

2000

Annual Report Pictures

Treasured Moments

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5 22 '00



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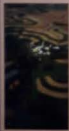


5 22 '00



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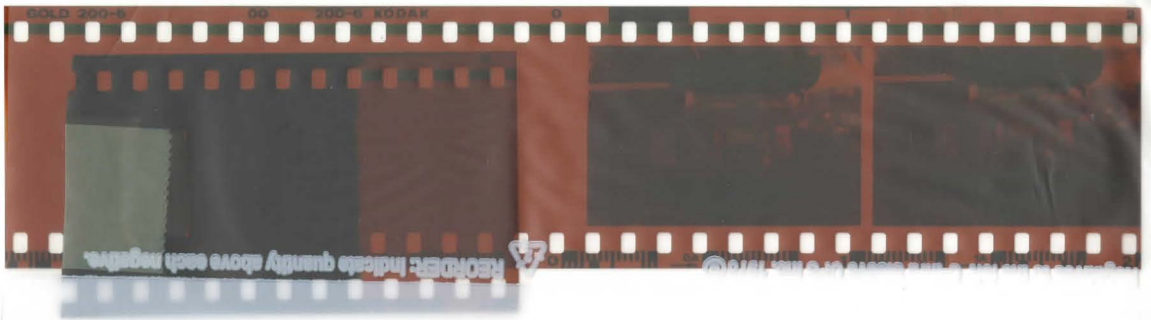
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making it a more
friendly place for
nature's creatures
and your family.





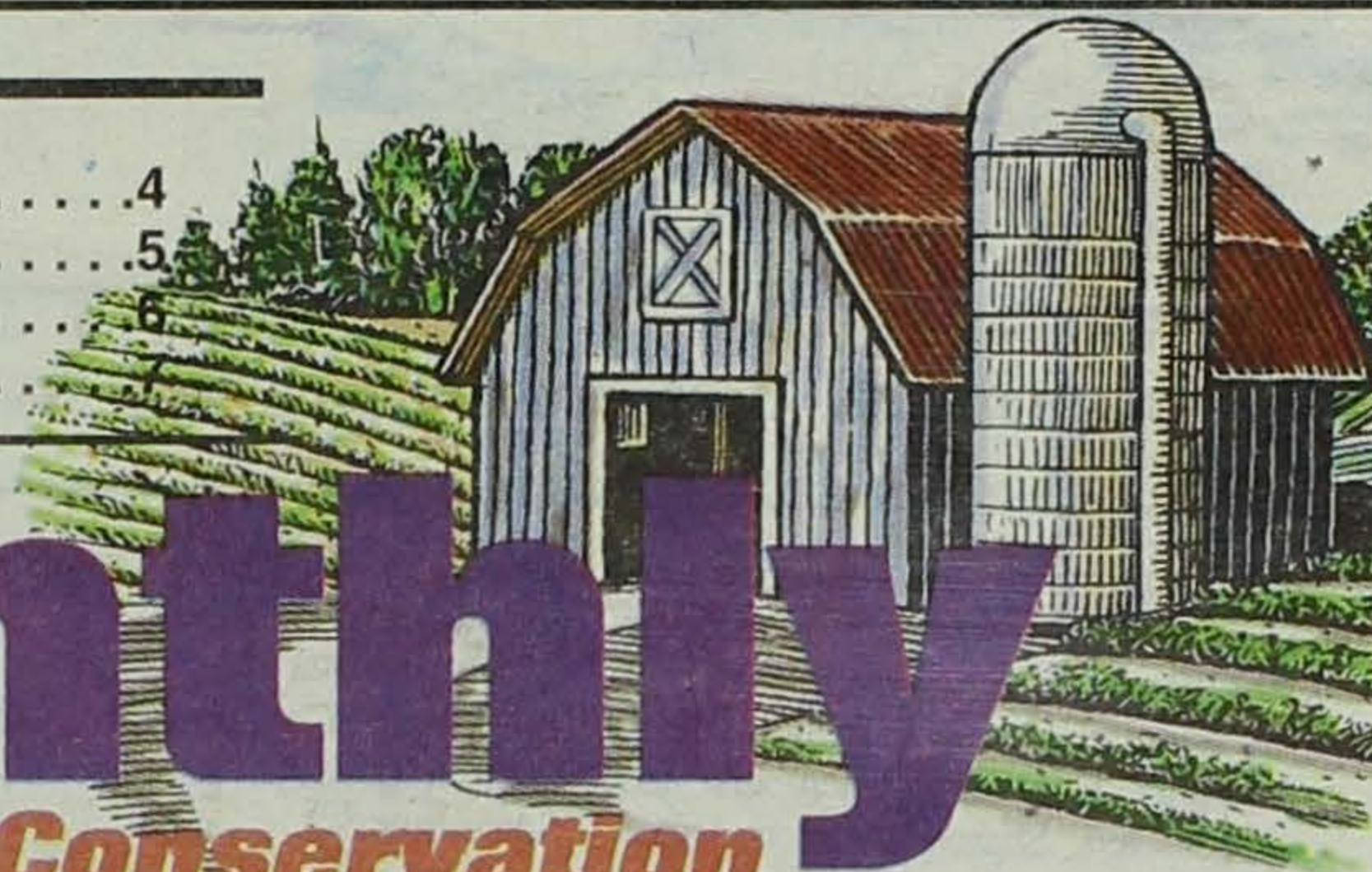
March, 2001

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Vol. 40 - No.03

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Grass Tetany and Soil Fertility Connected

BY Michael L. White
ISU Field Crops Specialist

Grass tetany is a health disorder characterized by low blood magnesium (Mg) levels. It has also been referred to as grass staggers or hypomagnesemia. Cattle are more susceptible than sheep or goats, with lactating females being the most susceptible. Early signs of grass tetany are nervousness and a stiff gait. The animals begin to stagger and become excitable as the condition worsens. Without treatment the animals begin to convulse, enter into a coma and die.

