



"Building healthy land, people, communities and quality of life, for present and future generations."

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*The NSAS Newsletter is a bimonthly publication of Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society, a private, non-profit organization. Our mission is to promote agriculture & food systems that build healthy land, people, communities & quality of life, for present & future generations. The purpose of this newsletter is to inform its readers about sustainable agriculture issues, resources & activities. Members receive this newsletter as a benefit.*

## Supporting Nebraska Local Foods!

Spring is one of my favorite times of year. The start of the farmers' markets combined with the planting of seeds allows for our imagination and creativity to grow. In our own garden, we are trying several heirloom varieties of onions, tomatoes, and corn, just to name a few. We are looking forward to the day that our backyard urban garden will become our own family farm, but for this year, our little garden gives us a small "taste."

During a recent event promoting Lincoln Farmers' Markets, I put together a "Nebraska Foods Basket" and everyone loved it. The basket included several local cheeses, my favorite local bread in Lincoln, a local honey, and a few local jams and jellies. Everything went over great! This event was held at the KFOR and KIBZ radio stations in Lincoln, and later in the summer I will held back with some more seasonal produce with a goal of promoting local farms.

I believe Nebraska is fortunate to not only have great family farms producing awesome local foods, but also organizations to support them. NSAS recently partnered with Slow Food Nebraska for a NET Radio Challenge. Our tag line was "Slow Food Nebraska and the Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society proudly support Nebraska Family Farmers and local foods!" You can read more about Slow Food Nebraska in this issue of the NSAS newsletter, or by visiting their new website at [www.slowfoodnebraska.org](http://www.slowfoodnebraska.org)

Another partner has been Buy Fresh Buy Local Nebraska (BFBLN). At the recent Lincoln Earth Day NSAS and BFBLN partnered to create a virtual Nebraska Foods exhibit promoting and recognizing our state's great family farmers and the wonderful products they produce. This partnership will also be at the Nebraska State Fair, so be sure to stop by and visit! For more information about Buy Fresh Buy Local Nebraska please visit, [www.buylocalnebraska.org](http://www.buylocalnebraska.org)

Another way to support local foods in Nebraska is to frequent the farmers' markets throughout the state. We have a list at the end of this newsletter with times and information about the various markets throughout the state and are currently trying to network with even more. There is also up-to-date information on the internet with the latest happenings at markets and you can find this information on the NSAS Facebook page.

I am always looking for ways to better serve you, the members. If you have an idea for a partnership, farm tour, grant, or anything, please contact me. I will gladly help get the ball rolling!

By William Powers

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## Press Releases

### NRCS EXTENDS SIGN-UP FOR ORGANIC FARMING AND RANCHING

LINCOLN, May 19, 2009 - The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Nebraska is extending the sign-up to June 12, 2009, for farmers and ranchers wishing to apply for financial or technical assistance related to organic agriculture production, said Steve Chick, state conservationist for NRCS.

"We have received a favorable response showing interest in organic farming or ranching from around the state. Plus it's the busy planting season, so I decided to extend the application process for the Organic Initiative," said Chick.

Over \$1.8 million is available through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Applications received by June 12 will be considered first for any funding, however producers may continue to sign up after June 12. All funds for the EQIP Organic Initiative will be obligated by August 15, 2009.

This program is aimed at agricultural producers who have at least \$1,000 of offfarm/ranch sales. This is a cost-share program and not a grant program. To be eligible, the producer is required to be pursuing organic certification or already have an organic system plan.

The 2009 EQIP Organic Initiative is a nationwide special initiative to provide financial and technical assistance to National Organic Program certified organic producers as well as producers transitioning to organic production. Interested producers should visit their local NRCS office at the USDA Service Center to determine eligibility or apply. Additional information on the 2009 EQIP Organic Initiative is available at [www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov/](http://www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov/).

NRCS is also educating producers interested in organic agriculture. The Northeast Nebraska Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council in Plainview, Neb., is hosting an organic farming special training session at the Community Building in Bloomfield, Neb., on Wednesday, May 27, from 1 - 4 p.m. This workshop is free and open to the public. Other workshops may be listed at <http://www.nercd.com/>.

