

**Tenured Faculty Review**  
**Matt Lippert**  
**Wood County Agriculture Agent**

**From Appendix E, Department of Agriculture and Life Sciences-**

4. Tenured faculty members being reviewed shall prepare a concise report/documentation of accomplishments, impacts, challenges and future program directions. This effort shall consist of no more than eight (8) pages stating progress on the criteria listed above and be appropriate to the faculty position. It is the candidate's option to submit up to five (5) pieces of supplemental information (strongly recommended).

This is my first review since receiving tenure. I will continue as when granted tenure to review accomplishments, impacts, challenges and future program directions in three broad program areas: Dairy Production, Cranberry Production and Farm Management.

**General Situation:**

I provide agriculture Extension programming across seven Central Wisconsin Counties as part of the Central Wisconsin Agriculture Specialization (CWAS) group. In this group I serve as the Dairy and Cranberry production specialist. Counties served include Adams, Green Lake, Juneau, Marquette, Portage, Waushara and Wood Counties. My office is in Wood County and I provide additional non-specialist type Extension programming in Wood County along with our part time Horticulture Educator Theresa Lessig. Currently there is one vacancy on the CWAS team.

The intensity of dairy production varies across these counties. It is distributed roughly around the periphery of the area being quite light in the heart of the CWAS area which is heavily focused on commercial irrigated vegetable production. During the last five years dairy production has increased in the area primarily with the location of several large Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO's) in the area. Milk Source dairies New Chester and Richfield are still coming into full production, Central Sands Dairy is 5 years old and Golden Sands Dairy is still in the permitting process but has been a high item for providing information to the public unfamiliar with CAFO's at the proposed site. In addition to the newly located dairies I serve a declining number of dairy farms that continue to expand in size. Dairies range from the above mentioned CAFO's to a number of Amish Dairies usually with fewer than 20 animals scattered across the area. In addition to the CWAS commitment I have covered for vacancies and extensively committed to joint dairy programming with agents in Marathon, Clark, Taylor and Lincoln Counties as the dairy industry in Wood County is closely integrated with those areas.

Cranberry production continues to be a major focus. While several of the CWAS counties have no cranberry production, Wood County is the largest cranberry producing county in the state. I work closely with the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association (WSCGA) and in that role I serve as the only county based faculty in the Department of Agriculture and Life Sciences to work extensively with cranberry growers. The Agriculture and Natural Resources Education (ANRE) program area leadership has encouraged my involvement in this area throughout the state without respect to county or district borders.

## **Dairy Production:**

During the past five years dairy producers have experienced generally high prices for their product with one notable exception throughout 2009. Despite high prices, margins have been very thin as dairy farmers have struggled to purchase expensive feedstuffs or competed with cash croppers for land rent. The last year has been highlighted by an extensive drought which has especially had severe impacts across the Central Sands area. Margins and drought and the high value of cull cows has brought special attention to managing herd and replacement size and selection of animals to keep or cull from the herd.

### **Accomplishments Dairy-**

The CWAS team received a grant to provide demonstration plots, pasture walks and workshops on managed grazing systems. Dairy producers are one of the groups that have benefited from this program. The Central Wisconsin Dairy Series has continued to be a strong program offered each winter at several locations across the area.

I have served as the chair of the Dairy Team during the majority of the last five years. In this role I organized monthly Wisline teleconferences for the dairy team, developed annual in-service and planning sessions and organized state-wide efforts including displays at Farm Technology Days, World Dairy Expo, and the Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin (PDPW) annual conference.

I am currently beginning my fifth year of a six year commitment to serve on the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Holstein Association. I have used this position to seek synergies between Extension and the association. One of the highlights was a series of barn meetings in the spring of 2012 where I was able to utilize county faculty and state specialists along with myself to highlight progressive operations that had successfully implemented free stall housing for their dairy herds. This year's barn meetings have just been completed and successfully presented hoof care techniques. Other topics have been newborn calf management and reproduction programs.

I often partner with organizations to multiply my efforts and provide greater exposure for my work. Other partners have been the Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MACCI) Agri-Business Committee the Heart of Wisconsin Chamber (HOW) Agriculture Committee and the Central Wisconsin Forage Council.