Grass tetany most often occurs in the spring on lush cool season grass pastures that have been heavily fertilized with nitrogen (N) and/or potassium (K). High plant K levels depress plant Mg uptake and high plant N and K levels decrease Mg availability in the animal. The primary prevention steps cattle producers have used in the past to lessen the chances of grass tetany included:

- Hold cattle off new grass growth until it is 6" tall.
- Feed dry hay, grain, or feed supplements further into the spring.
- Interseed legumes into grass pastures. Legume forage has higher levels of Mg than do grasses.
- Feed cattle supplemental Mg on a daily basis.

Recent research at the University of Missouri points towards low soil phosphorous (P) levels as part of the problem causing grass tetany in cattle. Previous greenhouse studies had showed that P regulated Mg uptake in tall fescue. The latest research on tall fescue pastures con-

Grass see page 3



Cass County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners for the 2001 year are: front row: Russell Joyce, assistant; and Greg Zellmer; and back row: Terry Hoskins, Ray Wilson and Mike Hall.

Photo by Jennifer Nichols

Commissioner and Staff Activities Calendar

January - Election of officers held: Greg Zellmer, Chairman; Mike Hall, Vice Chairman. Jordan appointed temporary secretary and co-treasurer.

February - Troublesome Creek Contract completed for three sites (two in Cass County and one in Audubon County). Final inspection completed.

Property tax exemption applications approved on two sites. Twenty-nine offers were made for continuous sign-up.

Public meeting held at library for the Iowa Earth Year 2000.

Eldon and Sidney Everhart make plans to enhance the east end of the USDA Service Center Building with native grasses, shrubs and flowers.

March - Jim Smith nominated for Outstanding SWCD Commissioner. Terry Hoskins nominated for Watershed Achievement Award.

Two property tax exemption applications approved.

Jensen reports there will be a booth at the Gardening Seminar emphasizing Backyard Conservation.

Connie Esbeck appointed secretary and co-treasurer to replace Carolyn Wilson who retired.

April - Ashley Blake selected to receive Muller & Fudge Scholarship for \$300.

District purchased Soil Stewardship material for 3rd grade students and teachers.

Four applications for property tax exemption were approved.

May - Terry Hoskins nominated for Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation Award.

One hundred and twenty five 6th graders participate in conservation field day at the Ralph and Pat Simmons farm. Ed Seidel, Gary

Wolfe, Duane Ortgies, Sandra Jensen and soil scientist, Rick Bednarek, assist with the field day.

District votes to donate \$100 toward field day expenses at Armstrong Achievement Farm Field Day to be held in June.

District votes to sponsor Gary Miller, Voc. Ag. Instructor in Anita and Bruce Johnk, Atlantic Voc. Ag. Instructor to attend Iowa Water Workshop in Oakland during June.

Siedel reported that 75 of the 77 CRP bids were accepted for a total of 3,600 acres.

Activities see page 2

Activities *Continued from page three*

Turkey Creek Watershed Site 23-D was listed as a priority area for the EQIP program.

Commissioners, Seidel; FSA County Committee members and CRP Clerk, Sharon Crane conducted a field tour of riparian and buffer strips.

District votes to proceed with a tree sales program.

Announcement made that a Sustainable Weed Management Workshop will be held at the Neely-Kinyon Research Farm in Greenfield on June 8.

Fifty-seven property tax exemption applications were approved.

June - Ray Wilson was administered the "Oath of Office" to fill the un-expired term of Jim Smith, who resigned.

Operation and Maintenance inspection reports for Troublesome

Creek and Turkey Creek were reviewed and discussed.

54th Annual Conference for Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioners announced for September 6-7.

Jim Smith was presented with a retirement plaque in appreciation for five years of service.

Connie Esbeck was selected as "Employee of the Month for June 2000" through the Iowa Department of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation.

July - Ray Wilson and Mike Hall announced they will run for another term as a district commissioner. Jim Jordan will not seek another term.

Sindra Jensen announced that wildflowers will be featured in this year's fair booth. Packets of wildflowers and native grasses would be given away daily as prizes for those

correctly identifying the wildflowers.

Average costs for earthwork and tile installation discussed and increased for the spring construction season for terraces, grade stabilization structures and sediment control basins.

DSC offers free registration to one commissioner in each district to attend Carbon Conference in Des Moines on August 29-31.

Watershed construction schedule indicates two Turkey Creek Watershed Sites 62-7 and 62-7A will be funded in 2001.

Five property tax exemption applications approved.

Application for priority watershed submitted for Baughman Creek Watershed in which REAP-P(practices) funds can be used to cost-share on permanent conservation practices.

Commissioners vote to donate \$100 to the Cass County Earth Year

2000 who want to have a booth at Atlantic Fest, using the theme "Recycling." Sindra Jensen is an Ambassador to Earth Year 2000 and works closely with this group.

August - Turkey Creek Watershed Directors organization is given a "boost" with Russell Morgan, Dennis Hockenberry, Myrna Rabe, Dale Witzman, Harold Hendersen, G.M. Baier, Robert Jones, and Lynn Dorsey agreeing to serve as directors.

SWCD matches funds with local Pheasants Forever, NRCS, and IDALS for habitat agreement to hire a person to encourage landowners to enroll in the buffer initiative program.

September - Turkey Creek Watershed Directors meeting held at the NRCS office. A revised and updated handbook was given to each director.

Baughman Creek Watershed approved as a priority area for REAP-P funds.