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### Fortenberry Resolution Supports Home Gardening, Organic and Local Food Production

Washington, D.C.--Congressman Jeff Fortenberry, joined by Representative Steve Kagen (D-WI), has introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives expressing lawmakers' support for the continued growth of home gardening, organic farming, and local foods production across America. Many Americans have recently expressed their concerns about the potential for limitations to be placed on these practices by Congress.

"Americans have a rich tradition of self-sufficiency in growing their own food," Fortenberry said. "New agricultural opportunities are rapidly developing as farmers employ organic farming methods and market locally-raised foods. These practices promote good nutrition, stewardship of resources, and strong local economies. Our public policies should encourage and support them, and we should refrain from over-regulating food production methods that have demonstrated records of sound food safety and sustainability."

The Fortenberry resolution notes that 43 million Americans plan to grow their own fruits, vegetable, herb, or berries in 2009, a 19 % increase from 2008, and that by the end of World War II, more than 20 million gardens were providing 40% of the produce consumed in the U.S.

It also recognizes the significant growth of local foods systems and farmers' markets, which have increased in number by almost 7% since 2006, and the organic foods market, which had sales of nearly \$23 billion last year. Fortenberry is a member of the House Agriculture Committee and Ranking Member of the Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry Subcommittee.

## 2009 Nebraska Grazing Conference

The ninth annual Nebraska Grazing Conference will be held at the Kearney Holiday Inn on Tuesday and Wednesday, August 11 and 12, 2009.

The first featured speaker will be Allan Nation from Mississippi. He became the agricultural reporter for his local newspaper at age 16, and has been editor of *The Stockman Grass Farmer* since 1977. To date, he has authored eight books including *Knowledge Rich Ranching*, *Quality Pasture* and *Grassfed to Finish*. In two separate talks Nation will address Nebraska's competitive advantage in the grazing industry, and grass-finished production and marketing.

Rick Danvir, wildlife manager for Deseret Land and Livestock headquartered in Utah, will discuss why Great Plains/Nebraska ranchers should manage for wildlife on their ranches--from a private ranche/wildlife manager's perspective.

Also addressing wildlife issues in connection with grazing operations will be Bob Budd with the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust. Budd will talk about impacts of grazing conservation practices and fence/water development on livestock and wildlife.

Making for a lively exchange will be the presentation by Justin Derner, research rangeland management specialist at the USDA Agricultural Research Service's High Plains Grasslands Research Station in Wyoming. Derner, a native Nebraskan from the Elgin area, is co-author of a paper published in 2008 that reviewed several years of research results from studies of rotational vs. continuous grazing.

Concurrent sessions on the first day will include one on invasive species and one on production issues -winter supplementation, longevity of replacement heifers, and pasture leases.

Other topics on the program include designing fence and water systems, becoming a grass farmer, mentoring, the 100 Cow Program, and passing on the legacy (in this case, father to daughter.)

Those attending the banquet on Tuesday evening will get a special treat as they listen to cowboy poet R. P. Smith from Broken Bow. A fourth-generation rancher, Smith also hosts "Home Grown" on the rural radio network and has been a featured entertainer at some of the largest cowboy poetry gatherings in the country.

The two-day pre-registration fee of \$75 is due to the Center for Grassland Studies by August 1. The fee covers lunch both days, the evening banquet, break refreshments, and the conference proceeding. One-day registrations are also available. Registration fee will be waived for students who

will still be in high school next year and who pre-register by the August 1 deadline, compliments of the UNL College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. Reduced registration fees apply for other full-time students. Late fees apply to registrations postmarked after August 1 and to walk-ins. Check are to be made out to 2009 Nebraska Grazing Conference (sorry, credit cards are not accepted.) Note the refund policy: cancellations received by August 1, 2009, will receive a copy of the proceedings and a refund of registration fee less \$10. Cancellations after August 1 will not receive a refund but will be sent a copy of the proceedings.

Participants of any of the previous Nebraska Grazing Conferences as well as all Nebraska extension educators will receive a brochure in the mail in June. Others may contact the Center for Grassland Studies at: 402-472-4101, grassland@unl.edu to be placed on the mailing list. Information and the registration form are also on the CGS Website at: [www.grassland.unl.edu](http://www.grassland.unl.edu)

### Organic Farm Tour

Dave and Deb Welsch will host a farm tour on Monday, June 15 at 2 pm. The tour will begin with a look at the planting and cultivating equipment followed by a field demonstration. After viewing the organic crop rotation, the tour will take a pasture walk to look at the rotational grazing and cow/calf herd. The tour will conclude with a look at the chicken operation and a light meal around 4:30 pm. RSVP for the meal is requested but not required. (402) 826-5361 or [dwelsch@westbluefarm.com](mailto:dwelsch@westbluefarm.com)

West Blue Farm has been certified organic since 1993. They also participate in the Conservation Stewardship Program as well as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program - Organic Initiative. Both programs will be discussed during the tour. They have also been direct marketing chickens and beef for 20 years.

