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Welcome to "ON Organic"

Hugh Martin, Organic Crop Production Program Lead, OMAFRA

Our attention on the farm is now turning largely to field issues (things like tilling planting and weeding). Various other programs continue throughout the summer and be sure to take advantage as you find it appropriate. If you have an interesting field project let me know. To ensure a successful season know your markets, and the requirements of your contracts. Make sure the crop you are growing has a market with a fair price.

The April 2010 issue of ON Organic heralds the start of our third year. I would like to thank all of our authors during that time. Thanks to Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO) and Organic Council of Ontario (OCO) for forwarding ON Organic on to their members, and I encourage you to share it with other colleagues who may find it useful. As always we welcome your comments.

Subscription to this newsletter is easy and no cost. For details go to the webpage: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/subscribe/index.html#organic>

The newsletter is also posted on the OMAFRA website at:

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/organic/news/news-organic.html>

The French version of these newsletters is available at:

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/french/crops/organic/news/news-organic.html>

The OMAFRA Organic pages are linked from:

<http://www.ontario.ca/organic> and <http://www.ontario.ca/biologique>

The ON Organic Team

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Selecting for Parasite Resistance in Sheep

by Delma Kennedy, OMAFRA Sheep Specialist Genetics, Reproduction and Performance Programs

Internal parasites are a problem for all sheep producers, but they can be particularly difficult for organic sheep producers. Adult sheep have some resistance to parasites and show few signs of parasitism when they are healthy, well fed and exposed to moderate or low levels of parasites. The biggest problem is with lambs that have not yet developed resistance. Control of parasitism needs to be a multi pronged approach aimed at reducing the number of parasites on pastures to reduce the risk for lambs. Genetic selection for parasite resistance can make a significant long term impact on the success of a pasture program for sheep.

Selection of sheep for parasite resistance is not new. Sheep farmers have been doing this in New Zealand and Australia for at least a decade. In those countries, there are standard methods of measurement and sophisticated genetic evaluation programs to ensure that the best genetic progress can be made. As a small industry with a small resource base, those things are not yet available in Ontario or Canada. However, progress can be made within flock with a simple measurement and selection program.

Testing

Measurement of resistance can be done with fecal egg counts (FEC) or with a blood test which measures the animal's antibody response to worms. Research done in New Zealand indicates that selection using the antibody test is less effective than using FEC. The FEC should be measured when the animals are between 6 and 12 months of age. A high worm load is needed to do the best job of separating out resistance between different animals. Less than 10% of the animals should have zero egg counts to do an effective job of selection. All sheep in the group must be sampled on the same day. Your veterinarian can advise you on what parasite you should use for measurement and what is considered a high worm load for that parasite and your farm conditions.

Measurement

There are many environmental influences that affect actual fecal egg counts. As a result, the FEC of animals can only be compared to each other within the same group of animals born within preferably a 30 day age range but up to a 60 day age range under the same

management conditions. A feces sample of about 6 pellets per animal should be collected from each animal in the selection group. The samples must be stored in a cool location to prevent egg hatching until the samples can be analyzed.

Selection of Animals

The average FEC must be calculated for the group and all other animals in the group compared to this average. The animals of most interest will have FEC that are much lower than average. Their progeny will be significantly better for parasite resistance than the progeny of the animals with high FEC. Animals that are genetically resistant to parasites are more resistant to parasites as lambs; it appears that they acquire their immunity sooner. As adults the resistant animals shed fewer eggs which results in a reduction in general pasture contamination.

To make significant progress in your flock, it is most important to have a parasite resistant ram because the ram has the most influence on the progeny of your flock. The heritability of parasite resistance is low to moderate but the variability of the trait within a flock is usually high. High variability means that the difference in egg counts between the highest count and the lowest count is large. This means that good genetic progress can be made selecting for this trait. Some producers may choose a faster route to increasing the parasite resistance of their flock by crossbreeding their flocks with parasite resistant breeds of sheep or importing parasite resistant genetics from countries with selection programs.

Future

The problem of parasites in sheep is recognized around the world as an important barrier to sheep production that must be solved. Research is continuing on finding whole genome tests that will allow producers to select for and improve resistance much faster. Vaccines are also being developed to enable sheep to create resistance at an earlier age.

More information on selecting sheep for parasite resistance can be found at:

www.sac.ac.uk/mainrep/pdfs/ofst47stockworm.pdf
www.csiro.au/files/files/p66p.pdf
www.sheepimprovement.co.nz/getdoc/f7e39437-f465-403d-9565-d1d605da676a/HealthIntParasite.aspx (this page has several relevant links including "Internal parasites- WormFEC protocol")

The Truth About Hand Sanitizers

by Sandra Jones, On-Farm Food Safety Program Lead/
OMAFRA

Hand hygiene has been proven to be one of the most effective ways of preventing people from getting sick or from infecting others. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are a popular way to disinfect hands when soap and water are not available.

Many of these alcohol-based sanitizers work well but there are some important things to remember...