Local Pheasants Forever representative, Kevin Ferguson, meets with the district commissioners to offer support in purchasing a native grass drill. District Commissioners vote to purchase the Great Plains drill.

Commissioners vote to support up to two teachers in Cass County to attend the "Food, Land & People Workshop"

Informational meeting for landowners on native grass seeding announced for Nov. 4 in Cumberland. Commissioners vote to pay rental fee for meeting place and provide refreshments.

Commissioners vote to donate \$100 toward the Pheasants Forever banquet.

October - District received \$5,000 grant from IDALS toward the purchase of the native grass drill.

Fall Regional meeting announced for Dec. 4 at the Villager.

Iowa Watersheds conference at Lakeside Casino and Resort announced for Dec. 18-19.

Construction halted because of dry weather conditions.

November - The habitat meeting held in Cumberland was attended by 30 people. Sindra Jensen had a part in the program as well as Jon Judson, Diversity Farms, Inc.; Roger Schwery, Heyne Seed; Duane Fuller, Adams County P.F.; Dan Brown, Cass County P.F., and Angie Hansen, Cass County DNR Biologist.

Master Gardeners indicated to Sindra Jensen they would like to be a party of the Backyard Conservation Team.

New Commissioner Orientation, 2001, announced for January.

Fifth grade conservation poster contest winners have had their posters on display in the lobby of the NRCS office.

December - Zellmer and Seidel attended the Fall Regional meeting held Dec. 4.

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Soil Conservation Employees



Employees at the Soil Conservation District Office in Cass County include: front row (left to right) Bill Bartenhagen, county director; Diane Carspecken, Program Technician; Don Obrecht, Farmer Loan Manager; and back row: Inez Dreager, Temporary; Jamie Newbury, Program Technician; Sharon Crane, Program Technician; Mona Ballinger, Program Technician; Jeanine Christensen, Program Technician; and Joyce Anderson, Temporary.

Photo by Jennifer Nichols

Grass *Continued from page one*

firmed these greenhouse studies. The greatest increase in plant Mg levels occurred when P fertilizer was applied to soils testing "very low" (less than 8 ppm). Iowa State University presently recommends an "optimum" P soil test level of around 16 ppm for cool season grass pasture.

Applying N fertilizer in the spring has been a very common practice to increase pasture productivity. Very seldom is P fertilizer included in this practice. Raising the P soil test level of pasture up to the optimum level will increase forage productivity and increase the nutritional content of the forage. Legumes require optimum P levels to flourish. Increasing pasture P levels will favor the establishment of legumes like alfalfa, clover, or birdsfoot trefoil into the grass pasture. In summary, proper soil testing and pasture fertility is key in a total pasture management system. More information on grass tetany and pasture fertility can be obtained at the Cass County ISU Extension Office 712-243-1132.

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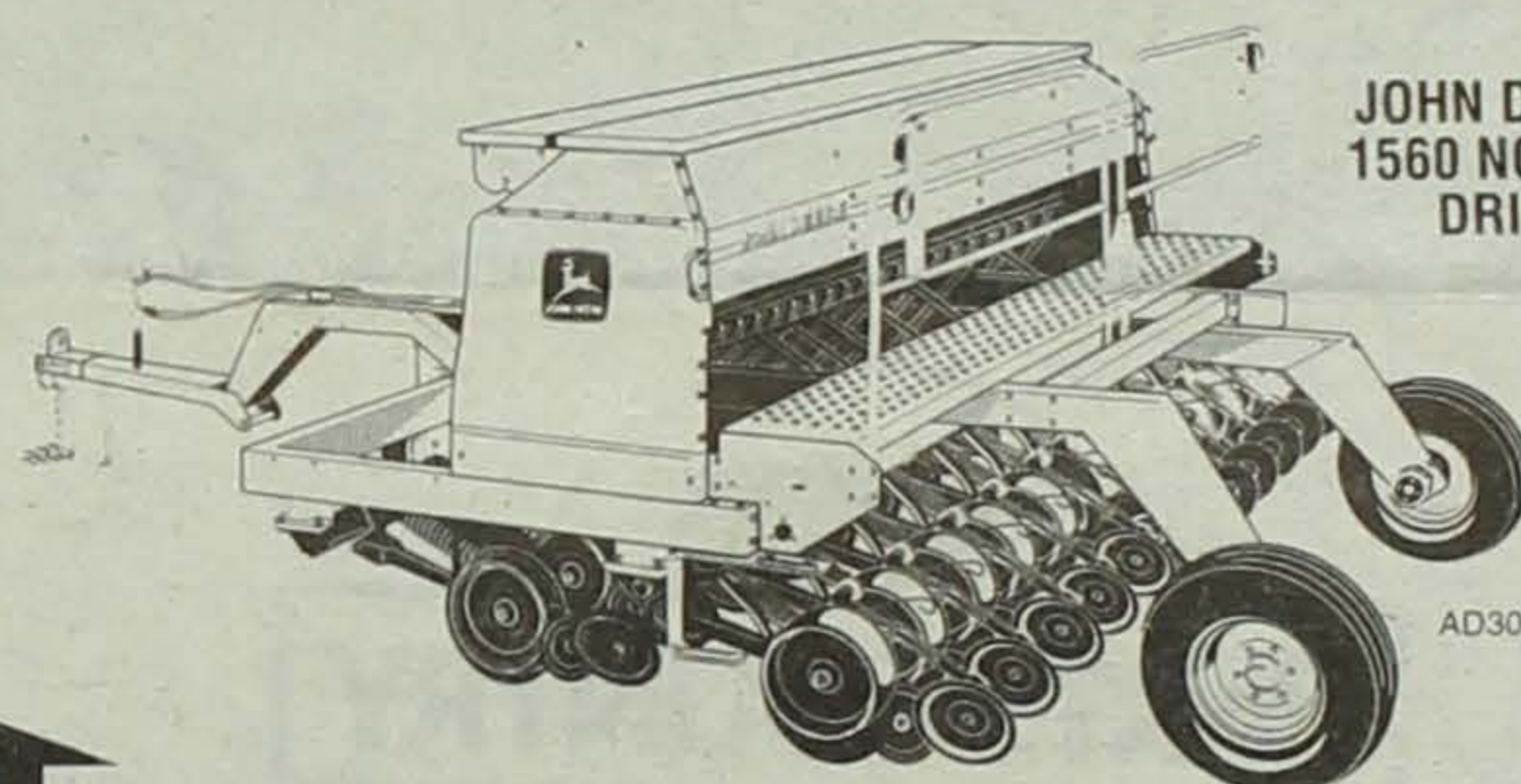
Call 1-877-4AGLINK
e-mail: gaicrop@gtam.com

