

State Allows Hunt of Feral Swine in Additional Counties

The Michigan departments of Agriculture (MDA) and Natural Resources (DNR) today added eight counties to the list of regions where hunting of feral swine will be allowed. The aggressive animals can carry disease, damage crops, displace wildlife, and severely impact the environment by disrupting the ecosystem. Feral swine are also prolific with the ability to produce as many as three litters of three to nine piglets each in a single year.

"State and federal officials are developing a plan to eliminate feral swine throughout the year, while still protecting the rights of legitimate livestock owners and the health of their animals," said Dr. Steven Halstead, State Veterinarian. "An additional eight counties have been added to the list of regions where feral swine may be hunted and we are asking hunters who hold a valid license to continue to assist us in removal efforts."

Hunters with a valid hunting license of any type may now shoot feral swine through March 31 in the following additional counties: Alcona, Alpena, Branch, Cass, Clinton, Osceola, Presque Isle, and Shiawassee. County prosecutors are aware that shooting feral swine in these counties is permitted and any potential owners of the feral swine have been contacted and do not claim ownership.

During the 2006 hunting season, seven feral swine were taken by hunters in Gratiot, Hillsdale, Midland, Osceola, Presque Isle, Roscommon and Shiawassee counties. There was one sighting each in Branch, Cass, Clinton, Gratiot, Hillsdale, Oakland, Saginaw and Washtenaw counties and one feral swine was hit by a vehicle in Alpena County. Sightings in Branch, Oakland, Saginaw and Washtenaw counties indicate multiple animals, as sows with piglets were reported.

A reminder: It is highly unlikely a person will contract an illness by eating thoroughly cooked meat of feral swine. Pathogens and parasites found in meats are killed by cooking to an internal temperature of 170.6 degrees F.

USDA Veterinary Services has provided funding for disease surveillance to protect the domestic swine industry. While there is no indication that these animals are carrying disease, precautionary testing is being conducted. Shooters are encouraged to bring the carcass to a DNR Field Station where the heads will be removed for testing. Those who plan to have the swine mounted should ask the taxidermist to submit the heads to the DNR.

If you see or shoot any feral swine please contact: DNR at (517) 336-5030 or via e-mail brownkr@michigan.gov; MDA at 1-800-292-3939 and press "4" for the Animal Industry Division; or USDA Wildlife Services at (517) 336-1928. For more information on Zoonotic diseases or a map listing the counties with feral swine, go to: www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.

Farm Bureau honors Zeeland member for service, dedication



Ottawa County farmer Doug Holstege has been recognized by Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) as the organization's Volunteer of the Month for December 2006. Holstege was chosen for playing a pivotal role in coordinating a campaign event for Republican gubernatorial candidate Dick DeVos following his endorsement by MFB's AgriPac last fall.

Schreur Farm in Hudsonville hosted the "town hall"-style meeting, which more than 300 people attended. Holstege had a hand in organizing every facet of the event, from cleaning and decorating the facility to sending invitations and coordinating traffic control. The event went off so smoothly the host farm's business operation wasn't disrupted even on the day of the rally.

"The event let people know that Farm Bureau is active in the community," wrote Holstege's nominator for Volunteer of the Month honors. "The Ottawa County Farm Bureau would not have been able to hold this event without Doug's help. He answered the call to action."

While Holstege had attended a number of Farm Bureau meetings since joining the organization in 1993, he had never before gotten directly involved in its core mission of advocating for the interests of Michigan farmers.

"For a first-time volunteer, Doug did an exceptional job," his nominator wrote. "He and other previously passive Farm Bureau members renewed their excitement in the organization and ignited a flame for others to follow."

Holstege raises vegetables and greenhouse crops on 90 acres of open land and under glass in 90,000 square feet of greenhouses. He also sells alternative heating devices, such as corn-burning furnaces.

Holstege lives in Blendon Township with his wife Michelle and their four children.

The



County Farm Bureaus enter season of cultivating members

Membership is always in season at the Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB), but it's especially ripe from now through March.