- Check the active ingredient on the label. It might say ethyl alcohol, ethanol, isopropanol, n-propanol or a combination of these. The concentration of the total alcohol content should be between 60-85 percent. Alcohol levels lower than 60% and the product is not effective.
- Remove any visible dirt from your hands first. Alcohol-based sanitizers work best on dirt free hands.
- Use about a dime-sized amount of sanitizer. As a rule of thumb, if the hands feel dry after rubbing for 10-15 seconds then it is likely that not enough sanitizer was applied.
- Dry your hands first if your hands are wet. Water and wet hands will dilute the alcohol content and make it less effective.

Not all sanitizers are the same. Hand sanitizers are a good option when A) they are formulated correctly and B) when they are used properly. If those two considerations are not met, you are wasting your money.

A New York Times consumer report in 2006 bought brand name and generic versions of alcohol based hand sanitizers. They found some products with active alcohol ingredients at 40% ethyl alcohol – well below the minimum concentration needed to be effective. So, it is important to check the label to make sure you are spending money on a product that you know is going to work.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers should be used to supplement – not replace – good old fashioned soap and water. Washing with plain old soap and water should be your first choice but if you are stuck without a sink, using an alcohol-based sanitizer is your next best option – assuming it has the right alcohol concentration range and you use it properly.

Food Safety Risks Associated with Horticulture/Livestock Operations

by Don Blakely, Food Safety Programs Branch, OMAFRA

There is an emerging consumer preference to purchase fresh local food products at farmer markets and roadside farm stands. These products are grown on farms tending to be small in size and producing mixed commodities of fruits, vegetables, livestock and poultry. Many view these products as safer than those from large factory farms. This is not necessarily a valid assumption. Food safety, whether farms are small or large, is achieved by following good agricultural practices. Mixed farms, where both horticultural and animal products can be found, pose special risks. There are increased hazards from cross-contamination and steps must be taken to reduce those risks.

Any farm where manure is produced or used must deal with the risks associated with pathogens such as E. coli O157:H7, Salmonella and Campylobacter. These pathogens pose a risk of serious illness if fruit or vegetables are contaminated. Here are some good agricultural practices to follow when fruit and vegetables are grown and harvested in proximity to livestock production:

1. Growing site - Ensure crops are grown on ground where no runoff occurs from livestock housing or pasture areas.
2. Use of manure and compost – As a rule never use fresh manure on land where you intent to harvest fruits and vegetables within 120 days. Manure must be properly composted before use to ensure pathogens are reduced to acceptable levels.
3. Irrigation water – Ensure water used to irrigate is free of hazardous pathogens. Be aware of hazards associated with your water source and test water before use. Employ drip irrigation to prevent water from getting on the surface of crops such as lettuce or spinach.
4. Traffic patterns and personal hygiene – Be aware that hazardous pathogens can be spread by manure on footwear and soiled hands. Limit movements between the livestock housing areas and vegetable growing areas unless footwear is changed or cleaned. Always wash your hands after contact with livestock and before handling any ready to eat harvested fruits and vegetables.
5. Harvesting – Ensure the tools used for harvesting such as knives are cleaned and that your harvested products are put into clean baskets and containers. Never let harvest containers sit on the ground.

6. Wash water – Washing produce is the most critical practice in preventing food safety hazards. Some fruits and vegetables can absorb water, and pathogens along with it, if the water temperature in dump tanks is too cold. If dump tanks are used, a small amount of contamination can be passed to all products. If water is recycled, there can be a five-fold increase in the amount of contaminated product. Test water before washing and treat it if necessary to kill pathogens. Treat all recycled wash water. It is required by law that the final rinse of fruit and vegetables must be potable.
7. Getting the Product to Market – Transport farm product in clean containers and vehicles. Display it away from any further possible cross-contamination. For example, do not set up a road side sale stand right next to a cattle pasture. Flies love cows and manure. They can easily transfer pathogens from manure to the fruits and vegetables in your sales stand.

Preventing food borne illness is vital. By following these good agricultural practices a farmer can ensure consumers are confident they are purchasing healthy, nutritious farm produce.

Organic Standards Amendments

Late in March the Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) published the proposed amendments to the current organic standards for public comment that resulted from the January 2010 meetings. These will not be in effect until approved later this year. To see the documents go to <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/cgsb/prgsrv/stdsdev/nsa/pubrevdoc/pubrevdoc-e.html>.

For Ontario readers if you plan to make comments on these amendments I would suggest you also forward them to the Organic Council of Ontario info@organiccouncil.ca since they represent the Ontario organic sector on this committee.