Got Spring Fever?

I know we do. We are the Backyard Conservation Team and we are a very new volunteer organization. The Backyard Conservation Team is working with the Cass County Soil and Water Conservation District to promote 10 conservation activities that have been adapted from farmers and ranchers to be used in your backyard. The activities include tree plantings, developing wildlife habitat, building backyard ponds, water conservation, and backyard terracing. Becoming a Team member will give you an opportunity to also learn from the group. We have a terrific group started that range from beginner gardeners to master gardeners. Not only will we bring in experts to speak at our field days but these field days will give you an opportunity to ask questions of other gardeners about their gardens and selections.

We are planning on holding tours, seminars, and educational opportunities for homeowners to learn the skills needed to accomplish these conservation activities. If you want to help us get started, we are having an informational meeting March 22 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Family Table Restaurant in Atlantic. We will have two speakers that will teach us some about composting and native grasses. Also at this meeting we will be discussing more activities, reviewing backyard conservation, and selecting a project coordinator. Please join us if you are interested in knowing more about the backyard conservation program.

If you can't join us on March 22 but are interested in knowing more information on the Backyard Conservation Team, call Sindra at 243-3180 between 8-4:30. Remember the Backyard Conservation Team Meeting, March 22nd, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., at the Family Table Restaurant in Atlantic.



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Soil Conservation Employees



Employees at the Soil Conservation District Office in Cass County include: front row: (left to right) Sindra Jensen, Soil Conservationist; Alyce Lane, District Employee; and Connie Esbeck, State Secretary; back row: Gary Wolfe, State Technician; Ed Seidel, District Conservationist; and Duane Ortgies, Soil Conservation Technician.

Photo by Jennifer Nichols

Spring prairie establishment

BY Michael L. White
ISU Extension Field Crops Specialist

Much of the native prairie establishment over the past few years in Iowa has occurred because of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Home and acreage owners are also establishing small prairie areas for the aesthetic and wildlife value. Many acreage owners have established native prairie areas to reduce their mowing time. Established prairies need very little maintenance.

It takes special management and patience to establish a prairie. Most native plant seeds must pass through specific environmental conditions before germinating. Prairie seed can lie dormant for several years before germinating. Patience is a necessary virtue for prairie establishment. It is common for 3-5 years to pass before a prairie seeding is fully established.

Site preparation is critical. Tillage and/or herbicides should be used to kill the present vegetation. Roundup (Monsanto) or Touchdown (Syngenta) are two herbicides commonly used to kill established vegetation. Spring applications should not be made until grasses and broadleaves get at least 8" of regrowth. This normally occurs during the last half of April. A firm seedbed is needed if tillage is used to prepare the site.

Very successful seedings have been established by just broadcasting the seed on the surface of the ground. Surface broadcasting works well with frost seedings made from January through March. The broadcast seeding method is often used during spring and early summer on tilled ground. A flat harrow or packer is recommended to press seed into the ground and firm the seedbed. Mixing the fluffy and light prairie seed with cracked corn or another carrier aids in the spreading process. Special drills can also be used to plant prairie seed. These drills normally have a fluffer bar or oversized auger in the seed box to help the seed flow. Prairie seed should be planted approximately 1/4" deep and placed into a firm seedbed.

Most prairie professionals recommend no fertilizer when establishing a prairie. Fertilizer tends to promote nonnative species and annual weeds. Weed control is a necessity. Plateau (BASF) is a very effective and commonly used herbicide used for residual weed control in prairie seedings. One needs to read the label closely. Not all prairie plants are tolerant to this herbicide. Several mowings during the first and second

