



# Acreage Answers

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## Reducing Your Chance of Theft

by Larry T. Wyatt, ALCM, Agricultural /Safety Engineer  
Grinnell Mutual Group, Grinnell, Iowa

It has been said that: "Locks only keep an honest man out of your building". However, locks will discourage amateur thieves from committing theft or vandalism in an unlocked building . We recommend deadbolt locks on all house doors. The locks should be able to be unlocked from the inside without a key so that the occupants of the house could exit the house in an emergency, without using a key to unlock the door.

Other suggestions to help reduce the possibility of a theft loss are:

1. Record the serial numbers of your farm equipment.
2. Record the serial numbers of items likely to be stolen from a house.
3. Do a "video inventory" of your house and it's contents.
4. Make a list of your hand tools and who made them.
5. Photograph tool boxes and groups of tools.
6. Engrave your initials on your tools and tool boxes.
7. Light your farm and driveway with sodium or mercury vapor lights.
8. Install motion sensing lights near the doors of your buildings.
9. Lock trailers to your vehicles or lock the hitch of trailers not connected to a truck, to make the trailer more difficult to steal.
10. Be sure to check with your insurance carrier when building a new building. Some policies may not provide for theft of building materials from a site, unless a special endorsement is purchased.
11. Lock your pasture gates with heavy chains and keyed padlocks, but make sure the "post end" of the gate is secure and couldn't easily be lifted off its hinges at the post.
12. Have a barking (not vicious) dog at your house. Thieves have said that a barking dog gets attention from those in the house.
13. Have friends and neighbors "neighborhood watch" your place while you are gone. If you will be gone on an extended trip, you may want to pay a responsible adult to "house sit."
14. Notify the appropriate authorities if suspicious vehicles or activity are noted in your neighborhood.

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Please share *Acreage Answers* with your acreage neighbors. Call your local ISU Extension office to be placed on the mailing list for *Acreage Answers* and to give us suggestions for future articles.

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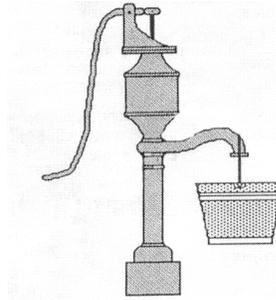
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Acreage Answers is available  
on the web at  
[www.extension.iastate.edu/polk/ag](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/polk/ag)

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Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating.



What do you know about your well? How deep is it? What is its capacity? How old is it? What depth is the pump? How deep is the casing and is the water safe to drink? Answers to many of these questions may take the help of the previous owner or a well contractor.

Usually, the best information will come from the contractor who drilled the well. They may have records on the well depth, draw down during pumping, casing depth, water yield, etc. You can ask the previous owner if he or she knows who the contractor was. Another place to check is county health departments. In recent years they have issued permits and kept records of well construction. The Iowa Geological Survey Bureau of the Iowa DNR has a database of more than 55,000 wells in Iowa. This can be accessed on the internet at <http://gsbdata.igsb.uiowa.edu/geosam/> and click on county.

If no information can be found, a new well contractor can measure the well and water depth, and perform a pumping test to measure the yield and draw down.

## What's My Well Like?

by Greg Brenneman,  
ISU Ag Engineering Specialist

While all of this information is good to have, especially if you will be increasing your water use for livestock or irrigation, it is also important to test the safety of the water for home use. Normally it is recommended to test for coliform bacteria and nitrates. These low-cost tests will tell you if your water system has been contaminated by surface or shallow groundwater getting in the well. Well water sampling kits can be ordered from the University of Iowa Hygienic Laboratory at 319/335-4500 or on line at [www.uhl.uiowa.edu](http://www.uhl.uiowa.edu)

For more detailed information on wells, well construction, and water testing check out these publications from your Extension office or on line at [www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs/wa.htm](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs/wa.htm)

PM-840 *Good Wells for Safe Water*

PM-1329 *Coping with Contaminated Wells*

You may also check with your local extension office to see if they have the test bottles on hand for you to pick up.