The Organic Federation of Canada works with the CGSB Technical Committee and CFIA at the national level on the revisions to the standards and have decided to solicit your opinion on two contentious issues:

- Slaughter Animals: Organic Grain-forage Rations in Fattening Phase - The volume of grain fed to slaughter animals in the finishing or fattening phase, and for how long. Do you agree with the proposal that organic feed rations could be "up to 50% grain for up to 10% of the life of the animal?"
- Parallel Production – Parallel production is not allowed in Canada but it is allowed in the US, and the EU

prohibits it with exceptions. The issue is under debate at the level of the CGSB Committee on Organic Agriculture and a proposal for amendment will be submitted for balloting. Should Canada be more flexible on the issue of parallel production? If it were allowed, could parallel production be managed without compromising organic integrity? Can consumers trust the organic quality of produce grown on a unit where organic and non-organic crops are produced? What is your opinion?

Make your opinion known, visit the OFC blog <http://ofcfc.wordpress.com> and post your comments, since the standards concern everyone.

Is Your Grain Purchaser Licensed Under the Grain Financial Protection Program?

by Hugh Martin, Organic Crop Production Program Lead and Cynthia Meikle, Agricorp Account Lead

Some producers have indicated concern about the risk of payment default by the grain elevator where they have delivered their crop. OMAFRA's Grain Financial Protection Program (GFPP) is administered by Agricorp and licenses grain dealers and grain elevators. The GFPP provides protection for producers who deal with licensed operations.

Financial protection includes the following:

- Provision for a fund for each of grain corn, soybean, canola and wheat producers who sell their crops to licensed grain dealers. In the event of a default, the funds provide a minimum 90% payment on approved claims.
- Monitoring of grain elevators to protect owners of grains and oilseeds who store their commodity in licensed elevators. Producers of corn, soybeans, canola and wheat may qualify for reimbursement from the funds if there is a storage default.

To be protected under the GFPP, producers are required to:

- Store grain at licensed elevators
- Sell grain corn, soybeans, wheat and canola to licensed dealers
- Ensure that you receive weigh tickets or grain receiving vouchers for each delivery
- Ensure that you receive an official Grain Storage Receipt (GSR) within 45 days of delivery, or within five days of your request
- Ensure that your GSR is signed by the elevator operator and that it shows the expiration date, charges and other agreements, terms and conditions
- Ensure that your payment for sale is issued on time, within 10 days of delivery

- Ensure that your payment is issued the next day for all sales out of storage
- For “basis contracts”, ensure that your payment for 75% of the market price is issued within 10 days (or the next day if sold out of storage)
- Cash your cheque within five banking days
- Report all delayed payments or other potential default concerns to Agricorp, immediately.

Additional detailed information about the GFPP is available:

- on the Agricorp website at www.agricorp.com or
- by calling Cynthia Meikle, Agricorp’s GFPP Account Lead at 1-888-247-4999 extension 3949

The Agricorp website includes a listing of all licensed grain dealers and grain elevator operators. You can receive the protection offered by the Grain Financial Protection Program by storing and selling your commodities at licensed elevators and dealers.

Agricorp Production Insurance Program

by Hugh Martin, Organic Crop Production Program Lead/ OMAFRA

A reminder that Agricorp offers production insurance programs for a number of crops. There are organic crop programs for your organic soybeans, organic winter wheat and organic winter spelt which may be eligible for specialized coverage, including average yield and claim price that account for the unique needs of organic crops. Specialized rates have also been established for organic processing sweet corn, fresh market carrots and fresh market cabbage.

For organic soybeans the last day to apply for coverage or to change coverage is May 1, 2010. The claim price for organic soybeans this year is \$20.93 per bushel. Premiums range from \$10.45 to \$21.45 per acre depending on coverage level (75-90%).

For organic wheat and spelt notify Agricorp as soon as possible of any winter survival or other claim issues.

For more details see the March issue, their website, or give them a call.

Agricorp Contacts:

Phone: 1-888-247-4999 (Mon to Fri, 7 to 5)

Fax: 519-826-4118

Web: www.agricorp.com or
email: contact@agricorp.com

Research Priorities for Organic Agriculture

by Hugh Martin, Organic Crop Production Program Lead/ OMAFRA

The Research and Innovation Working Group of the Organic Value Chain Roundtable recently reviewed the research priorities for the Canadian organic agricultural sector. These are now available at http://www.oacc.info/ResearchDatabase/res_ecoa.asp.

The purpose of these priorities is to indicate to researchers and funding partners (including federal and provincial governments) the priority research needs of the organic industry.

If you have any comments on these priorities forward them to me – hugh.martin@ontario.ca.

Biopesticides for Organic Agriculture

by Melanie Filotas, OMAFRA, IPM Specialist Specialty Crops

Over the past several years, the number of organically acceptable biopesticides registered in Canada has increased. While organic producers should not rely on biopesticides as their primary means of pest control, these products may be a useful tool in those situations where cultural and mechanical pest management practices have consistently failed to keep pests below acceptable levels. However, the effective use of these products depends on the user having a good understanding of what they are and how they work, as their modes of action differ considerably from that of conventional products such as copper or sulphur.

What are biopesticides?

Biopesticides may be loosely defined as pest control products which are derived from natural materials such as animals, plants, bacteria and minerals. Biopesticides may be microbial, with a beneficial microorganism as the active ingredient; or biochemical, where the active ingredient is based on a naturally-occurring substance which typically controls pests in a different (generally less toxic) manner than a conventional pesticide. The most familiar biopesticides are those products based on the bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), a commonly used insecticide in organic agriculture, however many other active ingredients are available.