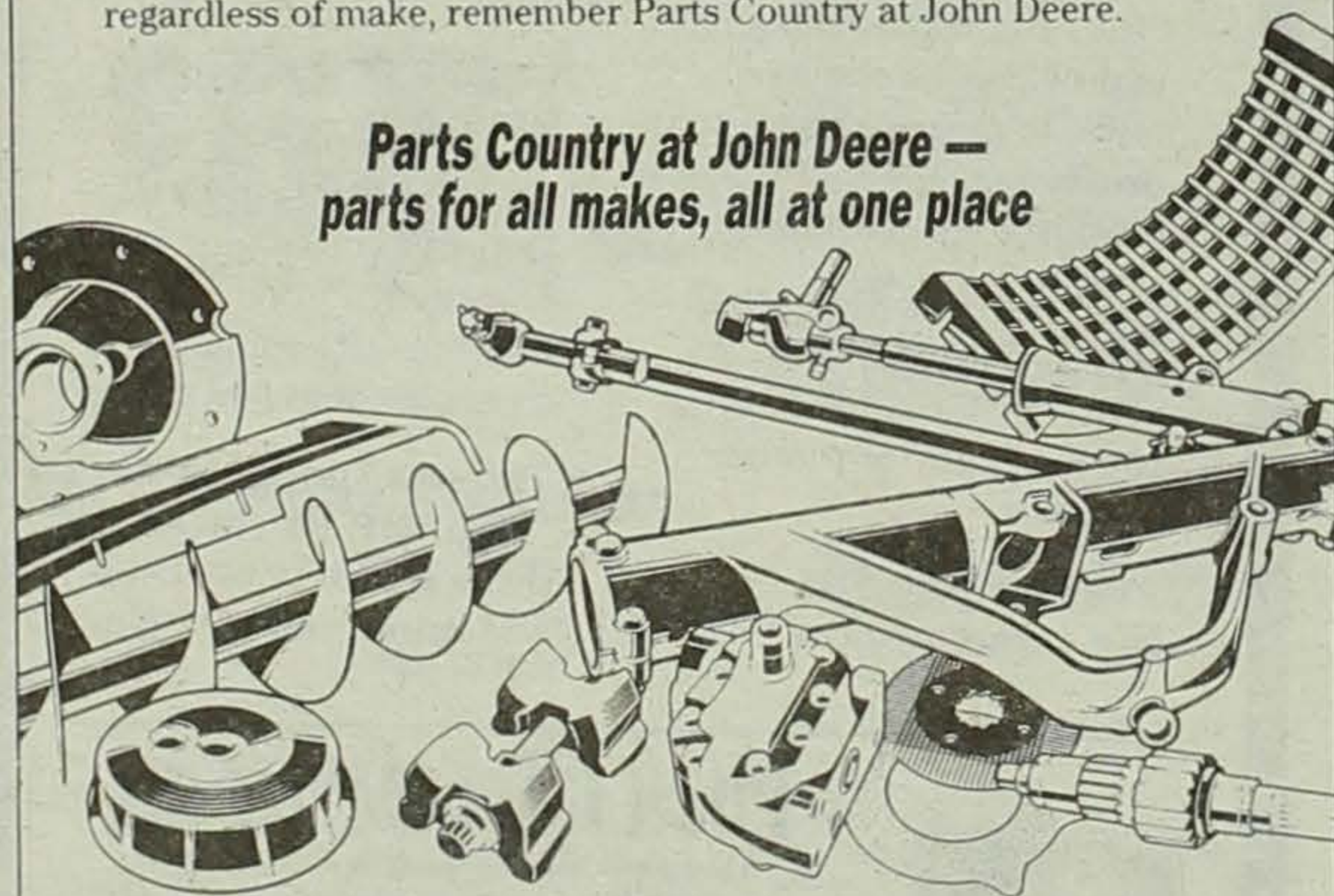
season can also be used for weed control. Once established, burning the prairie in April once every 3-5 years will help control woody vegetation and non-native plants. More information on prairie establishment can be obtained by contacting the Cass County ISU Extension Office at (712)243-2232.



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I-M Budget

(Office Supplies/Expenses/Commissioners Expenses)
July 1, 1999 - June 30, 2000

99-00 Allocation	\$2,738.55
Commissioners Mileage/Expenses	\$1,241.60
Office supplies/expenses	846.59
Reim. for State and national dues	650.00
.....	\$2738.55

III-M Budget
(Conservation Practices)

98-99 Allocation	\$94,395.81
Cost-share warrants paid	\$94,395.56
(Period covers July 1, 1998 - December 31, 2000)	
99-00 Allocation	\$58,108.56
Cost-share warrants paid	\$58,108.56
(Period covers July 1, 1999 - December 31, 2000)	

00-01 Allocation	\$125,280.56
Cost-share warrants paid	\$48,349.34
Obligated funds for conservation practices	63,947.37
.....	\$112,296.71
Balance of Unobligated funds	\$12,983.29
(Period covers July 1, 2000 - December 31, 2000)	

No-Interest Loan Fund	
2000 Allocation	\$10,000.00
Cost-share warrant paid for structure	\$10,000.00

2000 REAP FUNDS	
REAP-P (Practices) Allocation	\$7,288.00
Cost-share warrants paid	\$62.50
Balance of Unobligated REAP-P Funds	\$6,725.50
(Period covers July 1, 2000 through December 31, 2000)	

REAP-F (Forestry/Native Grass) Allocation	\$1,849.00
Obligated funds for windbreaks	\$700
Balance of Unobligated REAP-F Funds)	\$1,149.00

Balance on hand July 1, 1999	\$898.71
Receipts:	
I-M Fund Reimbursement	\$3,030.73
Watersheds	320,561.93
Payroll of District Employee	2,544.05
Miscellaneous	\$36.52
.....	\$327,071.94
Expenditures:	
Commissioners	\$1,113.70
Postage	159.32
Watersheds	320,561.93
Payroll of District Employee	2,544.05
Miscellaneous	993.94
.....	\$325,372.94
Balance on hand June 30, 2000	\$325,372.94

Putting Trees to Work...

We have always known the benefits of a windbreak around a farmstead, but have you ever considered planting trees to protect your livestock? When planted as windbreaks or living barns, trees can reduce wind velocity as much as 70 percent, greatly diminishing the effect of cold temperatures on livestock. This can significantly lower stress on animals and reduce feed energy requirements. The benefits farmers receive include better animal health, lower feed costs, and greater financial gain. During summer months, trees can reduce livestock stress by providing cooling shade and protection from hot winds.

