some familiar faces to WCO and there were new topics and speakers featured.

### Topics included:

- Quality corn silage before, during and after harvest; Hugo Ramirez, Iowa State University
- Characteristics of corn varieties for silage; Randy Shaver, UW-Madison
- Molds and mycotoxins in silage; Paige Gott, Biomin
- Pricing corn silage; Denise Schwab, Iowa State University and Bill Halfman, University of Wisconsin-Extension
- Machinery efficiency; Brian Luck, UW-Madison
- Corn silage safety; Keith Bolsen, founder, Keith Bolsen Silage Safety Foundation

As the season progresses, if you know of any dealer or industry events that WCO should promote to members, email us at [execdir@wiscustomoperators.org](mailto:execdir@wiscustomoperators.org). 🇺🇸

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## Please send your photos to WCO

Photos featured in the *Custom News* are either taken by staff or submitted by members and sponsors. We are always looking for high quality images of custom farmers in action. It might look like we favor certain brands because some sponsors are really good at sending in awesome photos! So - if you don't see enough of a certain brand of equipment, YOU can change that!

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!



## The WCO board is working for you! Two spots available

We might be in the midst of the harvesting season, but it's already time to start thinking about board elections. At the 2019 Forage Symposium, WCO will elect two board members: One operator representative (at-large director) and one corporate representative.

The board meets in person four times per year at various locations throughout the state. Each board member is also asked to be on at least one committee.

Meetings generally coincide with association or industry events for ease:

- February** - Forage Symposium
- March** - WCO Safety Cert. event
- July** - WI Farm Tech Days
- December** - Stand alone meeting

With each year comes new technology to adopt, new rules to follow and additional differentiations needed to remain competitive. WCO is at the forefront of many of custom farming's top issues.

**In 2019, WCO will elect one at-large operator director and one corporate director.**

WCO board members were active in loH legislation from start to finish and continue to engage with equipment and transportation issues. WCO board members are also following issues that impact manure hauling, water quality & quantity and more.

For a small investment of your time, you can make a difference! Please consider running for a spot on the board. If you have any questions or would like to add your name to the list, please contact Maria at [execdir@wiscustomoperators.org](mailto:execdir@wiscustomoperators.org) or (608) 577-4345.

### Committees are open to all members

WCO is always accepting committee members. If you are looking for a small but important way to get involved, contact WCO about joining a committee. Choose from the following:

- Education/Conference*
- Media*
- Scholarship & Awards*
- Safety/Regulations* 🇺🇸



The 2018-2019 board of directors



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**LENA, WI**  
**920.829.5131**

**BEAVER DAM**  
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## Employee of the year award revamped; Due Dec. 1

2019 will be the third year for the Employee of the Year (EOTY) award, and like anything new, changes are often needed. With this in mind, we have made some adjustments to the requirements and the application itself to encourage more applications.


Labor continues to be a primary challenge for WCO members but there are examples of men and women employed by custom farming operations who make significant contributions to your team.

The Employee of the Year award honors an employee of a custom farming operation who demonstrates excellence in six important categories. This award is particularly focused on acknowledging and recognizing employee contributions that are beyond the normal job expectations.

For 2019, we added a new category - "community involvement", which highlights a person's involvement with community groups and volunteerism. The other big change to the award is that the nominee does not need to be your employee. They can work for any custom operator.

All employees, both full-time and part-time are eligible for the award. The winner will receive \$750 and the nominator will receive \$250.

Applications for the 2019 WCO Employee of the Year Award are due Dec. 1. Interested members should visit the WCO website for more information including eligibility, criteria and application.