Acceptability for organic

It is important for organic growers to be aware that some biopesticides are not acceptable for use in organic agriculture. For example, BotaniGard is a bioinsecticide based on an

insect-killing fungus that is registered for use on some greenhouse crops but the currently registered formulations are not allowed for use in organic production. Organically acceptable products based on this fungus do exist, but they are not currently registered in Canada. Even where a biopesticide is generally organically acceptable (e.g. is listed by the Organic Materials Review Institute), it may not be acceptable to all certifying bodies in Canada. Additionally, many biopesticides that are widely used by organic producers in other countries are not registered in Canada and cannot legally be used here. One example are products based on neem oil – although used extensively in the U.S., these products are not registered in Canada. The moral of the story is to always check that a biopesticide can legally be used on your crop and that it is acceptable to your certification body, before using it for the first time.

Effective use of biopesticides

Although many biopesticides are formulated, packaged and applied in a very similar fashion to conventional pest control products, the active ingredients on which they are based are quite different. These products, many of which are based on living organisms, are much more susceptible to slight changes in conditions which would have little to no impact on the performance of conventional products. Handling, storage and expectations around efficacy therefore need to be adjusted accordingly. Considerations include:

- Biopesticides are not normally intended to be “silver bullets”, and should always be used in conjunction with other pest control tactics. Many of these products are labelled for suppression rather than control, meaning that a smaller portion of the pest population is controlled.
- One of the most important factors influencing efficacy of biopesticides is correct timing of applications. Many of these products are designed to be preventative and won't work once pests are present in large numbers. This is particularly true for many biofungicides, which are based on beneficial microbes that colonize the surfaces of plant roots and act as a barrier to invading plant pathogens. If the pathogen has already invaded the roots prior to application, the biopesticide will not have any impact on it. Timing can also be influenced by the life stage or activity of the pest. Many bioinsecticides (e.g. the Bt products) work best against younger insects and control is greatly reduced when applied against older stages.
- Thorough coverage of plant surfaces is also critical to the efficacy of most biopesticides. Because most of these products require direct contact with the pest to be effective, all affected plant parts must be thoroughly covered. This can be a challenge when targeting pests such as aphids or leafrollers, which are typically found in protected locations under or within the leaf.

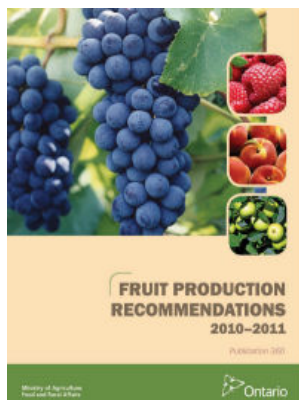
- Biopesticides can be extremely sensitive to environmental conditions such as sunlight, rain, humidity or temperature. The active ingredient in Bt products is sensitive to ultraviolet radiation, and its efficacy may be reduced after prolonged exposure to sunlight. There are several products which are intended for suppression of various plant pathogens in soil. These contain live spores of beneficial microbes which suspend activity at lower soil temperatures and their efficacy will be greatly reduced if they are applied to cool soils.
- Because of their environmental sensitivity, many biopesticides have limited residual activity. Biopesticides which work by forming barriers on exposed plant surfaces (e.g. Surround WP – registered for suppression of insect pests on some crops) are often dislodged by wind or rain. Others are quickly degraded and don't provide long term control. For these products, repeat applications may be necessary.
- Biopesticides can also be impacted by conditions in the spray tank. Factors to consider include temperature, pH and other compounds in the spray water, compatibility with other products and life of the spray mix. For example some biofungicides which contain beneficial fungi should not be tank mixed with fungicides. Other products break down or otherwise change when left in spray tanks for extended periods, so pay careful attention if product labels specify that the product should be sprayed within a certain period of mixing with water.
- Because biopesticides often contain live organisms, they may have specialized storage instructions. It is not uncommon for labels to specify that a product can be stored for a several months if refrigerated but only a few weeks if stored at room temperature. This is in contrast to many conventional products, which can often be stored for much longer periods.

In conclusion, biopesticides can be a useful tool for harder-to-control pests in organic production systems. However it is important to ensure the products are registered in Canada and acceptable to your certifying body. Furthermore, attention to specific application and storage instructions on product labels is particularly important to ensure optimum efficacy of biopesticides. Failure to closely follow instructions related to timing and environmental conditions can result in disappointing results with these products. At the same time, it is important to balance the level of pest suppression with any costs associated with applying the product. To do this, it can be helpful to leave untreated portions of the field as a check when trying biopesticides.

