



Miracle of Life exhibits live up to their name

Miracle of Life exhibits at the Michigan State Fair in Detroit and the Upper Peninsula State Fair in Escanaba are delivering the goods - pregnant farm animal and their babies, that is.

The Miracle of Life exhibit at the Detroit fairgrounds opened Wednesday and continues through Sept. 4. As of mid-morning today, the exhibit has been home to the births of one calf, 15 piglets, two lambs, 22 chicks, four turkeys and 15 quail.

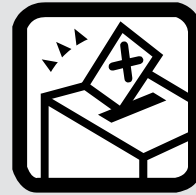
Pictured below, a ewe comforts the lamb she gave birth to Wednesday morning before the Detroit exhibit's opening. Bottom, a duckling captures the attention of a young spectator while fellow ducklings, in the foreground, take a dip in the pool.

Farther north, the Miracle of Life exhibit at the U.P. State Fair, held Aug. 15-20, ended its week-long run with the births of nine calves, 13 lambs - including six sets of twins - and 19 piglets.

In general, the Miracle of Life exhibit is one of the most popular attractions at the two fairs. Among the many spectators wowed at the U.P. exhibit was Michigan State University President Lou Anna Simon, a special guest at the fair. Simon toured the exhibit before attending a reception in her honor where she spoke with Farm Bureau members from across the U.P. Pictured top, local large-animal veterinarian Jim Boydston escorts Simon through the exhibit.



CAG'S Speak on ballot proposals



What did CAG's around the state have to say when we asked, "How many ballot proposals do you believe are too many to enable voters to make informed decisions?" Most groups thought that anything over six proposals was too many. Often times proposals are not worded clearly and can be confusing to voters. By limiting the number of ballot proposals, voters will have more time to make educated decisions. Still some of you thought the only fair way to determine how many proposals end up on the ballot, is by only eliminating those that did not collect the required amount of signatures. Each issue would have fair opportunity to make it under the voter's nose.

Then we asked "Why do some groups try to go around the legislative process to get issues on the ballot?" Most of you answered, special interest groups are in fear of their issues not being taken up by legislature. Other groups bypass the system in order to ensure the people have a say on the issue. Some politicians vote with political interest in mind rather than with the voice of the people in mind.

Lastly we asked, "In your opinion, are most voters informed about issues on which they will vote? Should they vote at all if uninformed?" Overwhelmingly, you responded that most people who are uninformed on issues are not voting in most cases. However, there are those who vote on name recognition without knowing the facts of an issues. It is every citizens' right to vote whether they are informed or not.

Michigan Farm Bureau values the views and opinions expressed through the Community Action Group program. Discussion response forms are read by the CAG program manager and also passed on the corresponding program manager of that month's topic. Please continue to learn on upcoming monthly topics and provide your comments via the CAG discussion response forms.

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Ag Department receives 225 applications for grants to expand/establish Michigan agribusinesses:

Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) Director Mitch Irwin announced that applications for Agricultural Innovation Grants from the Agricultural Development Fund, also known as the Julian-Stille Value-added Program, greatly exceeded the up to \$5 million currently available for distribution.

The Michigan Legislature established the fund under P.A. 322 of 2000 to provide grants for projects that will establish, retain, expand, attract or develop valued-added agricultural processing and related agricultural production operations in Michigan. The deadline for applications was July 13, 2006. A total of 225 grant applications were received by the deadline, with grant requests totaling \$36,111,821.31.

"The results of this grant process show that there is great interest in pursuing innovations in agriculture," said MDA Director Mitch Irwin. "This is proof positive that Michigan's agricultural industry is robust, our entrepreneurial spirit is alive, and there are unlimited opportunities to grow the industry in our state."

Eligible applicants for the Agricultural Innovation Grants included individuals, farmer-owned cooperatives, partnerships, limited liability companies, private or public corporations and local units of government. Applicants were also required to provide a cash match of 10 percent for eligibility.

A Joint Evaluation Committee (JEC) has been established based on criteria outlined by administrative rules. Committee members include representatives from Michigan State University, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, financial institutions and MDA.

Evaluation and scoring criteria were reviewed and approved by the Michigan Commission of Agriculture. Grant proposals will be evaluated, scored and ranked based upon: economic impact on the community; economic impact or enhancement to agricultural product and/or service; amount of project innovation or initiative; clarity of project proposal with specific and measurable outcomes; and management team experience and expertise.

