Farm Business News

Hedging leaflet for hog operators

LANCASTER — To help farmers determine their costs of fattening hogs, Trade Tech Management, Inc. has published a leaflet entitled "Tractors, Combines, and Commodities Hedging–Tools of the Farming Trade." The leaflet also suggests when a hedge should be placed in the futures market to protect profit.

In this leaflet, the registered commodities advisors list a few cost figures from their own hogs produced on local farms last year. In addition, a graph shows when they placed their commodities hedge and the profit margin locked in. Trade Tech's president, David K. Sauder believes farmers need to use the commodities hedge as a necessary tool in these times of excessive price fluctuations.

To obtain this free leaflet, farmers may call (717) 898-0139. Or they may write to Trade Tech Management, Inc., 1020 Stony Battery Road, Lancaster, Pa. 17601.

MF creates electronic unit

DES MOINES, Iowa — Massey-Ferguson is forming its own pool of electronic expertise, the Central Electronics Group.

This group will enable Massey to accelerate its advance into electronics systems, according to Ralph Ramsay, Massey-Ferguson Limited's engineering vice president.

"By establishing the Central Electronics Group, we are making a major commitment to a new technology. Our innovations will ensure that MF's new competitive position and that of its dealers is enhanced, "Mr. Ramsay states.

"To accomplish this, we will introduce electronics systems to make agricultural and industrial machinery use more efficient and simpler for owners and operators," Ramsay explains.

In addition to direct product applications, the new MF group will also emphasize electronics technology in computer-aided design, production equipment and product testing to reduce costs and improve quality and reliability.

Farm Credit opening

An open house was held Friday, July 10, for the new office of the Federal Land Bank Association of Lancaster and Lancaster Production Credit Association at 119 S. Custer Ave., New Holland. Participating, from the left, are Joe Stauffer, loan officer; Tammy Sensenig, secretary; Andy Terrell, branch manager; Charles Schreiber Jr., senior loan officer; and, rear, Gail McDonald, office assistant; and David Ketner, field representative.

Corn breeders seek energy-efficient hybrids

BLOOMINGTON, IL. — Behind the scenes, corn plant breeders have been working on improving energy efficiency. Through careful genetic manipulation, they've developed hybrids that utilize available sunlight better than their predecessors, perform better in minimum tilled fields, require less energy and water for growth, and dry quickly in the field.

Also, resulting are higher yields from hybrids that convert energy from the sun more efficiently into well-filled ears, stronger stalks, and more expansive root systems.

Researchers promise even better energy efficiency in the future as hybrids are selected for a number of energy-efficient characteristics, says Steve Eberhart, Vice President of Research at Funk Seeds International. One such characteristic is improved cold tolerance.

"Cold tolerance enables growers to plant earlier, so corn flowers earlier in the season," Eberhart says.

"That not only gives corn a longer grain-filling period, it also means grain-fill will occur during the long summer days of late June and early July, when solar energy is at its maximum."

Cold tolerance takes on increasing importance as more and more farmers utilize minimum tillage.

"Trash left on the ground keeps soil temperatures cooler," he says, "so hybrids must have the cold tolerance to emerge as well as corn planted in soil that has been moldboard plowed."

Hybrids with erect upper leaves are becoming more popular as plant breeders search for ways to maximize available sunlight. Because erect leaf types allow more sunlight to reach lower leaves, more leaf surface area is exposed to the sun, increasing photosynthetic activity.

And plant tolerance to herbicides has taken on new importance with the advent of minimum tillage practices that reduce the need for cultivation, Eberhart says.

"Growers must now select their hybrids for tolerance to herbicides used under varying environmental conditions," he adds.

Certain physical characteristics of the plant reduce the amount of money spent on fuel for grain drying. "Husks that loosen up as grain matures allow moisture to escape more easily," Eberhart says. "There is also speculation that a thin 'pericap' (the seed coat of a kernel) may enhance faster drydown.

"Stalk strength is very important, too," he continues. "A hybrid with strong stalks is better able to dry naturally, since it will stand in the field for a longer period of time." How effectively a hybrid uses costly nitrogen is also a major consideration. "There is a big difference among hybrids in their ability to translocate nitrogen," says Eberhart. "When Funk plant breeders make inbred selections, they eliminate luxuriant feeders that require large amounts of nitrogen for high yields. An extensive root system is also necessary for the plant to be able to pick up nitrogen deep in the soil.

"By breeding from a broad genetic base, we're able to select for more desirable characteristics at one time and combine them into one energy-efficient hybrid," Eberhart says.

The bottom line for growers is higher yield and a corn crop that is less expensive to produce.

WHAT'S NEW

A new trailer hitch ball from MGS Inc., features a built-in alarm to guard against theft or uncoupling.

Trailer hitch has built-in alarm

DENVER, Pa. — A new trailer hitch ball that sounds your automobile horn if the hitch coupling begins to come loose on the road also prevents theft of the trailer off the road.

SAF-T-BALL, developed by MGS Inc., Denver, features a patented electrical system concealed within the ball. The device is wired through the car's battery to the horn, so that the horn sounds if the coupling becomes loose, if the trailer is removed from it, or if the wires are cut. It can also be rewired to a separate battery and horn or siren. Either way, the alarm system can be deactivated only by throwing a switch, which the manufacturer suggests be located in the car's trunk or in the passenger compartment of a pickup truck or station wagon.

Designed primarily to provide safe towing of campers, boat trailers and utility trailers, the SAF-T-BALL can be used with any trailer and any socket coupling of the correct size. The SAF-T-BALL is currently available in 1 7/8" and 2" models.

Installation time for the do-it-yourselfer is estimated at 30 to 45 minutes. Wiring can be located beneath or through the automobile.

The manufacturer emphasizes that the ball does not interfere with any of the vehicle's other safety devices.

Information on SAF-T-BALL, which will be sold via direct mail and through trailer dealers, is available from MGS INC., RD #3, DENVER, PA 17517

Electric brad nailer saves time

The new electric brad nailer introduced by Black & Decker Inc. is designed to save time and energy in a broad range of farm construction and maintenance projects.

Black & Decker's first electric brad nailer drives 1" to 1¼" brads with push-button ease. The nailer is ideal for fast construction of storage sheds, bins, fencing and shelves and for general building maintenance. The unit's specially designed V-base protects fine wood finishes and other surfaces from scratching or marring and is perfect for the nailing of grooved paneling and corners.

The electric brad nailer has an automatic interlock switch to prevent accidential use. Brad nails load rapidly in the back end and are driven through a unique quick-release front end.

Among the many projects easily handled by the electric nailer is the installation of paneling. The unit can countersink or drive colored brad nails flush for uniform appearance. The nailer also puts an end to hammer-marred surfaces when molding is being installed.

The electric brad nailer is also handy for repairing loose joints in furniture quickly and precisely and for easily nailing dowels and decorative pieces into place.

The new electric brad nailer from Black & Decker drives 1-1¼ inch brads and features solid state circuitry for maximum power.