2010-2011 Publication 360 Fruit Production Recommendations

by Hugh Martin, Organic Crop Production Program Lead/
OMAFRA

The new revision to the OMAFRA Fruit Guide is now available. This book covers many facets of production for apples, pears, apricots, peaches, plums, cherries, grapes, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, tree nuts, etc. Each crop has information on fertility, pruning and thinning and on pest management. This includes many pesticides that would not be allowed in organic production but it also includes details on those pest management products that are allowed in organic.



The Pest Management Tools section on pages 10 to 21 has many changes and includes Cultural Pest Controls, Biological Control, Biopesticides, Mating Disruption, and Pest Management for Organic Fruit Producers.

For more details (price is \$20 each) or to order go to <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/pub360/p360toc.htm> or call 1-800-668-9938.

NEW Vegetable Production Recommendations 2010-2011

The new edition of OMAFRA Publication 363, Vegetable Production Recommendations is now available. The cost is \$20 plus GST. Discounts are available if you order 5 or more copies.

Order online: <https://www.publications.serviceontario.ca/ecom/> (type 363 into the search box at the top right).

You can also order by phone through the Service Ontario Contact Centre, 416-326-5300 or 1-800-668-9938 (toll-free).

Many OMAFRA offices will have these publications in stock. If not, you can place an order at OMAFRA or Service Ontario locations across the province.



Crop Budgeting For 2010

by Hugh Martin - Organic Crop Production Program Lead/
OMAFRA

Everyone needs to know their cost of production. The OMAFRA crop budgets are once again available as 2010 Field Crop Budgets (OMAFRA Publication 60)

www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/facts/pub60.pdf.

They are also posted on the OMAFRA website as Ontario Enterprise Budgets (both in manual and as interactive Excel spreadsheet formats) at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/bear2000/Budgets/oeb.htm>.

As well as the field crop budgets, the web version includes budgets for various fruits and vegetables as well as livestock Cost of Production Calculators. In total there are over 70 budgets available.

Use Your Own Costs & Assumptions

These budgets show default values for costs, yield and expected price. However, they are only useful to you when you put in your own real costs. Your own assumptions may be quite different from those shown. Expected prices for some crops and inputs are significantly different than the past couple years, so crop budgeting is essential to maximize your returns for the whole farm.

Considerations

What should you include in your budget? It is good to look at the costs of growing the crop from planting to harvest, but are there other costs to consider. Should the cost of cover crops be attributed to this year's crop or to next year's crop, especially if it is a legume that will allow you to reduce nitrogen next year? If you apply manure once every 3 years in the rotation, is that a cost to the current crop or should the cost be spread over the other crops according to where most of the nutrient and organic matter benefits will accrue? Should the cost of spreading the manure be attributed to the livestock enterprise or to the crop? These are decisions for you to make, but these costs must be accounted for somewhere.

Crop Rotation

Crop rotation is a benefit that adds another complexity to yield. Having a rotation of corn-soybeans-wheat will likely increase yields 10-15% more than a continuous crop of corn or soybeans. Crop rotation is also a low cost way to spread out the workload on both you and your equipment. Adding red clover as a cover crop will add another 5-10% yield, especially for the corn crop. These effects are greater on clay soils than on loam soils. Include these aspects in determining your expected yield, especially on fields that do not get these benefits.

Expected Yields

When deciding which crop to plant, expected yields are very important in calculating the bottom line. To determine your expected yield, look at your crop history. Some people suggest the last 6 years, which will usually include a good year, a bad year and four average years. Always use realistic expected yields and not just your best yields or area yields. In most cases you have good fields and poor fields, so consider the expected yield for each field individually.

From OMAFRA CropTalk newsletter <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/field/news/croptalk/2010/ct-0310a5.htm>

Selecting A Pasture Mix

by Jack Kyle - Grazier Specialist/OMAFRA

"What is the best pasture mix" is a question that crosses my desk on a frequent basis. The answer is simple, "that all depends". Each situation needs to be looked at for the specific characteristics and then look at the grass and legume species that best match.

Making Hay?

Is hay going to part of the management of this field? Are you looking to take a 1st-cut of hay and then graze the second growth? Or is it going to be hay for a couple of years and then become a pasture? If hay is going to be part of the management plan, then alfalfa is likely a good choice for the legume component of the mix. Alfalfa does best in well drained soils. Trefoil can tolerate more uneven drainage, so it could be a possibility if the field is poorly drained. Clovers might be considered, but keep in mind that they are slow to dry if you want to make hay. White clover is excellent for pasture. Its spreading growth habit will fill in some open spaces between bunch grasses. Red clover will only last for 2 years in a stand.

Bunch Grasses & Sod Forming Grasses

Including both bunch grasses and sod forming grasses in a pasture mix will be beneficial. Bunch grasses include orchard grass, meadow brome, timothy, perennial rye grass and tall fescue. Sod forming grasses include smooth brome, reed canary grass, Canada bluegrass, Kentucky bluegrass and creeping red fescue.

Orchard Grass

Orchard grass is a very productive grass that works well for both grazing and stored forage. For pasture, an advantage of orchard grass is that once the seed head is removed the plant stays vegetative for the rest of the growing season. Orchard grass is reasonably productive in dry conditions. Orchard grass starts to grow very early in the spring, well before any of

the other species. The disadvantage is that when it heads out, the forage quality drops very quickly and dramatically.

