THE BUZZ

News about the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs – University of Guelph Partnership

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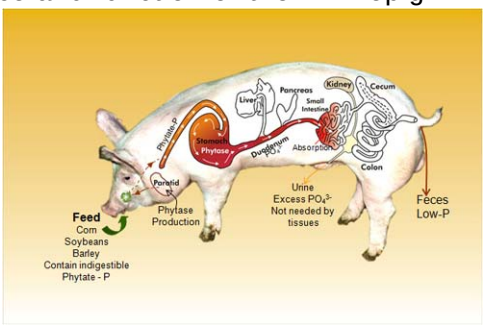
BREAKING NEWS

Harnessing nature's medicine. The 2010 Agri-Food Yearbook edition of *Research* magazine is hot off the presses. The magazine features SPARK-written articles about the research and programs that are part of the OMAFRA-U of G Partnership – this year with a focus on economic sustainability. Rich Moccia, Associate Vice-President (Research) Agri-Food and Partnerships, says the magazine is a great platform to showcase the Partnership. "This material compliments numerous facets of Ontario's desire to see both transformational, as well as incremental changes in the agri-food sector -- changes which will help ensure its stability and increased competitiveness as we move forward to a global food system." You can see the Yearbook online here. Printed copies will be distributed widely through the U of G and OMAFRA. If would like a copy or if you would like extra copies, contact Liz Snyder or Robyn Meerveld.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Enviropig™ in international media. The existence and function of the Enviropig™ is well known around the University of Guelph, and now this world class technology developed with OMAFRA's support is making new waves on an international scale. The Business Development Office is negotiating with a company interested in taking this technology to China, a country that produces more pigs per year than the rest of the world combined and is looking for possible tools to fight phosphorous pollution. The Enviropig has also recently been featured in a recent CNN news story. Transgenic animals are receiving significant attention from both media and regulatory bodies as the United States FDA contemplates the approval



of a transgenic salmon. The Enviropig is expected to be next in line for review, and will help to advance the debate around the risks and benefits of this technology. To learn more about Enviropig, visit www.enviropig.com.

RESEARCH

Photo: OMAFRA

Is the western bean cutworm a potential problem? The western bean cutworm, a native North American insect, has been observed as an emerging pest in corn fields, in Ontario and Quebec. This summer, a team led by OMAFRA's Tracey Baute, Entomology, Field Crops Program Lead, and University of Guelph Prof. Art Schaafsma, a field crop pest management expert, monitored the insects' distribution and severity in beans and corn and are currently following up on the significance of the data collected. Schaafsma says the concern is focused on change in grain quality as the cutworm exposes the ears to damage by other organisms. PhD student Jocelyn Smith, Schaafsma's research associate, will continue studies to help determine whether the infestation has the potential to become a serious problem.

A new kind of turf war. Grass is a fundamental part of the food chain, playing an integral role in ecological sustainability, not to mention livestock grazing. But despite the familiarity of many durable pasture and turfgrass varieties used in North America, they are not homegrown – rather, they're imported from Europe, and often enhanced to be bigger, more competitive and able to tolerate stress such as drought. The downside is, these enhancements can adversely affect animal health and local biodiversity. Prof. Jonathan Newman, director of the School of Environmental Sciences, has set out to test a study from U.S. scientists that showed enhanced cultivars harm the environment because they displace native grasses. Newman says this research will help consumers by giving them tools to become more sustainable, and to make more informed choices.

RESEARCH STATIONS

Wastewater work at Alfred. Campus d'Alfred researchers Chris Kinsley and Anna Crolla are studying decentralized wastewater technologies such as wetlands and reed-bed filters. As wastewater moves through wetlands, natural processes (physical, chemical and microbiological) work together to treat the water, removing toxic elements. Kinsley and Crolla have built natural systems to study how they filter septic tank sludge, domestic wastewater and milkhouse washwaters. Based on research results a full scale system is being built in Algonquin Park to treat all of the park's sludge. Says Kinsley, "improvements in decentralized wastewater technologies will ensure that small and rural communities can manage their wastewater in a cost effective manner while protecting public health and the environment."

Reed Bed Pilot Filters
Photo: Chris Kinsley

AGRICULTURE & FOOD LABORATORY (AFL)

Safer food products. Maple syrup is local food at its finest. And with vigilance from producers and OMAFRA food inspection staff, maple syrup products are getting safer all the time for consumers. Maple syrup came under scrutiny several years ago in New England when inspectors there found it contained unacceptable levels of lead. As science advanced and detection methods improved, it was discovered that in some cases lead solder used on older processing equipment was letting too much lead into the product. Producers everywhere became aware of the problem, and started fixing it immediately by modernizing their processing equipment and production practices. As a result, over the past four years, maple syrup samples in Ontario that were over the acceptable limit of lead (0.5 parts per million) dropped to one per cent, from six per cent. Read about this development here.

AGRI-FOOD AND RURAL LINK

First KTT projects top $1 million. The inaugural call for KTT proposals funded by the OMAFRA-UofG Partnership, through the Agri-Food and Rural Link, has resulted in support for 17 projects, totaling more than $1 million in funding. Projects include a participatory approach to accelerate the adoption of practices to control Johne's Disease on Ontario farms, the use of learning alliances to enhance the environmental sustainability of food processors, and enhancing the KTT for field crop information for Ontario producers. All approved projects are listed on the website. Competition in this call was significant - in total, 43 proposals were submitted. The second call was issued September 20, 2010 with a due date of November 1, 2010. For more information go here

STAFF AND STUDENT NEWS

HQP Student Maida Duric in Hong Kong

HQP student showcases Partnership at Globalization of Chinese Medicine Consortium.

In August, Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP) student Maida Duric, an MSc candidate in Human Health and Nutritional Sciences, showcased the partnership at the Consortium for the Globalization of Chinese Medicine, a conference held in Hong Kong that brings together world leaders in Chinese medicine. She highlighted a project currently funded through the Food for Health Research Theme and led by U of G researcher Dr. Marica Bakovic about alleviating metabolic syndrome through enriched functional foods. “Thanks to funding for research about foods with health-promoting and disease-preventing properties, modern medicine may be transformed in a way that combines valuable aspects of Western and herbal medicine to optimize health care,” says Duric.

COMING EVENTS

News@Noon. The next News@Noon will feature Prof. Gopi Paliyath, RPD of the Food for Health research program, who will speak about his research to increase antioxidant levels in Ontario berries, and provide an overview of other Partnership-funded research in this theme. Stay tuned for the date and time.

About The Buzz

The Buzz is the electronic community news vehicle for the OMAFRA-University of Guelph partnership.

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Find out more about the OMAFRA-U of G Partnership at:
www.uoguelph.ca/research/omafra/index.shtml
www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/about/uofg/

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