### **Impacts Dairy-**

I am the primary partner in a 500 cow family dairy operation. This has provided me visibility and credibility to my materials and teachings. Areas of greatest impact have been forage production; ration balancing, housing and replacement programs. An example of our CWAS team newsletter and my forage focus in dairy is found in **(EXHIBIT A)**

I have brought the University to key farms by connecting our state specialists on a number of research projects in our area. Specialists including Pam Ruegg, Victor Cabrera and Paul Fricke have been involved in projects on our area dairy farms.

With agricultural engineers, Dave Kammel and Brian Holmes we have worked on many operations that have changed their housing systems, milking systems, herd size, cow comfort and efficiency of labor utilization. These consultations have improved the profitability and quality of life for many area farm

families and have often been the catalyst for keeping these farms in business as the improved facilities have afforded for intergenerational transfer.

Unique programs that we have offered include CAFO standards updates and skid steer safety certification. The Central Wisconsin Dairy Series has grown in attendance with good cooperation from our technical college counterparts and has presented many topics including udder health, robotic milking systems, genomic tools for selection, economics of feeding choices and heifer replacement strategies, reproduction protocols and many other topics.

### **Challenges Dairy-**

Programming for the CWAS area in dairy production is a challenge due to its sheer size. It is difficult to provide prompt response in person to producers that are two hours away. The production issues between Marshfield, the Central Sands, Elroy and Markesan are considerable. This situation goes beyond the issues all Extension staff with dairy responsibilities have, the challenges of serving an increasingly diverse group of producers. Newsletters, workshops, website offerings, articles and web-based applications also add a challenging dimension of mastery to provide access to the many different producers across the area.

Since the CAFO's in the area are primarily dairy operations, I shall address this here. The Golden Sands Irrigated Vegetable Production Area is unique in our state for its low level of animal agriculture. These recent expansion activities will not abate that, but do introduce many animals into areas where that have not occurred before. There are unique environmental challenges of handling livestock waste on sands, but for the most part CAFO's must address these in the permitting process. While CAFO's in many areas face increasing critique from the non-farm public, I believe it is more intense in the sands of our CWAS area. Typically the CAFO's have less need of Extension than lower resource farmers for production management issues, but the CAFO's need assistance or demonstrate the need to educate the public about best management practices and likely impacts of large scale livestock production.

This needs to be done in a manner that is not construed as being advocacy for large scale agriculture. I find this a unique challenge because the level of misinformation and fear of the unknown, when addressed, often may be misconstrued as advocacy. If the public views me as an advocate for a system, my ability to successfully convey much needed information is greatly diminished. It is an incredibly fine line. My counterparts on the CWAS team have found the education of CAFO owners/managers not familiar with the unique limitations regarding nutrient management of our sand ecosystem equally challenging.

### **Future Program Directions Dairy-**

My dairy interests and abilities are varied; I intend to continue to develop factsheets, articles, spreadsheets and presentations on dairy cattle feeding, herd inventory management, assessing opportunity in selection based genetic merit. There is much opportunity for collaboration with specialists in these areas. I hope to be able to be involved in research in animal husbandry, specifically research regarding dry and transition cow management and its potential to improve animal performance and well-being.

I continue to be a member of Team Forage. Much of what I consider to be dairy nutrition work, pricing and selection of byproducts, harvesting and selecting higher quality forage materials fits best with Team Forage. An article I wrote for the Wisconsin Agriculturist regarding ration choices is **(EXHIBIT B)**

In my role with the Wisconsin Holstein Association I just received word of my appointment to the National Holstein Association Junior Activities Committee as an Adult Advisor. This is a three year appointment. I will continue an involvement with dairy youth. Our county has been selected as an ongoing host for the state 4-H dairy judging program which I provide the local coordination for. I am involved in a number of dairy youth recognition, leadership development and scholarship programs, judge a number of junior fairs and assist with Wisconsin Junior State Fair. These programs include Dairy Quiz Bowl, Dairy Judging, Dairy Challenge and showing activities. An example of my on-going work with dairy youth is an article found in the *February 2011 Hoards Dairyman* p. 112 **(EXHIBIT C)**.