Meadow Brome

Meadow brome is almost as productive as orchard grass. Similar to orchard grass, it stays vegetative after the first seed head is removed. This is a big benefit in a pasture situation.

Reed Canarygrass

Reed canarygrass makes excellent pasture. It does well in moist soil conditions. Because of its big root system, it can be productive in dry conditions as well. The disadvantage of reed canary grass is that it is slow to get established. It typically takes 2 or 3 years before you see very much reed canarygrass in the stand. Reed canarygrass stores energy in the base of the stem and re-grows from the top of the cut stem. For this reason, if cutting reed canary for stored forage, the cutting height should be fairly high at 3-5 inches (7-10 mm).

Perennial Ryegrass and Tall Fescue

Perennial ryegrass makes excellent pasture, but generally does not last more than 2-3 years in our Ontario environment. Perennial ryegrass prefers cool temperatures and good moisture levels. Tall fescue is the best grass for stockpiling forage for late-fall and early-winter grazing. If the pasture you are seeding will be used in this way then consider tall fescue as one of the species for the mix.

For more information, refer to:

www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/pub811/3species.htm

Farm Biosecurity Program

The Farm Biosecurity Program (FBP) supports the implementation and adoption of national standards for biosecurity. Biosecurity refers to measures that prevent the introduction and spread of contagious disease. The FBP is designed to build producer awareness of health risks and ways that Ontario's farmers can implement and/or improve upon existing biosecurity measures.

Currently only the poultry industry has a national standard - the National Avian On-Farm Biosecurity Standard. This Standard is a comprehensive tool designed to identify a range of measures intended to prevent disease causing agents from entering, spreading within a farm or escaping from a premises housing poultry.

Through educational workshops and a self-assessment exercise, poultry producers will be able to identify their current level of biosecurity and develop plans to adopt new and/or additional measures to heighten their existing level of biosecurity.

The Farm Biosecurity Program offers cost-share opportunities to assist farmers in the implementation of biosecurity projects identified in their action plans. All cost-share funds are available on a first come, first served basis up to the available annual funds for each year of the program. Before producers can access cost-share funding under the FBP, they must complete a half-day Poultry Farm Biosecurity workshop where you will:

- Learn about biosecurity risks to Ontario poultry operations and how those risks can be managed through the consistent application of sound biosecurity principles at the farm level.
- Evaluate and identify key risk factors on your operation, and develop an Action Plan for making improvements, based on the National Avian On-Farm Biosecurity Standard.
- Begin a Self-Assessment of your operation, leading to an Action Plan that will help you manage those risks. A completed Self-Assessment and Action Plan must be attached to your application to the Farm Biosecurity Program.
- Acquire a certificate of participation so that you can apply for the cost share funding.
- Regional workshops for the FBP will be held in April 2010 at the following locations:
 - April 27: Belleville (10 a.m. - 3 p.m.) Fairfield Inn, 407 North Front St, Belleville
 - April 28: St. Isidore (French only) (10 a.m. - 3 p.m.) St. Isidore Recreation Centre, 20 Arena St, St. Isidore

Lunch and refreshments will be provided. There is no cost to attend these workshops, but you must register.

To register call toll free 1-888-479-3931 or complete the form on-line at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/about/growingforward/fbprog3-form.htm>

Workshops in St. Catharines, Ingersoll and Guelph have already occurred. There will be another round of workshops in the Fall of 2010 and further into 2011 and 2012. This program will run to December 2012 for applications to be submitted.

Growing Forward is a commitment by Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments to support the development of a profitable, innovative agri-food sector that is adept at managing risk and responsive to market demands. A Growing Forward program that is of potential interest to organic layer and poultry producers is the Farm Biosecurity Program. A cost share program where up to \$10,000 is available per farm for making biosecurity improvements to their operation.

Loblaw and University of Guelph Announce Chair in Sustainable Food Production

According to a University of Guelph news release, Loblaw Companies Limited (Loblaw) and the University of Guelph, (U of G) announced on April 7th, the creation of The Loblaw Companies Limited Chair in Sustainable Food Production. The chair was made possible by a \$3-million gift from Loblaw and will be the centre of U of G's research focus on creating robust food production systems. It will help lead change in food production systems through education, research, practice and outreach within the context of the essential elements of sustainability: the environment, communities and the economy.

Among other things, The Loblaw Chair in Sustainable Food Production will pioneer approaches for dealing with the increasing challenges in agriculture and food production. This includes leading a national program in sustainable local food production, developing roundtables on the topic and creating an industry advisory group to guide novel curriculum development.

The chair will also assemble a core of researchers in agriculture and food production, lead collaborations in the public and private sectors, serve as a key resource for government food and agriculture policy development, and work to lead and advance the sustainability of agriculture and food production in Canada.