# Conservation, Crop Disaster, and Livestock Programs, Oh My!

by Beth Grabau, County Executive Director,  
Dallas County FSA Office

You have probably heard news about the passage of the latest farm bill. Congress has allocated more money for conservation programs. But did you know that with its passage there may be programs that acreage owners are eligible for?

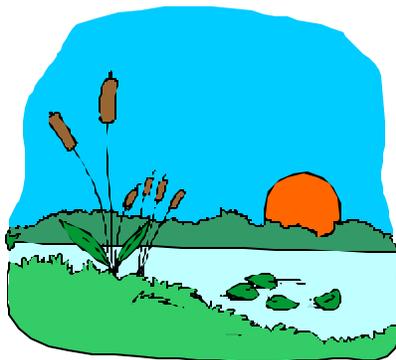
Do you want to install terraces, a water retention basin or pond, a waste management system, a grass seeding, etc? If you are in the thinking or planning process for these or other practices to be applied to the land, contact your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office at 993-4205 extension 2. You may be eligible for assistance, which will pay for a portion of the costs to install the practice.

If you have a history of planting corn, soybeans and other "program" crops, you may be eligible for enrollment in the annual farm program, along with Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP's). Other programs included in the Farm Bill are those for wool, mohair, honey, and others.

For more information, the Farm Service Agency Farm Bill web site can be found at: [www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/farmbill/default.asp](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/farmbill/default.asp) or link to the site

from the Iowa FSA web site at: [www.fsa.usda.gov/ia](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ia) or contact your local FSA office. At your local office, find out how you can be placed on their mailing list for newsletters. Go to [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov) for more program information.

There will be a "Farm Bill Strategies" meeting, August 30<sup>th</sup>, 9-Noon at Crossroads Ag (intersection of highways 44 & 169 west of Dallas Center.)



## Watch for the SMV

by Sean Shouse,  
ISU Extension Ag Engineer

SMV's or slow moving vehicles are seen more this time of year. With the introduction of more SMV's driving in Iowa can be both a

joy and a risk to your life. Fall can bring out the vibrant colors of the harvest season, but it also brings out the steady stream of SMV's and farm equipment traffic.

Over 300 traffic collisions involve farm vehicles in Iowa each year. Many of these farm vehicle collisions occur during harvest season. October has nearly twice as many collisions as any other month. The most common time of day for collisions is between 4 and 8 p.m. Collisions with left turning farm vehicles and rear end collisions with farm vehicles top the list of accident scenarios.

To protect yourself and others, watch for the orange and red triangle that indicates a slow moving vehicle.



This SMV sign is required on the back of any farm vehicle or implement that travels the road at less than 25 miles per hour. Be alert for farm traffic and slow down well in advance when you approach.

For more information, ask your county Extension office for bulletin PM-1629-*Safety on Iowa Roads*, or check out the web version at [www.exnet.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1629.pdf](http://www.exnet.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1629.pdf).



## Mining Black Gold

by Darrell F. Hennessey  
Linn County Master Gardener and  
Master Composter

Composting is often looked upon as something new. On the contrary, composting has been a part of nature since the beginning of time. The next time you walk through the woods notice what is happening to tree limbs and other debris lying on the ground. You will notice the fertile, humus-rich soil that has benefited from nature's composting efforts. For more than a year now, ISU Master Composters have been working under a grant from the Department of Natural Resources to promote the use of home composting with its many benefits.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could have such humus-rich soil in our own garden beds? Well, the good news is, yes, we can. Adding compost to garden soil will increase the moisture holding ability of sandy soils and improve drainage and aeration of heavy clay soils. This finished compost material is also ideal for potting houseplants. And, as a side benefit, we greatly reduce the amount of waste going to limited space in local landfills.

Kitchen and yard waste, for example, makes up from 20 to 30 percent of all our household disposables.

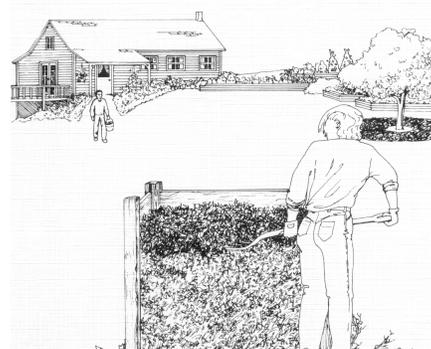
ISU has available a large number of useful references. PM-683 *Composting Yard Waste* and RG-206 *Questions About Composting* are two that answer many of the common questions.