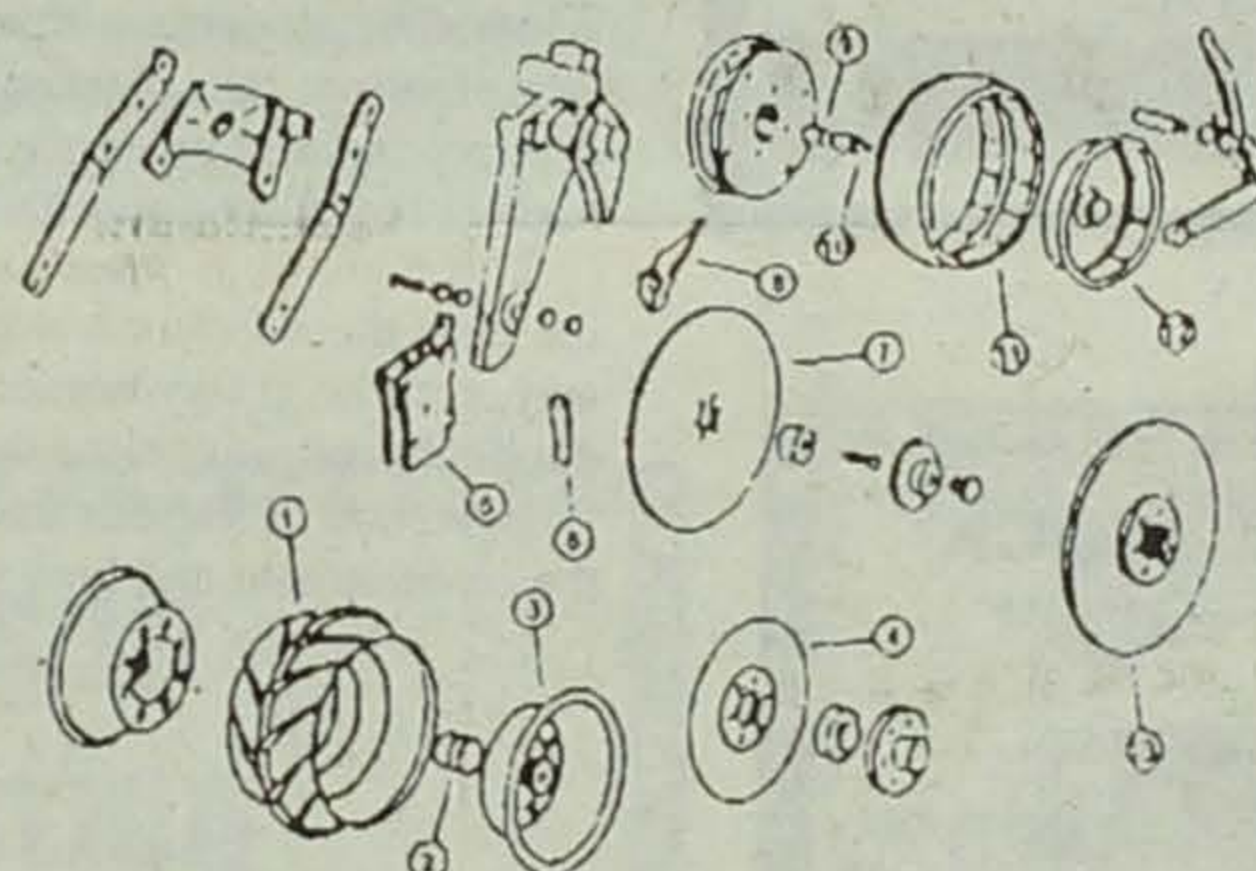
Trees help reduce offensive odors and reduce airborne dust from concentrated livestock areas as well. Trees in an agricultural setting provide greater plant diversity, making for a healthier ecosystem.

The Cass County SWCD started a trees sales program beginning January 1. The trees are sold primarily for windbreak purposes but there are no restrictions on where they are planted or who may purchase them. Cost-share is available each year, up to a maximum of \$700 to install a windbreak on your farmstead or acreage. Call 712-243-3180 to see if you qualify.

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- 7A. ☐ LH disk opener assembly
- 7B. ☐ RH disk opener assembly
8. ☐ Firming point
9. ☐ Gauge wheel bushing
10. ☐ Gauge wheel bearing
11. ☐ Gauge wheel tire
12. ☐ Gauge wheel rim
13. ☐ Marker disk assembly

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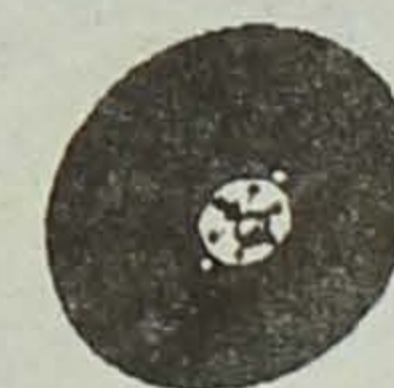
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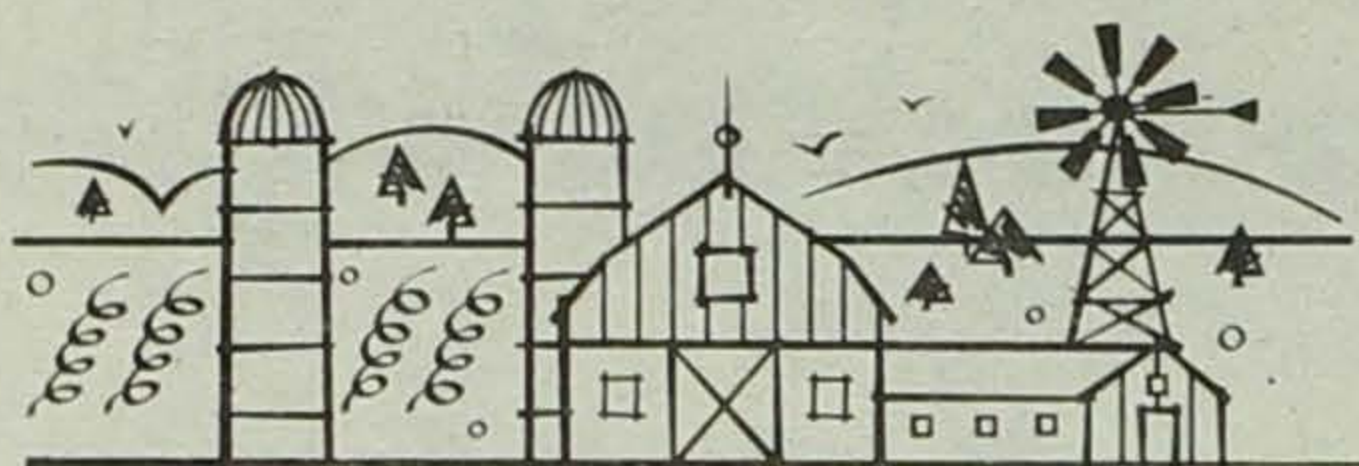
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Great plains no-till drill for rent