To read more, go to U of G, [News Release http://www.uoguelph.ca/news/2010/04/loblaw_u_of_g_a.html](http://www.uoguelph.ca/news/2010/04/loblaw_u_of_g_a.html).

Durham College Launches a New Food Processing Safety Techniques program

The food processing and manufacturing industry currently employs more than 95,000 people in Ontario in more than 3,000 establishments. Durham College is offering a new and unique Food Processing Safety Techniques program that will meet the ongoing demand for skilled workers in this thriving field.

In just eight months, graduates obtain the skills needed to find employment in one of the province's leading employment sectors. The program offers a multitude of diverse employment opportunities including general equipment operators, line workers and equipment maintenance in a wide variety of areas including bakeries, dairies, sugar and confectionary companies and beverage manufacturers.

The program is the only one of its kind in Ontario and is currently accepting applicants for September 2010. For more information, please visit [Durham College](#) or call 905-721-3000.

Consultation

Funding Opportunities

Apply for Summer Job Funding by April 16

Applications to Ontario's Rural Summer Jobs Service must be in by April 16. The program provides a \$2-per-hour hiring incentive to help employers hire a student, age 15 to 30, between April 1 and September 30. The student must be returning to school in the fall.

To learn more about eligibility requirements and obtain an application form, visit Employment Ontario [online](#) or call 1-800-387-5656.

Employers offering jobs in a rural community can contact [OMAFRA](#). Employers offering a job in northern Ontario can contact the [Ontario Ministry of Northern Development and Mines](#).

Call for Letters of Intent for the Food Safety Research Program

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs invites proposals for its *Food Safety Research Program* 2010/2011 to support the implementation of an enhanced, science-based food safety system in Ontario.

Proposals are solicited that will generate new knowledge and/or technologies in the following areas:

- Threat identification and prioritization
- Detection and surveillance
- Pathway analysis
- Prevention and control of disease
- Benefit/cost analysis.

The application process for the 2010/11 *Food Safety Research Program* includes submission of a:

1. Letter of Intent; and
2. Full Proposal (by invitation only following approval of the Letter of Intent).

The deadline for receipt of Letters of Intent is Friday, May 21, 2010 at 4:00 p.m. Documentation and program information can be accessed from the Food Safety Research Program at <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/research/newseventsindex.htm>

Revisions proposed to Health Canada's policy on *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods

Your comments are invited on Health Canada's proposed revisions to its policy on *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency, provincial/territorial governments and the food industry use this tool to reduce the risk of *Listeria* contamination in these foods. The draft revised policy includes new end-product compliance criteria, modified definitions of ready-to-eat foods in which *L. monocytogenes* can and cannot occur; and modified guidelines for sampling. [Learn more and comment by May 3 http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/consultation/init/listeria/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/consultation/init/listeria/index-eng.php).

Should specific food colours be listed on product labels?

Health Canada also wants your feedback on its proposal to require manufacturers to declare individual food colours on the ingredient labels for pre-packaged foods sold in Canada. Currently, food manufacturers are able to use the general term "colour" on ingredient lists to specify one or more colours in a product.

The change is proposed to address consumer allergies to food colours such as tartrazine and cochineal, as well as to improve transparency and consumer choice. Listing individual food colours would bring Canadian regulations in line with international requirements. [Learn more and comment by May 3.](#)

Events

April 15 — Wheat-Based Functional Foods and Nutraceuticals, Guelph

Are you interested in learning more about wheat-based functional foods and nutraceuticals? If so, plan to attend the Guelph Food Research Centre's seminar on April 15 from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Dr. Elsayed Abdelaal current research focuses on the development of grain-based functional foods and value-added components through crop fractionation with a particular interest in carotenoids and anthocyanins. Dr. Abdelaal is the chair of the Bioactive Compounds Technical Committee at the American Association of Cereal Chemists International. For more information contact Dan Ramdath at 519-780-8034 or email dan.ramdath@agr.gc.ca.

April 20 — GFTC Innovation Breakfast Series: High Intensity Sweeteners in the Marketplace, Toronto

Hear from the experts on the latest trends around high intensity sweetener use, and related product innovation, health and safety, and regulatory issues. Check out [GFTC's website](http://www.gftc.ca/courses-and-training/course-details.aspx?course=INN01) at <http://www.gftc.ca/courses-and-training/course-details.aspx?course=INN01> for more information and registration.

April 21-23 — SIAL Canada 2010, Montreal

The North American Food Marketplace is your opportunity to get up to date on the latest ideas and trends in the international food industry. More than 500 exhibitors from 30 countries and 12,000 agri-food professionals from 60 countries will attend! For more information, registration and to book travel arrangements, visit the [SIAL Canada website](http://www.sialcanada.com/sial/en/) at <http://www.sialcanada.com/sial/en/>

April 22 — Ontario Food Protection Association Spring Meeting, Mississauga

Food safety professionals won't want to miss the topics at this year's meeting: Advanced Food Safety Technologies are the focus of the morning sessions and Improving Your Allergen Program will be discussed in the afternoon. Learn more and register at www.ofpa.on.ca.