## **Cranberry Production:**

During the last five years cranberry production has gone from a period of calls for widely increased acreage in production to the present situation of a glut of overproduction for the industry. I have observed the low part of the production cycle once before but the present situation is unique in that there are extreme instances of haves and have-nots. Growers that market through the grower cooperative have been able to sustain profitable prices while for the independent growers prices have been of half as much. This marks the difference between moderately profitable to unsustainable. There is considerable concern about 2013 being the year that some growers will need to file bankruptcy or leave the industry. There has also been considerable consolidation and turn over in the independent non-coop purchasers of cranberry products.

Production methods continue to improve with the use of monitoring equipment to more closely track soil moisture levels, new safer more selective pesticides, faster more efficient harvest equipment and new more productive hybrids available for production.

### **Accomplishments Cranberry-**

Following the departure of the state fruit crops specialist I became the editor of the Wisconsin Cranberry Crop Management Newsletter- this publication comes out ten times during the growing season and is sponsored by the Wisconsin Cranberry Marketing Committee along with voluntary industry support. I have continued to contribute to and edit the newsletter to the present time. The newsletter is distributed to about 500 growers and industry affiliates across the state. **(EXHIBIT D)**

Since my beginning in the position in 2003 I have had the opportunity to attend the North American Cranberry Research and Extension Workers (NACREW) biannual conference in various cranberry growing regions across the United States and Canada. At the 2009 conference I secured the bid to bring the conference to Wisconsin in 2011. We hosted 100 academics in Wisconsin Dells and the Warrens area for a very successful conference that provides the synergy to review research and establish future research focus for this specialized crop interest group.

I serve on the WSCGA education committee. We organize the Wisconsin Cranberry School, the WSCGA Summer Field Day and usually several workshops during the year. Attendance at the school and field day are usually in the 400 to 500 attendee range. I have spoken at sessions in the school; I evaluate the school speakers and topics. An evaluation of the school including myself as a speaker and my topic is **(EXHIBIT E)**

### **Impacts Cranberry-**

Yields of cranberry in Wisconsin is sharply up the past several years on a per acre basis, during the past five years we have had most growers in Wisconsin write whole farm management plans, a practice that was not available prior to this time. Implementation of sustainable practices such as spring flood and reduced/monitored water application has greatly increased during the last five years.

### **Challenges Cranberry-**

I rely on the availability of state specialists for this very unique and specialized production system. Unlike in other crops there are not teams of county faculty working on these projects. During the past five years we have had a vacancy in the state fruit crop specialist position, a situation which is going to

occur again later this year. We have had a vacancy in the state fruit entomologist position, a sabbatical with the fruit plant pathologist and other leaves for specialist staff. The USDA has provided some new campus based specialists during the last five years but they do not have an Extension component to their position.

There are very few horticulturists trained in cranberry production systems. Expanding emerging fruit and nut crops that have focused on small scale local production and value added and direct marketing compete with the specialist's focus on cranberry production to a degree that did not exist in the past. There is a shortage of specialists and academic expertise in cranberry production.

### **Future Program Directions Cranberry-**

I will be part of several field research project with Sylvia Goudot, state fruit crops Entomologist. The first project will involve a new and very aggressive invasive insect, *Spotted Wing Drosophila*.

I am beginning to develop a field survey of cranberry producers to benchmark the Wisconsin cranberry industry for variable cost of production regarding key inputs such as insecticide, herbicide, fungicide, fertilizer, fuel, labor and level of investment in harvest and crop protection equipment.

In 2013 I will attend the NACREW conference in Quebec, Canada and continue to participate in the plant nutrient work group.

## **Farm Management:**

With the horticulture support that I have in my office farm management is clearly the area of need that expresses itself via phone calls and walk-ins to our office. Land rent questions regarding trends in pricing, expectations of tenants, insight into factors that affect land rent value, assistance with renting to relatives, calls for contract examples are frequent. Input as far as recent history of land sale prices is also frequently sought. The market in our area varies steeply based on widely varying productivity and competitive pressures for the land.