The tour will begin at 2261 Rokeby Road. From Southeast Community College in Milford, follow the paved road 4 miles south and 1 mile east. From Crete, go 3 miles west on Highway 33 to County Road 1900, then go north 5 miles to the West Blue Church. Then go 1 mile north of the church to the first tour stop. The tour will conclude 1/2 mile south of the church.



## Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Dedicates National Plant Materials Center in Honor of Norman A. Berg

WASHINGTON, May 15, 2009 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today dedicated the USDA National Plant Materials Center in honor of pioneering conservationist Norman A. Berg who dedicated more than 70 years to the stewardship of working farm and ranch land.

"Norm's relentless work ethic, his pride in his community and his tireless dedication to the conservation of natural resources continue to make him a shining example of what is best about America," said Vilsack. "I am proud to be able to honor him with such a fitting tribute."

Norm Berg's far-reaching career began in 1943 at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service (SCS) - a relatively new agency formed in response to the Dust Bowl, now named the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Berg rose through the agency's ranks, becoming associate administrator in 1969 and serving as Chief from 1979 until 1982.

"Chief Berg helped make NRCS the premier natural resource agency that it is today," said NRCS Chief Dave White.

Berg counseled countless farmers and ranchers on how to save their eroding land and was a tireless advocate of conservation districts that help local communities manage natural resources.

Upon retirement from public service, Berg became active with American Farmland Trust (AFT) and the Soil and Water Conservation Society, both national, nonprofit conservation organizations.

Until his death, Berg remained a committed conservationist, serving as senior advisor for AFT; the Washington, D.C. representative for the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS); and NRCS Chief Emeritus.

Berg passed away in March of 2008 at age 90. To honor Berg, Congress made renaming of the National Plant Materials Center a provision of the 2008 Farm Bill.

More information about USDA and the Norm A. Berg National Plant Materials Center is available at [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)

## Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Announces Economic Recovery Projects for Invasive Species

WASHINGTON, May 14, 2009 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced today projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinstatement Act (ARRA) for invasive species projects. In total, there are 19 projects, funded at over \$38 million, in 14 states.

"These projects will provide for public health and safety by restoring forestlands and rangelands damaged by invasive species," said Vilsack. "Invasives weaken affected ecosystems and reduce resource benefits from forests and rangelands."

Invasive species affect the health of ecosystems by stressing the naturally-occurring species and competing with them for resources. Stressed ecosystems are at risk of loss. These funds will be used to suppress and control species such as: kudzu, cogon grass, and hemlock woolly adelgid.

Information on other Forest Service ARRA projects and related economic recovery can be found at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/>

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## Beekeeping Value-Added Products Workshop

June 12-13. Ithaca, NE. The training includes both classroom and hands-on session. Participants in the comb honey program should bring their own protective gear. Registration for the two-day workshop is \$45 per person (includes two meals and training materials.) One-day registration is \$25. On-site registration is not available, and pre-registration is required by June 5. Registration is limited and early registration is encouraged to guarantee participation.

Send registrations to: Jeri Cunningham  
University of Nebraska, Department of Entomology  
202 Entomology Hall, Lincoln, NE 68583-0816  
Phone: 402-472-2123 Email: [jcunning@unlnotes.unl.edu](mailto:jcunning@unlnotes.unl.edu)



Colleen Melvin (Curtis, NE) checks her 4-H bees with her dad. Look for an article about Colleen's 4-H project in the next NSAS newsletter!

## Coming Home to Antelope County

By Alexandra McClanahan

The landscape has always held me. I grew up in Antelope County, Nebraska, in a place of gently rolling hills and sandy soil that lies between the rich farmland of the central Midwest to the east and the vast rangelands of the Sandhills to the west.