Based on JEC evaluation and scoring, grant awards will be announced by MDA by October 2006. Categories for grant awards will include Technical Assistance, Facility Improvements, Market Research/Development, Business Plan Development, and Facility/Land Purchase or Construction. For more information about the Agricultural Innovation Grants, visit www.michigan.gov/mda or call 517-241-2178.

September 2006



Membership Standings

	2006	8/28/06
Goal	203,012	1197,155
Target	47,566	46,793

The FB Update video is now available to view online at www.michiganfarmbureau.com/video



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For questions, comments and suggestions, please contact Mike Wenkel at ext. 3232

Upcoming Discussion Topics:

October: Minimum Wage: Working through legislature vs. constitutional

November: Hunter access and youth hunting permissions

December: Deer harvest, land access and special permits

September

- Membership year begins
- MFB European Study Tour
- State P&E Committee
- State YF Committee

October

- State PD Committee
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-
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November

- State Annual Meeting
- Project RED - DeVos Place
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Michigan's First Biodiesel Plant to Open in Gladstone

Governor Jennifer M. Granholm and Michigan Department of Agriculture Director Mitch Irwin today joined Richard Vande Vusse, president of Ag Solutions, Inc., and Michigan soybean farmers to celebrate the grand opening of Michigan's first commercial biodiesel processing plant. The Upper Peninsula plant was built with a capital investment of \$1.3 million and will initially employ six people.

"Developing and producing alternative energy with companies like Ag Solutions Inc. in Gladstone is a key component of my economic plan to diversify Michigan's economy," Granholm said. "The state that put the nation on wheels should be the state that makes those wheels independent of foreign oil."

The plant is expected to be in operation next week with an initial capacity of 5 million gallons per year that could be expanded in the future. Ag Solutions, Inc., will begin biodiesel fuel production with refined virgin soybean oil feedstock and then expand to other feedstocks, including recycled cooking oil and processed animal fats.

"All of Michigan will benefit in this instance where one person's trash is another person's treasure," Irwin said. "Instead of sending waste from packing plants and restaurants to landfills, this Gladstone company has developed an innovative process to turn this product into renewable biodiesel fuel."

A January 2006 report estimates Michigan's agricultural industry has a \$60.1 billion impact on our economy annually, and that impact is only expected to grow in the coming years. In fact, a March 2006 biodiesel feasibility study found that with an investment of \$7 to \$12 million, a stand-alone 5 to 10-million-gallon biodiesel plant could be built in one of several Michigan locations. The study was financed in part by a USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant from USDA Rural Development, with support from Capital Area Innovative Farmers, individual farmers, CAP Cooperative, Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee, Corn Marketing Program of Michigan, Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan/National Farmers Union, Gratiot County MSU Extension, Greater Gratiot Development and MDA.

"The opening of this plant is the culmination of more than two and a half years of persistence, hard work and the foresight of the soybean industry to recognize the value of bringing biodiesel production to Michigan," said Vande Vusse. "This plant will have an even greater impact in the U.P., where biodiesel is harder to obtain due to transport costs and where good paying, secure jobs will boost the local economy."

Michigan soybean producers expect to harvest about 2 million acres of soybeans this growing season, with a farm-gate value estimated at \$385 million.

"We're excited that Michigan soybean producers can now proudly say, 'Michigan has a biodiesel plant!'" said Gail R. Frahm, executive director of the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee. "Soybean producers nationwide have dedicated their sweat and hard-earned dollars to biodiesel promotion, research and market development, and through their efforts have helped expand the market for biodiesel fuel."

In July, Granholm signed legislation that provided a number of incentives to promote the production, sale and use of alternative fuel. The package included tax incentives, providing matching grant opportunities, creating additional renaissance zones and establishing a Renewable Fuels Commission within the Michigan Department of Agriculture to recommend strategies in the promotion and research of biodiesel, ethanol and other renewable fuels. Granholm also called for the state of Michigan to install renewable fuels pumps at its motor transport facilities statewide so that state employees who drive state-owned vehicles have easy access to renewable fuels.