That's because this is the time of year when most county Farm Bureaus across the state kick off local campaigns to introduce potential members to the benefits of belonging to the state's largest general farm organization.

"The membership campaign season is a driving force in Farm Bureau's grassroots structure," said Mike Wenkel, MFB Membership and Field Services manager. "Everything we do at Farm Bureau is volunteer- and membership-driven, and this is our time when we really frame that vital base."

MFB wrapped up its 2006 membership campaign with 47,654 regular (farmer) members, up from 47,565 regular members a year ago. The feat marks the organization's eleventh consecutive year of regular member growth. In addition to regular members, MFB's membership is also made up of associate members, or non-farmer members who enjoy Farm Bureau membership discount programs and services, including insurance products from Farm Bureau Insurance. Factoring in associate members, MFB's 2006 membership totaled 201,177 members.

Membership growth allows Farm Bureau to enhance its promotion and education activities, lobbying efforts, and other organizational programs on local, state and national levels. It also helps enhance health insurance plans and other cost-cutting member benefits.

For dates of county Farm Bureau membership kick-off events view the pdf at <http://www.michiganfarmbureau.com/files/2007/01-25-07-Membership-kickoff.pdf>. For specific details, contact the county Farm Bureau office at the number listed.



February 2007



Membership Standings

2006/07 01/29/07

	2006/07	01/29/07
Goal	201,244	87,832
Target	47,655	24,528



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

Reminders

- CAG's have a new online resource available. The Loop, Discussion Topics and Questions and the Fun Page are all available to view and print by visiting www.michiganfarmbureau.com/cag.
- Any changes to your group can be made directly through your county administrative manager, including changes to discussion leaders.
- Any suggestions or ideas for future articles, discussion topics or fun pages can be e-mailed to smorris@michfb.com or sent to Michigan Farm Bureau, 7373 West Saginaw Hwy, Lansing, MI 48917 Attention: Sarah Morrison

February

- AFBF National Leadership Conf.
- AFBF Young Farmers Conf.
- MFB Young Farmers Conf.
- Lansing Legislative Seminar

March

- Washington Legislative Seminar
- Ag Day at the Capitol

April

- Deadline to qualify for Membership Chairman's Trip

Michigan farmers urged to complete survey on farm economics

Farmers will soon have the opportunity to set the record straight about the issues that affect them - and to help ensure that policies and programs are based on accurate, real-world data. This is the goal of the annual Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS), conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

ARMS is USDA's primary source of information on production practices, resource use and economic well-being of America's farm households.

"Just about every federal policy and program that affects U.S. farmers and farm families is based on information from ARMS," said Dave Kleweno, director of the NASS Michigan Field Office. "This information is used not just by USDA and Congress, but also by commodity organizations, agribusinesses, and others who make the decisions that shape the future of Michigan agriculture."

Between February and April, NASS will contact farmers to complete the survey via personal interview. Producers will be asked to provide data on their operating expenditures, production costs, and household characteristics.

"Producer participation in ARMS ensures that decisions affecting farmers, their families, their businesses and their communities are based on the facts, straight from the source," said Kleweno.

NASS will publish the farm economic data in the annual Farm Production Expenditures report, to be released on Aug. 2.

As with all NASS surveys, information provided by respondents is confidential by law. NASS safeguards the confidentiality of all responses and publishes only state- and national-level data, ensuring that no individual producer or operation can be identified. All NASS reports are available online at www.nass.usda.gov.

Agricultural Identification Survey - Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Agricultural Identification Survey?

The Agricultural Identification Survey is an effort to ensure that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a complete and accurate mailing list when it conducts the 2007 Census of Agriculture. Through the survey, USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is seeking to identify farming and ranching operations in the United States in order to ensure that they receive a Census form in the mail at the end of the year.

How did you get my name?

The Agricultural Identification Survey was sent to more than a million individuals and organizations whose names were obtained from a variety of sources. A survey was sent to you because one or more list sources appeared to indicate that you might have some involvement in agriculture.

When is the survey being conducted?

Agricultural Identification Survey forms were mailed on January 2, and follow-up forms will be mailed to non-respondents on February 8. The Census, meanwhile, will cover the 2007 calendar year, with forms being mailed out the last week of December.