Ever since my parents bought a half-section of land northeast of Neligh in the mid-1960s, it was my dream to own a farm. As I began to approach my 50<sup>th</sup> year, I knew that the time to realize my dream was not some distant time in the future, but now.

In April 2002, I found an ad on the internet for an 80-acre farm two and a half miles from Orchard. The price seemed reasonable, and so I immediately decided to buy it. Wrong, said my husband. You can't buy land until you see it with your own eyes. My sisters and I had planned a trip to Neligh at the end of May, so I just kept my fingers crossed that the land would not sell before then.

It didn't! And even though I had the real estate agent show me other properties, I knew the minute I laid eyes on the Orchard land, it was the place I wanted. It may have looked like a mess to some people - there were actually wind-eroded "holes" of sand in the field. But to me it was a place with trees, wild plums, chirping birds, a rundown house built around the turn of the century and a beautiful barn with large number "1941" above the barn door.

My work with Alaska Natives leaders throughout my writing career in Alaska since moving there in 1982 focused mostly on the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. Known as ANCSA, the act provided for the creation of Alaska Native corporations to manage the \$1 billion granted and the 44 million acres of land Native peoples retained. Spending so much time on ANCSA forced me to think hard about what it means to belong somewhere, really belong in the sense of having your heart sink right down into the soil. I continued with other oral history interviews with Alaska Natives of all ages, and as I listened to people tell their stories, again and again, it was the land that held their hearts.

From the moment I saw the photograph of the rows and rows of trees in the two shelterbelts on the northern and western borders of the property, I knew where my heart belonged. To honor the people who are responsible for paying my salary, I chose the name Sht'uh Farm, a Dena'ina Athabascan Indian word provided by Dena'ina expert Professor Alan Boraas, which means "my special place" or "my home." Even though the name connotes a particular real estate transaction and ownership recognized in Western terms, in reality it feels more like this rundown little farm has been entrusted to my temporary care so that someone will take steps to protect its soil from the ever-present wind and to rehabilitate and preserve the house and barn.

In 2006 I realized that I needed to begin the process of attaining organic certification. During my ownership of the farm, no chemicals other than fertilizers had been applied to the land, and in March 2006, the last chemical application of fertilizer was made. After that, I began a long journey of learning just exactly what was required of someone seeking organic certification, and I also learned that many people in the organic community are less familiar with what works and what doesn't work on sandy soil. All that is another story for another newsletter.

What I'm hoping to convey in this article is simply the joy that one experiences when one goes back home. There surely isn't a more beautiful place on earth than Alaska, and after living there since 1982, I definitely feel like an Alaskan. Still, Antelope County, Nebraska, is *home*, and that makes it "my special place."

*Alexandra McClanahan (Shively) is from Neligh. She graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1975 with a degree in journalism. She worked for several newspapers in Nebraska, focusing on agriculture and irrigation issues. She moved to Alaska in 1982. She attained her Master's Degree in Alaska Native studies in 2005. She bought her farm in Antelope County in 2002. She is the author of several books published by The CIRI Foundation, and she is also a published poet. She is married to John Shively and the mother of Natasha Hensley Shively. The family lives in both Anchorage, Alaska, and Orchard, NE*

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### Organic Producer and Handler Profile

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) is compiling a directory of organic producers and handlers to be placed on their web site. This directory will assist consumers in contacting you and in purchasing your goods and services. If you would like to be included in the directory, please complete the form and return by **July 10, 2009**.

If you have any questions about this directory please call the program coordinator, Steve Martin, at (402) 471-4876 or e-mail at [steve.martin@nebraska.gov](mailto:steve.martin@nebraska.gov). To see examples of other directories, go to [www.agr.ne.gov](http://www.agr.ne.gov), select Promotions/Development Division, and scroll to the bottom of the page.

A sample listing will look like this:

**Martin Farms**

Steve Martin

1 Martin Lane

Martinville, NE 68509

(402)471-4876

[steve@martinfarm.com](mailto:steve@martinfarm.com)

[www.martinfarm.com](http://www.martinfarm.com)

Fresh vegetables and fruit, feed corn, alfalfa, eggs, milk, cheese, meet (beef, chicken)

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# OCIA News

Organic Crop Improvement Association, Nebraska Chapter #1 Newsletter

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## NEWS RELEASE FROM IANR NEWS SERVICE, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

All Four UNL Organic Farms Now Certified, Research Underway

May 1, 2009

LINCOLN, Neb. – All four University of Nebraska-Lincoln organic farms now are certified by the Organic Crop Improvement Association International.