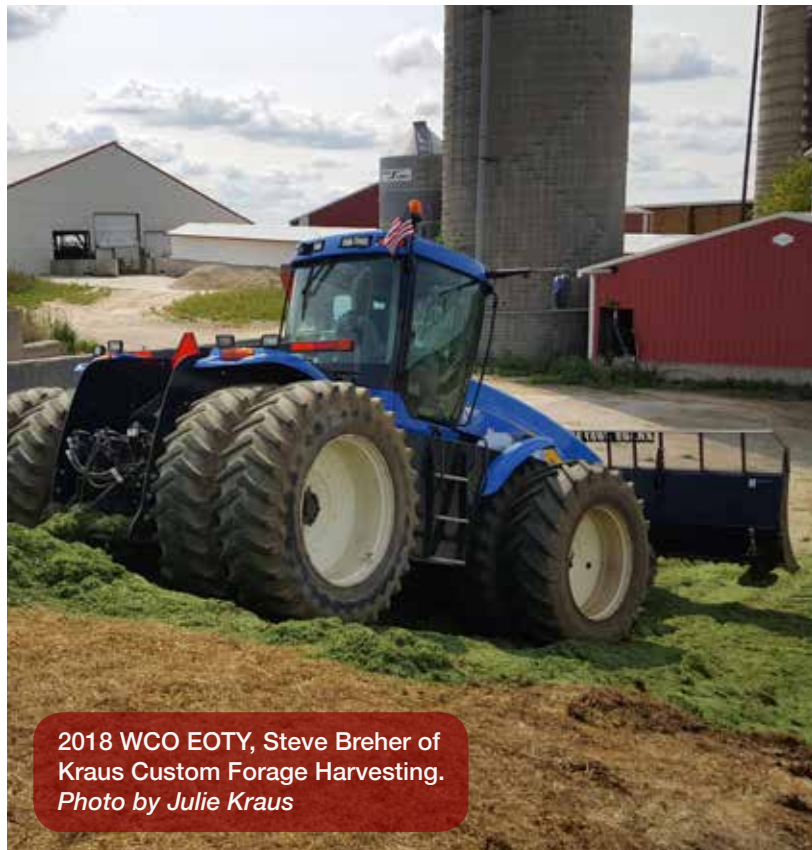
This past February, WCO honored Steve Breher, of Kraus Custom Forage Harvesting, Elkhart Lake, Wis. 



Contact: Bill Levers - Sales  
(608) 643-3321  
blevers@mcfarlanes.net

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2018 WCO EOTY, Steve Breher of Kraus Custom Forage Harvesting.  
Photo by Julie Kraus

## 2019 Forage Symposium request for proposals

By Maria Woldt for WCO

New this year, WCO is accepting proposals to speak at the Forage Symposium held in Wisconsin Dells, Feb. 18-20 at the Chula Vista. The WCO Education Committee has historically selected sessions for the Symposium using a combination of survey data and current issues. In an effort to keep the event fresh and tailored to what attendees are truly looking for, we decided to hold a “request for proposals - or “RFP”

This process is common for academic conferences, and is a great way to keep content relevant and lessen the burden on the planning team.

The WCO RFP is open to anyone with a relevant topic for the custom farming community. Preference will be given to educational topics and to WCO gold and silver level sponsors. Proposals are due Sept. 1 using the online submission form.

### WHO CAN APPLY?

WCO is accepting proposals for breakout and general sessions. This request is open to the following:

1. WCO Platinum or Gold level corporate sponsors,
2. University, nonprofit or government agency professionals with ties to WCO,
3. WCO operator members

Individuals, companies, universities, organizations and government agencies may submit proposals.

### HOW TO APPLY/APPLICATION FORMAT

Proposals should be submitted using the online proposal submission form at [wiscustomoperators.org](http://wiscustomoperators.org) by Sept. 1, 2018. Proposals should address the topic’s relevance to the custom farming community.



L to R: Kathy Vander Kinter, Chuck Rabitz, Blake Knickelbein, and Bill Arneson speaking about collections at the 2018 Symposium.

### SEMINAR SELECTION TIMELINE:

- July. 15, 2018 – Release and distribution of “Request for Proposals”
- Sept. 1, 2018 – Deadline to submit proposal
- Nov. 1, 2018 – Topics selected, notifications sent

### ABOUT FORAGE SYMPOSIUM

The Forage Symposium is a joint partnership between the Midwest Forage Association (MFA) and WCO.