Is the Agricultural Identification Survey related to the National Animal Identification System (NAIS)?

No. There is no relationship between the Agricultural Identification Survey and the National Animal Identification System.

Why was the survey mailed from Jeffersonville, Indiana, rather than Washington, D.C.?

The survey was mailed from the National Processing Center, a government facility operated by the Bureau of the Census, which is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce. The center provides centralized printing, mailing and survey processing services for a variety of government entities, including NASS.

How does USDA determine what a farm is?

For the purposes of the Census of Agriculture and related surveys, a farm is defined as any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were, or normally would have been, produced and sold during the Census year.

Do I have to return the survey form even if I am not involved in farming or ranching?

Yes. NASS realizes that the survey may have been sent to some recipients who are not involved in any type of agricultural activity. However, it is important that all recipients return the form. This will enable NASS to update its records and avoid follow-up contacts with those not actively farming or ranching.

What will happen if I don't return the survey form?

USDA is required by Public Law 107-113 to conduct the Census of Agriculture every five years. The same law requires recipients to respond to surveys conducted in conjunction with the Census, including the Agricultural Identification Survey, or risk a fine of up to \$100.

Those who fail to return their initial form will receive a second form, to be mailed February 8. A NASS representative may also contact them by phone in an effort to complete the survey.

Will this information be made available to others?

No. Federal law requires your knowledge and consent for NASS to release any data about you or your operation.

Will my name and/or address be used for other purposes?

NASS will not release your name, address or any other personal information to a third party. Occasionally, NASS conducts a special mailing on behalf of another agency organization in order to provide farmers with important information about a critical agricultural issue (such as soybean rust or avian influenza). However, these entities do not have access to our mailing list.

How can I speak to someone about the survey?

To speak with a NASS representative about the Agricultural Identification Survey, please call (888) 424-7828. Occasionally, because of unusually high call volume, we may not be able to answer your call immediately. If you cannot get through to an operator, please try back later. You can also send an e-mail message to nass@nass.usda.gov and we will arrange to have someone call you.



Agricultural Export Workshop to Bolster Marketing

The Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Food Export Association of the Midwest (formerly MIATCO) will co-host a workshop to bolster international

marketing for state companies. The workshop, "Getting Started in Exporting," will be held on February 12, in Allen Park, Mich., and will enhance Michigan companies' knowledge of exporting and how to target top export markets for their products.

"This workshop lays the groundwork for participating in our \$960 million agricultural export market," said MDA Director Mitch Irwin. "With our state's diverse and high-quality agricultural products, succeeding in the global marketplace just requires an effective marketing strategy on the part of Michigan companies."

Dennis Lynch, Food Export Helpline® Counselor for Food Export Association of the Midwest, will present the basics on a wide range of exporting issues, including:

- how to determine a company's 'export readiness'
- how to prepare quotes for trade leads
- understanding terms-of-sale and payment
- selecting the best method of distribution for products
- resources to assist food companies.

Workshop registration ends February 5, and costs \$50. All pre-registered attendees will receive: a top 25 export market report for their product; automatic enrollment in Trade Lead Connection; workshop handouts; Global Food Marketer, and Food Export Association of the Midwest's newsletter. Registration also includes lunch and morning and afternoon breaks. For more information on agriculture exporting, or to receive a workshop registration form, please contact Jamie Zmitko-Somers, MDA International Marketing Specialist at (517) 241-3628 or zmitkoj@michigan.gov

Did you know... February is National Cherry Month

- The United States produces about 650 million pounds of sweet and tart cherries each year.
- The average U.S. citizen consumes about one pound of tart cherries per year. That is more than 260 million pounds per year.
- Cherry trees bear fruit for about 25 years, but some trees are more than 50 years old.
- The sweet cherry season start in late May and runs through mid-August.
- It takes 6 to 8 pounds of fresh tart cherries to make 1 pound of dried cherries.
- The average U.S. citizen consumes about one pound of tart cherries per year. That is more than 260 million pounds per year.