“Now that we have the four farms certified, research will be conducted that will give producers information specific to Nebraska organic crop production,” said Liz Sarno, UNL Extension educator and organic project coordinator. “Not only will this give us valuable organic crop information, but it will continue to attract new research and new farmers to organics.”

The four research farms are located at the Agricultural Research and Development Center near Mead, the Haskell Agricultural Laboratory near Concord, the South Central Agricultural Laboratory near Clay Center and the High Plains Agricultural Laboratory near Sidney.

The three farms in the eastern half of the state have corn, soybeans and winter wheat in their crop rotation. Each research station is conducting research with some type of cover crops. This research not only is of interest to organic producers, but no-till farmers as well, Sarno said.

The western location near Sidney has winter wheat, proso millet or sunflower in its crop rotation, along with summer fallow. A pea green manure or composted cattle manure is used during the summer fallow period to provide fertility to the system. Research also is being done on nitrogen fertility using green manure, composted cattle manure and Summit 10 liquid fertilizer.

“Having organic crop ground at these various research farm locations allows each station to follow a crop rotation best suited for that farmer’s area,” Sarno said. “Researchers can eventually help organic farmers determine what are the best crop rotations, best varieties and cultural practices.”

The UNL organic project began in October 2005. A team of Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources researchers received a \$750,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service’s Integrated Organic Program to expand organic farming research and education, enhance collaborations with growers and develop science-based information for organic food production in Nebraska.

Other components of this grant were to develop a tool for measuring a farm’s biodiversity, educational outreach for students and farmers, and weed control by flaming, Sarno said.

"An integral part of the grant has been to develop the Healthy Farm Index as a tool for landowners to measure their farm's ecological health and maintain or improve crop productivity," Sarno said. More information about this is at <http://organic.unl.edu/hfi/hfi.shtml>.

As part of the Healthy Farm Index, two years of data have been collected on 27 organic farms research focused on bird assemblages and vegetation structure, along with preliminary insect data.

"This really offers a whole different perspective," Sarno said. "For example, a wood lot can provide habitat for birds, help control insects or provide habitat for beneficial insects, increase yields, increase profit and at the same time enhance what's happening in a farmer's ecology. It's a good 21st century tool."

Parameters for measuring a farm's ecological health have focused on the ecological, economic and social aspects of farming and consideration of the ecosystem services as part of the production equation.

Results from the four research stations and on-farm farmer-driven organic research also were incorporated in classroom education programs, Sarno said. These teach principles and practical knowledge that help students envision future agricultural systems. They also were disseminated to farmers in response to production questions. More information about that can be found at <http://organic.unl.edu/classes.shtml>.

Sarno said there will be several field tours this summer across the state. Sarno has organized past meetings and workshops with farmers at each research farm site to collect their input about their research needs.

Farmer input from these meetings led to an organic winter wheat variety study, "Developing Small Grains Cultivars and Systems Optimally Suited for Organic Production," funded by the USDA-CSREES. Stephen Baenziger, Small Grains Breeding and Genetics program leader, and Richard Little, organic wheat breeding specialist and coordinator, are in charge of the project. For more information go to <http://organic.unl.edu/wheat/wheat.shtml>.

Another project, flaming to manage weeds in organic crops, started with the 2005 grant and continues with the winter wheat study.

Dose response curves were determined for propane (based on usage rate of gallon per acre) needed for safe and economical weed control. To further investigate weed management with flaming, UNL received a 2008 NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant Award with matched funds

from the Propane Education and Research Council for the project, "Reducing Soil Erosion through Thermal Pest Control."

With these funds a commercial type flamer will be manufactured for field demonstration purposes and for working with four organic farmers to conduct on-farm experiments. Stevan Knezevic, UNL integrated weed management specialist, at the Haskell Ag Lab is in charge of the project. For more information visit <http://organic.unl.edu/wdflm/wdflm.shtml>.

For information about organic research at UNL visit the Organic Working Group Web site at <http://organic.unl.edu> or contact Sarno at [esarno2@unl.edu](mailto:esarno2@unl.edu) or (402) 309-0944.