Michigan's renewable fuels legislation includes:

Senate Bill 1074, Public Act 268

Senate Bill 1075, Public Act 269

Senate Bill 1078, Public Act 270

Senate Bill 1079, Public Act 271

House Bill 5181, Public Act 272

House Bill 5752, Public Act 273

House Bill 5754, Public Act 274

For more information about renewable fuels, the biodiesel feasibility study or Michigan agriculture, visit www.michigan.gov/mda. Additional information about biodiesel can be found at the National Biodiesel Board's Web site, biodiesel.org. For more information about Michigan soybean farmers and soybean production, visit michigansoybean.org.



Citizens Reminded To Report Gas Gouging: Take Photos & Save Receipts as Evidence

With continuing uncertainty in the retail gasoline market, state officials today reminded Michigan consumers that they can play an important role in documenting higher than expected gas prices and helping state officials protect their pocketbooks at the pump.

"We've had a number of reports from concerned citizens stating gas prices are a dollar or more above the state average. Our inspectors are investigating each claim; however, we have not been able to verify the \$4 per gallon prices," said Mitch Irwin, director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA). "Michigan citizens can help us protect them at the pump by gathering evidence when they see this occurring."

Irwin encouraged citizens to take a photo of the roadside sign or gas pump if they believe gouging is occurring. Photographs, or the receipt from the purchase, can significantly aid investigators if prices or pump settings have changed prior to their arrival.

"Our inspectors are on the streets seven days a week, 24 hours a day ensuring consumers are getting what they pay for," said Irwin. "Their hard work, and the active participation of consumers, will help ensure that we are protecting everyone."

During the current fiscal year, MDA has nearly doubled the number of inspectors. They have inspected more than 11,000 pumps and addressed each of the 2,100 complaints received.

Motorists can help increase their protection by making sure the price display on the gas pump is set to zero before the pump starts and verifying that the sign on the roadway matches the price on the pump before fueling. MDA also encourages consumers to improve their fuel economy by controlling the factors that burn more fuel such as keeping your engine tuned, avoid aggressive driving and speeding.

Anyone who suspects problems at the pump is encouraged to call the MDA's 24-hour hotline for reporting complaints, 1-800-MDA-FUEL (1-800-632-3835). For more gas tips, visit MDA's Web site at www.michigan.gov/gasolinecorner.

Rosemary Benjamin - July, 2006 Volunteer of the Month

With her husband Michael and their children, Benjamin helps operate the family's 500-acre cash crop farm, raising alfalfa, wheat, corn and soybeans.

With a bachelor's degree in agriculture education from Michigan State University, Benjamin taught FFA before focusing all her attentions on her family, and her family farm. But she has since found plenty of other outlets for her skills as an educator.



Currently serving the Shiawassee County Farm Bureau as its promotion and education chair, Benjamin has coordinated the local Project RED (Rural Education Day) event for the past two years, doing her homework first in a neighboring county to better understand how the program works. The event has attracted more

than 500 area third-graders each year, giving them a unique opportunity to learn about agriculture in a hands-on environment, interacting firsthand with producers and livestock.

Benjamin also takes advantage of almost any other opportunity to enhance young people's exposure to agriculture, judging FFA contests for Perry/Morrice schools, supplying animals for Perry's small animal day, hosting hay rides and being an involved 4-H parent.

"Rosemary is instrumental in teaching children about agriculture and how important it is to understand where their food comes from," wrote her nominator for the Volunteer of the Month honor. "She has a wonderful attitude - one that's easy to work with - and she is very respected on our board of directors."

Benjamin's Farm Bureau involvement isn't limited to the county promotion and education efforts. She and her husband are also involved with the Hi Neighbors community action group in Perry, and in 2005 she served as a voting delegate representing the Shiawassee County Farm Bureau at Michigan Farm Bureau's State Annual Meeting.

Did you know...

- September is National Honey month
- Honey has a long shelf life. No need to refrigerate it. It can be stored unopened at room temperature in a dry cupboard.
- Honey is one of the oldest foods in existence. It was even found in the tomb of King Tut!
- Due to the high level of fructose, honey is 25% sweeter than table sugar.
- Honey is created when bees mix plant nectar, a sweet substance secreted by flowers, with their own bee enzymes.
- To make honey, bees drop the collected nectar into the honeycomb and then evaporate it by fanning their wings.
- Honey has different flavors and colors, depending on the location and kinds of flowers the bees visit. Climatic conditions of the area also influence its flavor and color.