## Buying Trees and Shrubs? Do Your Research First!

by Mary Ann deVries, ISU Extension  
Horticulturist, - Polk County

When checking the plants for sale in the parking lots of some local stores here in Iowa, I'm reminded of the old P.T. Barnum quote: "There's a sucker born every minute." Apparently, that's the philosophy of a few of the landscape suppliers who send plants to our area, because it's not unusual to find trees and shrubs for sale that are in poor condition or simply not suited to our Iowa climate. To avoid buying the wrong plant, it's a good idea to shop at reliable



nurseries and to do a little research first. Here are some things to consider:

**Cold Hardiness.** This is a measurement of the lowest winter temperature the plant can tolerate. Iowa occupies hardiness zone 4 (average minimum temperature -20° to -30° F) and zone 5 (-10° to -20° F). If the plant tag on the tree or shrub you're considering doesn't list a hardiness rating of Zone 4, 5 or lower, don't buy it.

**Soil Conditions.** The soil in your yard has a great effect on the success of any tree or shrub you plant. Most grow well in soils with a pH rating of 6.0-7.5. However, pin oaks, azaleas, rhododendrons, and blueberries, for example, need much lower pH levels and will never thrive in many Iowa areas. A soil test, available from your local ISU Extension office, will help you identify the pH level of your soil. Key words on the plant tag such as "acid loving" will tell you the plant needs a low pH.

**Soil Drainage.** Select appropriate plants for wet and dry sites. River birch, green ash, and many dogwoods do well in wet areas. Juniper, crabapple, hawthorn and potentilla tolerate dry soils. (Continued on page 5)

**Pest Susceptibility.** Some pests can be chronic problems. For example, apple scab on crabapple trees and aphid problems on honeysuckles are annual problems. When shopping, especially for crabapple trees, check the tags. Select only those bred for disease resistance.

**Plant Health.** Look for signs of good health. Avoid plants that appear wilted or have off-colored foliage. Leaves should be pliable yet firm. Select trees with well-developed leaders and straight trunks. Avoid trees that appear too large for their containers – an indication that a plant may be root bound.

Check for well-rooted plants. Try to move the tree in the container. Well-rooted plants will not create a hole in the soil. The container and tree will move as one. Also, healthy roots will be firm and usually lighter in color than surrounding soil.



At planting time, always carry the tree or shrub by the container, never by the trunk. And check planting depths. The crown (where the trunk and roots come together) must never be below the soil surface. Planting a tree too deep is the number one cause of tree death.

## Lyme Disease

by Ken Holscher,  
ISU Extension Department of  
Entomology

Lyme disease is a chronic, debilitating condition caused by the bite of the black-legged tick, *Ixodes scapularis*. This tick is commonly referred to as the deer tick. Major areas of the disease in the U.S. are the eastern seaboard, upper Midwest, and Pacific Coast. Although about 90 percent of cases occur in these areas, all 50 states have reported cases of Lyme disease. In Iowa, about 20 cases are confirmed each year.

There are many symptoms associated with Lyme disease. The most obvious early symptom is a large, transient rash that appears at the site of the tick bite 2 to 30 days following the bite of an infected tick. Unfortunately, less than half of the individuals who contract Lyme disease experience this tell-tale rash. Other early symptoms include headache, fever, chills, and fatigue. As the disease progresses, neurological and cardiac symptoms may develop along with

intermittent or chronic arthritis.

All stages of Lyme disease are treatable and curable with antibiotic therapy. However, once Lyme disease has progressed, treatment becomes more difficult.

Awareness of the tick vector and disease symptoms are the best protection against Lyme disease. Routine inspection for any attached ticks is also a recommended practice for individuals working or recreating outdoors. Ticks take several hours to attach to a host before feeding and are only capable of transmitting Lyme disease once they have started feeding. Therefore, frequent inspection and prompt tick removal can be an effective preventive measure. If the tick appears to have fed it should be kept for possible identification, and a physician should be consulted if any abnormal symptoms appear.