With the help of grants from the buffer initiatives program through the State of Iowa and the local Pheasants Forever, the Cass County Soil and Water Conservation District was able to purchase a Great Plains grassland drill. Already before the end of the year, much interest was shown in renting the drill by landowners and operators to plant native grasses on CRP land. The rental rate has been established at \$10/acre with a non-refundable \$50 deposit and a \$25 minimum usage charge. To inquire about the drill or to sign an application to rent the drill, call the Cass County SWCD office 712-243-3180 or stop in the office at 503 West 7th Street, Suite 1, Atlantic.



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Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Simmons (pictured above) share their love of the land with 6th graders to help them learn about conservation.

Photo contributed

Students learn about conservation

Each spring for the past several years the sixth grade students from the Atlantic Middle School have experienced soil conservation practices up close and personal while visiting the Ralph Simmons' farm north of Wiota. The students, within a quarter mile section, can see the conservation management practices of contour planting, tree plantings, conservation tillage, grass waterways, terraces, buffer strips, an earthen dam with a pond and evidence of crop rotation. The Soil Conservation District and the local Department of Natural Resources arrange various sessions that the 125 sixth graders rotate through on this day long outing.

The students are able to walk along the terrace to see how the water is diverted so little soil is taken. They see how the shortened slopes slow down the racing water. The plants of the buffer strips, the grass waterway, and the grassy border around the pond are examined to view the root system and how that system and the blades of grass slow down the water and move it cleanly down the hill.

Evidence of various animals native to this area can be found. The students learn how these animals help the environment and how sometimes their activities might be harmful to the environment. The various types

of fish found in the pond are on display, and the students discover the value of fish to the pond ecosystem. The cleanliness of the water can be determined by the type of little critters that are found. The students are able to sample the water and identify the "good" and the "not so good" organisms.

A session on backyard conservation points out to the students what can be done in an urban setting to make our area more environmentally friendly.

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7th and 8th Grade Students invited to Intermediate 4-H Lock-in

"Express Yourself" is the theme of the lock-in planned for students in the 7th and 8th grades. The lock-in will begin Saturday evening, March 31 and finish early Sunday morning, April 1. This all-night event will be held at the Community Center in Oakland and be adult chaperoned. The Southwest Iowa Area 4-H Council is planning the activity and will focus on communication skills and is open to both 4-H and non-4-H youth.

According to Julie Hering, Youth Program Coordinator, "The lock-in will provide an opportunity for youth to make new friends, practice basic communication skills, develop healthy relationships, and have fun. It will include lots of hands-on learning experiences, games, food, movies, and music. The area council members take their responsibility as positive role models very seriously and look forward to sharing their leadership and communication skills with this age group."

Claire Masker, Neola, and a veteran council member, was involved in a similar event last year. She says, "The lock-in is a great way for junior high kids to have fun in a safe environment. We want to provide a chance for them to make new friends from around the area and learn the importance of expressing themselves in positive ways."

Tyson Robinson, Mindy Euker, Amy Schmitt, Brian Fager and Katie Kucera are members of the Southwest Iowa Area 4-H Council representing Cass County. They are helping plan this lock-in and look forward to carpooling with any Cass County youth interested in attending.

Registration forms are available from the ISU Cass County Extension Office at 243-1132. Forms and a \$5 non-refundable registration fee are due March 20.

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Improve pastures with frost seeding!

BY Michael L. White
ISU Extension Field Crops Specialist

Frost seeding legumes and/or grasses into established pastures is an inexpensive method to increase pasture productivity. February through early March is an excellent time to do this. The freezing and thawing action of the soil along with raindrop splash provides the soil covering for the seed. Timely rainfall in April and May is probably the most critical factor for a successful frost seeding.

All commonly grown legumes can be established by frost seeding. Medium red clover, alsike clover, and ladino clover tend to establish quicker than alfalfa, birdsfoot trefoil, and crownvetch. Grasses can also be frost seeded, but often are less successful than legumes. The grasses best suited for frost seeding includes orchardgrass, timothy, tall fescue, and brome grass. Switchgrass, a warm season prairie grass is also very adapted to frost seeding.

One or two early grazings or mowings to reduce the established pasture competition the first year will increase the success rate of a frost seeding. Broadcasting the seed with fertilizer is not recommended. Fertilizer increases the competition of the established pasture at the expense of the frost seeding.

