

Wheat crop offers side benefit

By NICK OHDE

INTEGRATING small grains into a livestock farming system can have benefits for manure management. Guthrie County farmer Dustin Farnsworth (see article on Page 36) shares his experience with using straw from a small grains crop as bedding: “I had a wet area in my barn last year, and put bale after bale of cornstalks down, but they’d get soaked immediately. I decided I’d try putting down a wheat straw bale, and it dried the area out quickly. The pigs were able to bed down in

that area that same night.” He says based on this experience, he’ll be using wheat straw in the hoop building this year when he moves pigs in to finish.

One of the benefits of using a hoop building for finishing instead of a confinement is that cleaning is much easier. “You only clean a hoop building out twice a year,” he says. After a batch of hogs is

sent to market, all of the manure pack is removed and spread on the field.

Animal scientist Pete Lammers of University of Wisconsin-Platteville says it’s harder to quantify the nutrient value of a manure pack than liquid manure from a confinement building. In general though, he says the nitrogen in composted manure is less concentrated and the nutrients are in

a more stable form, meaning that although there are less of them, the nutrients stay in the field instead of leaching away.

Farnsworth says an additional advantage of the hoop building system is that it doesn’t stink: “We have a building less than 100 yards away from our house, and we can’t smell it.”

Ohde is with Practical Farmers of Iowa.

Ames firm tests bird flu vaccine

AN Iowa biotech company is testing a vaccine that could protect poultry from the avian flu virus that has resulted in the deaths of millions of chickens and turkeys in the U.S. this year. Harrisvaccines Inc. announced in mid-May that it would begin testing the vaccine at USDA’s National Veterinary Services Lab in Ames — first on turkeys, with a second test on chickens and ducks soon after at USDA’s Poultry Research Lab in Georgia.

The trials could last four to eight weeks. But even if the tests prove successful, Harrisvaccines would need to wait for approval from USDA, which would have to work out a host of issues, such as which producers get the vaccine and how it would affect exports of U.S. poultry. It could be several months before the vaccine gets to poultry farms.

“We feel very confident that our H5 vaccine will be effective; it’s just how effective it will be,” says Joel Harris, head of sales and marketing for the company. He said the Ames company is confident the vaccine would be successful, based on the firm’s past controlled experiments and tests showing the vaccine works in birds. Harris said enough of the vaccine could be produced for the entire poultry industry, and at an affordable price. “We have it ready. We started mass production this week. So as soon as we get the green light, we could have thousands or millions of doses available to producers quickly.”

USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service is considering allowing bird flu vaccinations in selected states and poultry sectors. “We are considering all options,” says Lyndsay Cole, APHIS. “We are looking to make a decision after we get industry input, but we don’t have a specific timeline.”

The vaccine would be injected in eggs, young chickens or older birds to prevent them from getting the virus, which can kill birds within 48 hours. Harris said the vaccine would be most useful in large operations that already have been hit by the virus and are ready to begin raising birds again.

Source: Harrisvaccines, USDA

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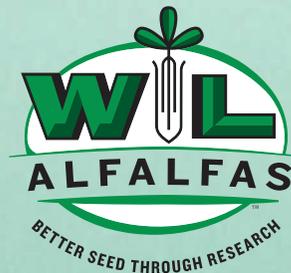
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