Sources: Liz Sarno, extension education, organic project coordinator, (402) 309-0944, [esarno2@unl.edu](mailto:esarno2@unl.edu)

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### ***Organic Crop Improvement Association Nebraska Chapter #1***

OCIA is accredited by the USDA NOP, ISO-65, IFOAM, CAQ, JAS and the Costa Rican Ministry of Agriculture for the MAG program.

The Organic Crop Improvement Association was established in 1985. It is a non-profit international association of organic farmers, processors, traders, and manufacturers who have joined forces to promote partnerships, provide information to help growers improve crops and soil, build environmental stewardship, and provide certification services.

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## Certified Course in Permaculture Design Offered at SDSU

South Dakota Ag News Headlines  
 Certified Course Offered at SDSU in Permaculture Design  
 South Dakota Ag Connection

Well-known Australian permaculturist Darren Doherty will offer a two-week Permaculture Design Certification course at South Dakota State University June 4 through June 17.

The intensive, 72-hour course will lead participants through the history, theory and practical application of permaculture, the development of sustainable, self-sufficient agricultural ecosystems. Coursework culminates in a formal design project by each participant.

Permaculture Design Certificates are awarded to those successfully completing the program. Course participants can also earn seven CEUs for taking the course.

The permaculture concept originated in Australia in the 1970s as a design system for ecological and sustainable living that integrates plants, animals, buildings, people and communities. Its philosophy promotes working with nature to meet human needs.

Topics included in the SDSU course will provide information on the history, theory, ethics and principles of permaculture; nature-friendly house placement and design; keyline design, Holistic Management and carbon farming; energy conservation techniques for all climates; recycling and waste management; organic food production; water harvesting, irrigation systems management; waste water treatment systems; ecological pest control; drought-proofing; soil rehabilitation and erosion control; livestock systems; aquaculture; catastrophe preparedness and prevention; windbreaks and fire control; community development; enterprise development models; GIS/CAD design; and project costing and management.

Doherty, owner of Australia Felix Permaculture, is a registered teacher with the Permaculture Institute of Australia and has taught on more than 30 PDC courses, more than ten by himself, across the world with renowned teachers such as Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, the co-originators of the permaculture concept.

Since 1993, Doherty has been a full-time permaculture designer, drafting and developing more than 1,100 properties that range from apartment balconies to 110,000-acre ranches. Doherty's international experience in permaculture design and management on four continents has him considered a pioneer in retrofitting broadacre agricultural systems. In addition, Doherty is a qualified whole farm planner from University of Melbourne, approved keyline design consultant and accredited permaculture training trainer.

"Darren's design experience in permaculture is wide-ranging," said Karl Schmidt, SDSU director of international affairs. "His work on broadacre farm design should be of particular interest to many people in our region."

The cost of the 72-hour PDC training is \$1,250 and includes instruction as well as twice-daily tea/coffee breaks with substantial refreshments. As an added bonus, the course includes an evening permaculture film series. A 10 per cent course discount applies for those who register and pay in full by May 1.

This Permaculture Design Course is hosted by Glacial Lakes Permaculture, a South Dakota nonprofit group, in collaboration with Project Sustainability at SDSU, the student SDSU Sierra Club and the Office of International Affairs.

To register for the PDC or for more information, contact Karl Schmidt at 605-688-4913, or via e-mail at: [karl.schmidt@sdstate.edu](mailto:karl.schmidt@sdstate.edu).

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## Nebraska Poultry Growers Cooperative!

Mark & Molly Kvam are the proud owners of a newly built and just-about-finished poultry processing shop on their farm in West Point, NE. We've been discussing with regulators what is the best way to structure the service so that poultry producers would be able to have their birds processed here in Nebraska, AND be able to legally resell them within the state.

The result is that the facility will be operating under one of USDA's exemptions, called the "Producer/Grower - 20,000 Limit Exemption". As long as the producer/grower processes under 20,000 birds per year, that producer/grower can legally resell the birds within the state. If a cooperative is formed to be the producer-grower, then individuals joining this new cooperative as poultry producers will be able to process their birds at this facility. (And no, you don't have to process your own birds!)

We're in the process of forming the cooperative and are looking for interested producers who would like to join. Please feel free to email or call me for additional details. Once the kinks are worked out and it's open for business, the Cooperative will be ready to start taking reservations for future processing dates.