More than 400 farmers, custom operators, farm and operator employees and ag professionals attend the two and a half day conference. MFA and WCO host breakout sessions that are open to all attendees regardless of membership. There are also general sessions that are presented in a large-group format.

WCO is accepting proposals for breakout sessions. Applications from the pool of proposals will also be considered for general sessions. See “who can apply” for application criteria.

### TYPES OF PROPOSALS:

**Breakout Sessions (60 or 90 minutes):** Offered Tues. Feb. 19 and Wed. Feb. 20. Each breakout room comfortably accommodates 75-100+ people. Traditional AV equipment is available – screen & projector with a HDMI plug-in. Speakers may bring presentations on a memory drive or on their own computer to plug into the system. Presentations are requested in early Feb. for inclusion in the conference proceedings.

### SPONSORSHIPS COSTS

All corporate presenters must be gold or platinum level WCO sponsors to be considered. There is no fee to sponsor the session other than the yearly WCO sponsorship fee. Speaker fees and expenses (if any) must be included in the proposal.

If you have questions, contact Maria Woldt, at [execdir@wiscustomoperators.org](mailto:execdir@wiscustomoperators.org) or (608) 577-4345. Proposals are accepted using the online proposal submission form found on the WCO website. 🇺🇸

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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 2019 membership. Sponsors can participate also. Simply list your company name on the "referred by" line and earn money towards your 2019 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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## Farmers and mental health: DATCP stands ready to help

*By Sheila Harsdorf, Wisconsin's Secretary of Agriculture*

Across the country, mental health awareness is a topic of importance. While help and education is more available now than ever, there are still stigmas associated with mental health. Farmers are one such group that often struggle to seek help when they need it.

I ask your help in sharing the message that there are resources specifically available for farmers.

Farmers are known as nurturers of their animals, stewards of their land and caretakers of their farms. They balance the needs of their family and farm above everything else, often ignoring their own needs.

As farmers continue to endure an extended period of low commodity prices, it is especially hard for many to try to negotiate financing and make due with much less while still providing for their family.

A typical day for a farmer can mean hours working independently and alone

doing barn chores or fieldwork. There are times that farmers may feel there is no one to talk to, and that they are isolated in their struggles to make ends meet and address challenges in their business.

Farmers need to know that there is help out there!


The Wisconsin Farm Center at the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is here for farmers to call for guidance on finances, farm succession planning, and other issues they may be dealing with. Farm Center staff work with farmers and their families one-on-one to address each personal situation. All services are free and confidential.

Farmers, whether beginning their career or nearing retirement, can experience challenging situations. Staff are able to walk through options with farmers about how to navigate difficult personal or financial situations.

While at times, alternatives may seem very limited, sometimes an outside perspective can help bring light to possibilities.

Our Farm Center staff are available to lend a listening ear and if needed, to connect farmers and their families with counseling services. Mental health professionals are a valuable resource that can help us through a tough time.

Just as taking care of our physical health is important, so is taking care of our mental health. I encourage those in need to reach out for help and utilize available resources by calling the Wisconsin Farm Center at 800-942-2474. Staff are available Monday through Friday from 7:45 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.

**WCO NOTE:** The Farm Center is a great resource for diverse business situations including those of custom operators. Consider contacting the Farm Center 



As farmers, there are times we feel there is no one to talk to, and that we are isolated in our struggles.



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**New this year, WCO is accepting proposals to speak at the Forage Symposium held in Wisconsin Dells, Feb. 18-20 at the Chula Vista. The application in on the WCO website and proposals are due Sept. 1.**

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(Required as of January 1, 2015), go to  
**[wisconsin.gov](http://wisconsin.gov) and search "no fee ag permits"**

Questions about IoH definitions and rules? Go to  
**[wiscustomoperators.org/resources](http://wiscustomoperators.org/resources)**