May 4-5 — Wisdom Exchange 2010: SHIFT! Leveraging Opportunities in the New Decade, Toronto

Join other CEOs and presidents of high performing firms in Ontario to learn how to make the most of an ever-changing economic landscape. Share knowledge and best practices; make valuable contacts. [Find out more and register.](#)

May 6 – Ontario Food Safety Research Program Forum, Guelph

The Food Safety Research Program Forum is designed to disseminate food safety research findings promptly and widely, as well as to promote dialogue/information-sharing among food safety researchers, ministry staff, industry and other stakeholders on research issues and findings. Attendees will hear from funded researchers, as well as government and industry representatives on their food safety priorities and research issues and initiatives. The Food Safety Research Program is a competitive research fund established in 2001 to support innovative food safety research projects.

There is no registration fee, but space is limited. For details or to register, go to [Food Safety Research Program Forum](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/research/foodsafety/fsforums/2010/fsforum2010index.html) <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/research/foodsafety/fsforums/2010/fsforum2010index.html> or contact Kathleen Basciano by April 16 at kathleen.basciano@ontario.ca.

May 10-12 — EMC National Manufacturing Conference & Exhibition, Hamilton

Advantage through Excellence: Building the Case for Manufacturing in Canada is EMC's biggest national conference and networking event ever, and OMAFRA is a key event partner. EMC has arranged a special price of **\$425+GST** (save \$350 off the non-member rate) on a **limited** block of tickets. Contact EMC's Bren McKeachie, the Senior Community Development Advisor and Food & Beverage Sector Network Manager at (519) 376-0470, toll-free at 1-866-323-4362 or by email to bmckeachie@emccanada.org. You can also register online at www.emccanada.org/emconf201. When entering your payment details, enter code **FOODBEVADV1** to receive your discount. Your registration includes all meals, workshops, tours and takeaways — a \$1,500 - \$1,800 value.

May 16-18 — Baking Association of Canada — Bakery Showcase 2010, Mississauga

Join bakers both small and large, as well as suppliers and buyers of baked goods for Canada's national baking trade show and convention event. Held every other year, it is the **LARGEST** baking specific event produced in Canada. For more information and to register, visit www.bakingassoccanada.com.

May 30 – June 1 - 2010 CIFST/AAFC Conference "Safe and Healthy Food: Harvesting the Science" Winnipeg, Manitoba

The Canadian Institute of Food Science and Technology (CIFST) is hosting their 49th conference — the 4th in partnership with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The conference will provide delegates with a unique forum for learning, sharing and networking between industry, government and academia across a broad spectrum of food and agri-food disciplines.

The innovative program includes plenary keynotes, industry symposia and technical sessions, featuring such topics as food and health challenges and opportunities for Aboriginal Peoples, traceability, food safety, emerging technologies, functional foods and nutraceuticals, dietary fibre, meat science; and more. Learn more and register at [2010 CIFST/AAFC Conference](http://2010.cifst/aafc-conference).

June 1-2 — PROFIT New-to-Exporting Seminar, GTA/Buffalo

Learn about the basic requirements for exporting food and beverages to the United States in this hands-on orientation seminar from Ontario Food Exports. Topics include: export financing, product labeling, U.S. tax laws, U.S. food brokerage, U.S. food distribution, U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulations, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and U.S. customs brokerage. For more information, call Jennifer Hannam of Ontario Food Exports at (519) 826-3767 or email jennifer.hannam@ontario.ca.

Training

Global Food Safety Standards Primer

Need a better understanding of the Global Food Safety Initiative benchmarked food safety standards to choose the right one for your organization? Join GFTC for [GFSI Benchmarked Food Safety Standards: A Comprehensive Overview](#) on April 27 in Guelph. Review and compare options such as BRC, SQF, IFS, FSSC 22000 and others. GFTC is also offering SQF, BRC and FSSC 22000 training programs across Canada, including:

- [Implementing SQF 2000 Systems](#) (April 15-16), Toronto
- [Global Food Safety and Quality Benchmarked Standards: BRC](#) (May 31-June 1), Toronto
- [Understanding and Implementing FSSC 22000 \(ISO 22000 & PAS220\)](#) (June 7-8), Guelph

GFTC is also offering many other spring training opportunities. See [GFTC's course calendar](#).

Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium (EMC)

Check out EMC's calendar www.emccanada.org/calendar for many excellent training opportunities and events.

Links to Organic Agriculture Information

Organic Council of Ontario (OCO)

<http://www.organiccouncil.ca>

Canadian Organic Growers (COG)

<http://www.cog.ca>

OMAFRA Organic Agriculture

<http://www.ontario.ca/organic>

Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO)

<http://www.efao.ca>

Organic Agricultural Centre of Canada (OACC)

<http://www.oacc.info>

Agricultural Information Contact Centre: 1-877-424-1300

E-mail: ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca

Northern Ontario Regional Office: 1-800-461-6132

www.ontario.ca/omafra