Small to moderate size producers are often not comfortable with farm management topics and sometime make poor decisions because they have not had the tools or methods to develop sound management information. In surveys conducted by our office farm management is an area of high expectation of what should be offered from our office. In contrast sometimes workshops developed specifically regarding farm management are poorly attended.

## **Accomplishments Farm Management-**

In the fall of 2012 I attended a farm succession program at UW-Madison and became accredited as an International Farm Transition Network (IFTN) Farm Transfer Coordinator. I have assisted many farm families with intergenerational farm transfer situations and assisted many others transition from farming or to non-family arrangements

I have continued to offer and develop commodity risk management programs in the CWAS area and in conjunction with Clark and Marathon Counties. This past year I lead our team with an offering of the Winning the Game Curriculum. I have extensive interest in dairy markets and have found my background in that area is useful for providing training for producers of all types that have access to futures contracts, forward pricing tools, options and other risk management tools.

I brought the Heart of the Farm (HOF) program to the Marshfield area. The past two years the Marshfield HOF has been one of the best attended and highest evaluated sites in the state. HOF is offered through a grant with the Center for Dairy Profitability, we work with a local advisory group to develop our curriculum.

We have offered Farm Records training such as QuickBooks training frequently in the area.

## **Impacts Farm Management-**

The number of acres that decision making has been affected is probably greatest on the commodity risk management programs of any programs that I conduct. Over the last five years approximately 27,000 acres of production has been impacted by decisions producers have made because of increased understanding of grain marketing programs.

## **Challenges Farm Management-**

To date I have struggled to develop unique scholarly materials for farm management related topics. Often the needs are very specific to individual producers or the needed materials have already been developed that I can adequately incorporate into my own curriculum.

## **Future Program Directions Farm Management-**

While interest in farm record systems has been low, we have had very good success with instructing in specific software such as QuickBooks. Women have been especially invested in farm management topics and we have used this successfully in the development of the HOF program.

Farm management overarches the two production systems I work with. Once completed the cranberry production input benchmarking will be a major accomplishment for budgeting and controlling costs (farm management principles) for cranberry producers. I also hope to share information I have worked on regarding the behavior of dairy markets. This is an area where there is a tremendous material base already developed by our state specialists, however I see a niche to present unique material in this area as well.

Earlier I mentioned the large appetite of the public for information regarding land rent. I feel there is a largely untapped potential for discussions regarding land use. This topic does not lend itself to the technology transfer model but is more interactive in its potential for joint discovery from all participants involved.

Currently the development of the Golden Sands Dairy and the conversion of forest land to irrigated crop production involving 48 high capacity wells and nearly half of township of land is a land use topic. There is considerable opportunity to develop programs jointly with our Community Resource Development counterparts to serve this need.

## **Proposed Plan of Professional Development**

### **Matt Lippert, Wood County Agriculture Agent**

#### Dairy

1. Annual attendance at the Four States Dairy Nutrition Conference
2. Participation in Dairy Team In-services
3. Participation in the Forage Team In-services
4. Attendance at either PDPW or Dairy Business Association (DBA) conferences or Expansion Symposia
5. Maintain Accreditation as an American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists Professional Animal Scientist ARPAS-PAS
6. Participation in Research with Campus Based Researchers- (Amy Stanton, Pam Ruegg)
7. Opportunities to develop feed and livestock inventory management tools with specialists (Cabrera, Hoffman, Shaver)

#### Cranberry

1. Biannual attendance to the NACREW conference
2. Annual attendance to research round tables – researchers present to advisory teams the results of recent research and likely new and follow up areas of research
3. Attendance at Fruit Crop Team In-services
4. Participation in research with Campus Based Researchers (Guodot)
5. Primary responsibility for developing and sharing findings of a cranberry grower input cost survey

#### Farm Management

1. Continued updates with the FINPAK farm budget and cash flow program
2. Continued updates on QuickBooks general record keeping program
3. More updates on risk management tools for all commodities
4. More training on farm transition
5. Management Academy- developing ability to instruct in management style and development

#### Other

1. Cultural Awareness Training
2. Training in Tablets and new communication technologies
3. Attendance to National Association of County Agricultural Agents –Annual Meeting, Professional Improvement Conference (NACAA-AM/PIC)