Thickening a stand with a mixture of grasses and legumes has many positives. Mixed pasture stands are more disease and pest resistant and will still produce under varying weather conditions. Legumes added to an existing grass pasture will increase production, protein, and average daily gain. Legumes established into a grass pasture can completely eliminate the need for nitrogen fertilizer. A 35 percent legume component can replace 100-120 pounds of added nitrogen per acre. More information on frost seeding can be obtained at the Cass County ISU

Extension Office. Call 712-243-1132 and ask for "Improving Pasture by Frost Seeding" Pm-856 (no charge). You can also find this publication at this ISU Internet address: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Pages/pubs/>

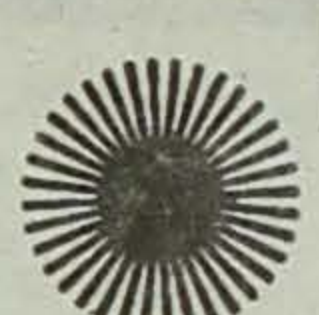
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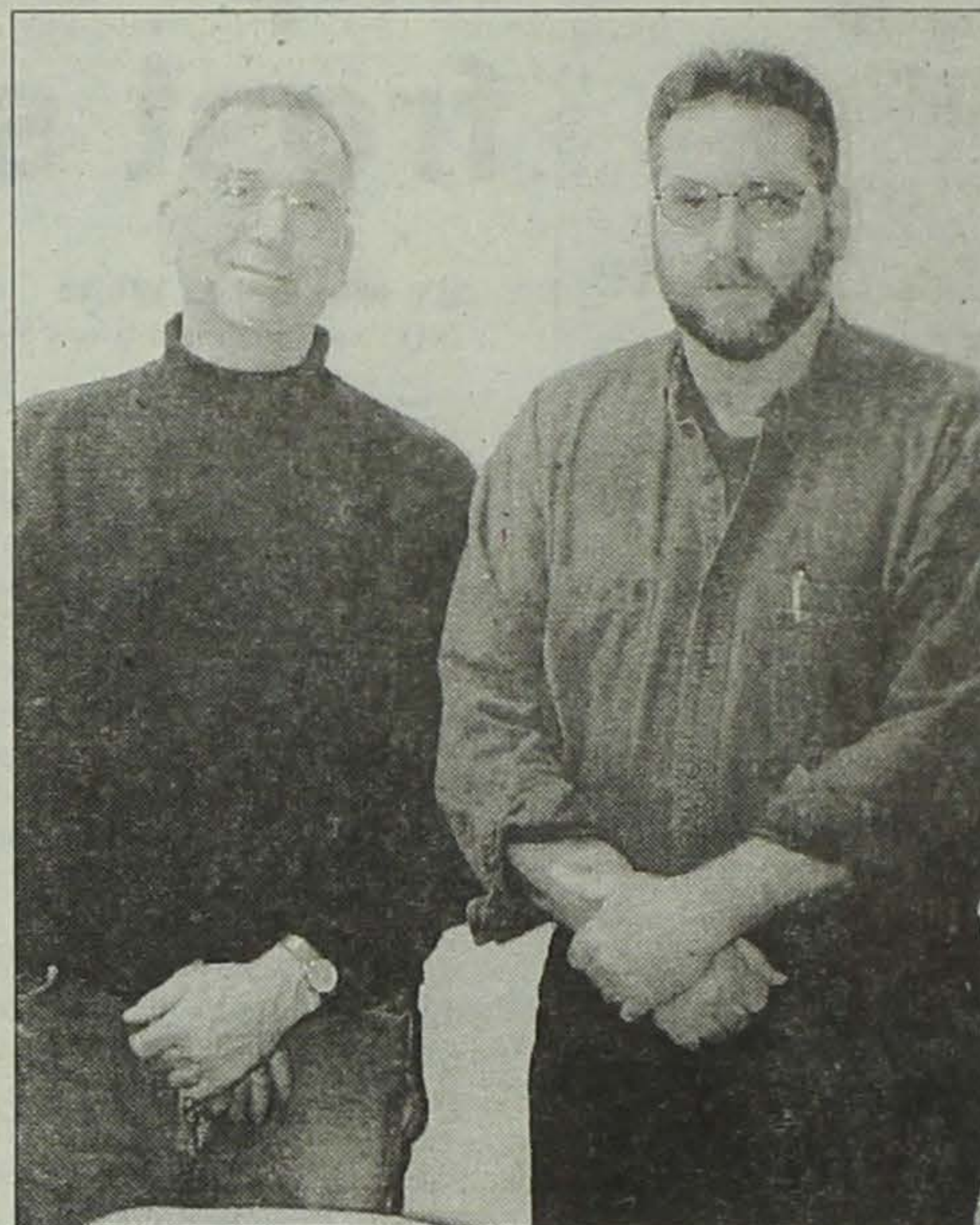
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Senior Scholarship Recipient

Ashley Blake, daughter of Randy and Chris Blake, rural Wiota, was the recipient of the \$300 Muller and Fudge Memorial Scholarship in 2000. Ashley graduated from Atlantic High School in May 1999 and has set high goals for herself. Her plans are to pursue a career in agricultural health or social services. Ashley enjoys music and was very active in both band and choir. Some of her extra curricular activities in addition to band and vocal music included, show choir, piano, drums, French Club, National Honor Society, Student Council, 4-H, cross-country, and tennis. Community services were numerous as well. Ashley was a Sunday School teacher, helped with the Red Cross Bloodmobile, Student Council Food Pantry Drive, Wiota Booster Club volunteer, township cemetery clean-up, NHS volunteer baby sitting service, Co-chair of Adopt-a-Family; decorations and cleanup for school dances and many other volunteer services.



Retiring Commissioners



Cass County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners who are retiring from the board are Jim Smith (left) and Jim Jordan.

Photo by Jennifer Nichols

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