Submitted by: Randy Wattermann, 402-372-5005, [wattermann@skyww.net](mailto:wattermann@skyww.net)

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## Slow Food Nebraska, How's it going?

By Krista Dittman

Being part of Slow Food Nebraska fulfills two of my heart's fondest desires: enjoying a wonderful meal and doing so with people who share a common enjoyment of good-tasting, locally-sourced, and fairly-produced food. Slow Food strikes a balance between tradition and progress, a way to exercise your right to vote with your fork, and sets a table where left and right can eat together.

The seeds for Nebraska's first Slow Food convivium were cultivated during the spring of 2005. The fertile soil of the Lincoln-based local food community were tilled by two farmers, two restaurateurs and two dedicated locavores. Since then our membership has grown to nearly 100 and an Omaha convivium will be starting soon.

At the heart of the Slow Food movement is the opposition to fast food and fast life and the concept that good food is a right and not a privilege. It espouses the pleasure of eating - not high-priced exotics shipped in from around the world, but simple food eaten as closely to its source as possible. Imagine opting for a freshly picked tomato sprinkled with chopped parsley and garlic right out of the garden in the summer or in the fall, selecting parsnips to roast alongside sweet potatoes sprinkled with rosemary. Great food can taste even better when it's chosen from local farmers who use environmentally sound farming practices and earn a fair living doing so.



For me, Slow Food represents a bridge between talk and action. It's been a way for me to pair my personal passions with organized programs that promote local food culture, traditions, and community, create dialogue about food issues, highlight local food artisans, and enjoy it with other Slow folks. Slow down. Buy it locally. Do so with friends. Enjoy choosing well.

### The Executive Committee

Krista Dittman  
Crystal Powers  
Elaine Cranford  
Susan Rivers

Maggie Pleskac  
Jill Rodger  
Elizabeth Becker  
Katie Weeks

Visit us at: [www.slowfoodnebraska.org](http://www.slowfoodnebraska.org) for a listing of upcoming events and membership information. Slow Food is on Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Slow-Food-Nebraska/35201264492?ref=ts>



### Slow Food Nebraska's Beer and Cheese Tasting at Branched Oak Farm in 2008



## "In The Vault"

**Working With Nature  
Sandhills Rancher Profits From Holistic Management**  
by Jane Sooby

Gail Nason is a rarity in the Nebraska Sandhills: she's managed her family's ranch for the past 10 years. In the male-dominated ranching culture, Gail stands out, not only because of her gender but because she is an innovator.

Gail uses Holistic Management principles (formerly Holistic Resource Management or HRM) to manage her pastures and has switched from winter to summer calving.

In only 3 years of applying Holistic Management principles such as cross-fencing pastures, she has seen a huge improvement in pasture quality. She has also been able to almost double grazing capacity on her 5,000 acres, from 350 to 600 head of cows and their yearlings.

Gail's ranch is part of the old Bassett ranch, located 35 miles north of Tryon, Nebraska. She is the third generation of her family to work the ranch. Her folks who ranched it before her still live on the place and her dad still helps with the work. Her 16-year-old son Brett helps out on the weekends and in the summer when he's home from attending school in Hyannis.

Gail thinks that Holistic Management can help people in the ranching business deal better with the ups and downs in the market. "We tend to dwell on these low prices," she said, "but we need to do what we can, learn how to be economical, and work with nature."

Holistic Management shares the ideals of sustainable agriculture. According to information on its website, Holistic Management "is a process that allows people to make decisions, based on their deeper values, that will be economically, socially and environmentally sound."

In practice, Holistic Management involves management practices like intensive grazing that increase production and profits while improving the land. Cross-fencing pastures is an important technique in managing pasture to optimize grass growth, though as Gail points out, "Most people think of Holistic Management as fencing. It's more than fencing—it's managing your resources."

In a ranch setting, Holistic Management involves monitoring pastures and observing cattle behavior to learn as much as possible about the resources. Gail uses a transect method to monitor pastures. This involves putting a permanent marker in place, laying a tape down from the marker, and randomly choosing a distance to observe up and down the tape.

Gail uses a 2'x4' rectangle at each point and counts the number of plant species, insects, and pieces of manure in

the area. Additionally, Gail uses all her senses at each spot to take account of what is happening in the area that could affect grass growth. By going back to the exact spot year after year, progress can be measured.

This year, Gail reports a difference between her ranch and other ranches in the area. "Even though this was a good grass year, I could see a big difference," she said. "The main difference is in the quality and quantity of grass in the pastures. The prairie sand reed was as tall as I can reach," which she estimates to be at least 6'4".

A vital part of Holistic Management involves setting a three-part goal based on available resources and continually assessing progress toward that goal. A three-part goal includes the quality of life sought by the people involved in an operation, what they must produce to sustain that quality of life, and a description of the future resource base as it must be to sustain what is produced.

Holistic Management recognizes the importance of involving all stakeholders in setting this goal and acknowledges the importance of quality of life issues. In this way, Holistic Management brings the entire family together in determining the goal of the ranch and deciding how to achieve it. Gail admits that she hasn't yet put the goal-setting part of Holistic Management entirely into practice but is working with a consulting firm to set goals and make long-term management plans.

Holistic Management led Gail to move from winter to summer calving because, "They teach you to get your cows closest to the natural cycles. Deer and antelope drop their young in June. They also talk about managing your whole, which is the resources of your people. We figured it was a quality of life thing."

The reason Gail gives for switching from winter to summer calving is, "I hate the cold weather and I hate missing my sleep," but the deeper reason is that she felt things had to change if she was going to be able to stay in the cattle business. She changed the entire operation over at once and is amazed at how easy the change has been.

Most people wonder about marketing calves at a different time of year. Gail says, "You can worry about the marketing end, but worrying doesn't change anything." The calves are weaned November through December and backgrounded over the winter, then marketed in August through September as short yearlings. Although they calve two months later than winter calvers, their yearlings are only 40 pounds lighter. She's producing 750 lb. steers and 725 lb. heifers. This year, Gail marketed her first set of summer-calved yearlings and was pleased with the results.

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Another advantage to summer calving for Gail is that her son Brett is now involved with calving when he's home for the summer, rather than with the artificial breeding that was formerly done in the summer. He is seeing a different side of the ranching operation and discovering the joys of calving. Gail said that he has never been fond of haying but does enjoy working with the animals.

Gail wants her son to go out and see the world after finishing high school, then would like for him to want to come back to ranch. Through Holistic Management, she can plan now to create the landscape, profit and quality of life that may encourage his return.

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## Upcoming Events

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### Sustainability Happy Hour, Lincoln.

June 26 at 4:30 pm at the Watering Hole located at 1321 O Street in Lincoln. Come join the discussion and enjoy "Locally Centered Drinks and Conversations about Sustainability!"

Email William at [healthyfarms@gmail.com](mailto:healthyfarms@gmail.com) for more information or visit NSAS on Facebook for complete details.

### Farmers' Markets in Your Area:

#### Omaha

Village Point Farmers Market-Sundays

Omaha Farmers Market - Saturdays

Florence Mill Market - Sundays beginning June 14

Bancroft Street - Wednesdays

#### Lincoln

Haymarket Farmers Market - Saturdays

Community CROPS - Thursdays beginning June 4

Jazz in June Farmers Market - Wednesdays

Old Cheney - Sundays

Havelock - Wednesdays

#### Throughout Nebraska

Nebraska City Famers Market - Fridays

Columbus Farmers Market - Thursdays

Sidney Market - July thru August

Nemaha County Farmers Market - Saturdays

Blair Farmers Market - Saturdays

Seward Market - Saturdays beginning June 6

### NAIS Listening Sessions

USDA is seeking to engage stakeholders and producers to hear not only their concerns about the National Animal Identification System, but also potential or feasible solutions to those concerns. The information and ideas gathered will assist Secretary Vilsack in making decisions about the future direction of animal traceability in the United States. For specific locations, please visit: <http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/feedback.shtml>

- June 9 - Jefferson City, MO
- June 11 - Rapid City, SD
- June 16 - Albuquerque, NM

### Dung Beetle Field Day, Linn, MO, June 18, 2009

Dr. Pat Richardson, noted dung beetle expert from the University of Texas at Austin, explains the importance of these little critters at a program featuring a morning video presentation and a trip to our farm in the afternoon for some hands-on-experience (with plastic gloves provided, of course). For more information and to register, contact Ralph Voss at 573-694-1682 or [ralphvoss@bcglobal.net](mailto:ralphvoss@bcglobal.net)

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