

Nominators of Master Farmers ensure the program's prestige

FOR those who don't know, a lot goes on behind the scenes of the Master Farmer program.

The *Prairie Farmer* staff held a conference call last November where we asked past Master Farmers multiple questions about the program. While we made several changes this year, one I didn't see coming was the move back to a winter banquet.

To meet the magazine's production schedule, this meant we needed to have winners selected by mid-January. Therefore, we needed nominations by Jan. 5. So, we effectively gave nominators about a month and a half to put



For Starters
By JOSH FLINT

together an application for deserving farmers. Those who've seen the Master Farmer application know that's not an easy task.

I must say, I'm extremely grateful and very impressed with the nominators' work. For this issue, Field Editor Holly Spangler and I decided to put each winner's nominator on the cover. It's a small gesture for the long hours that went into presenting us with another hallmark group of farmers.

Also, there were a number of other farmers nominated this year. Thank you to those folks, as well. All of the applications were very well done.

On March 4, we'll congratulate the much-deserving class of 2009 Master Farmers. If you're at the banquet and see one of the nominators, be sure to thank them. In the end, the nominators

ensure the award remains among the most prestigious in agriculture.

Farm Dog entries

The deadline for 2009 Favorite Farm Dog entries is March 15. From new best friends picked up at the local feed mill to prime cattle herders, we've received some good entries thus far.

Unfortunately, my dog will not be entering the mix. At only 4½ pounds, Yoda is a Chihuahua, the world's smallest breed.

Several years ago, my wife wanted a dog. I agreed it would be a nice addition. She wanted a Chihuahua. I wanted something a little bigger. As they say, we compromised and got a Chihuahua.

At 6 feet tall, 230 pounds, I didn't think a Chihuahua would be a good fit for me. I imagined getting laughed at as I walked him. I was wrong.

Yoda is probably the lowest maintenance dog in the world. When it comes to a pet's qualities, low maintenance is at the top of my list. He's never been groomed. A quick bath in the sink does him just fine. And forget walks. He gets plenty of exercise chasing a toy from one end of the house to the other.

He's also fairly resilient. I've seen him throw up his entire stomach's contents, only to scarf down a half-eaten hamburger moments later.

When it comes to other dogs, he's a little confused. Like almost all Chihuahuas, he cannot accurately judge his size vs. another dog's size. He once tore through our yard so he could bark in the face of our neighbor's Labrador. The Lab gave him a curious look. I'm sure he was thinking, "You sound like a dog, but you sure don't look like one."

Prior to Yoda, I'd never been a dog owner. Now that he's been around for almost three years, it's hard to imagine things without him. Even though he weighs about as much as a cantaloupe, he's every bit the furry companion I was hoping for. In the meantime, keep those farm dog entries coming. The photos and stories are great. I can't wait to share them with the rest of you.



NOT A FARM DOG: My wife enjoys dressing our dog, Yoda. I think he has more sweaters than I do. We named him after the "Star Wars" character. The ears are quite similar.

Continue the conversation

Check out Associate Editor Josh Flint's blog "Prairie Gleanings" online at www.PrairieFarmer.com. Click the "Blogs" tab at the top of the page.

Each week, Josh will write about something he has seen while traveling the Land of Lincoln. Let him know your thoughts on what he is seeing out there by joining the online conversation.

Jury rules in favor of Clay County operation

A CLAY County jury recently ruled in favor of Bible Pork, a swine farm near Louisville. The lawsuit was brought by 15 neighbors who claimed the farm's odor was a nuisance under Illinois law.

Illinois Pork Producers Association President Phil Borgic applauded the jury's decision.

"This ruling is great news for the livestock industry and all of agriculture," adds Borgic, a pork producer from Nokomis. "Many times, as in this case, livestock operations are wrongfully attacked by people with misinformation and emotional rhetoric. This jury proved in the end facts will prevail. We believe this ruling will set a precedent for future livestock-related cases."

The ruling is a significant victory for Illinois livestock farmers who have operated their farms in good faith under the Illinois Livestock Facilities Management Act. In addition, this ruling also reinforces the clear protections provided under the LMFA for both livestock farmers and their rural neighbors.

"In these tough economic times for our country, pork producers play a pivotal role in providing a safe, quality, affordable protein source for many Americans," adds Borgic.

Source: IPPA

TRUE OR FALSE?

Longer residual weed control means higher yields.

U of I bioenergy center to offer free lecture series in March, early April

THE University of Illinois' Center for Advanced BioEnergy Research is sponsoring several upcoming lectures on wind, nitrogen management and feeding coproducts to hogs. All lectures are free and open to the public.

"Wind Energy Trends in Illinois" will feature Kevin Borgia, executive director of Wind for Illinois. Borgia will speak March 16 from 4 to 5 p.m.

Thomas Theis, director of the Institute for Environmental Science and Policy at U of I Chicago, will present "Integrated Management of Reactive Nitrogen." Theis' presentation runs from

4 to 5 p.m. on March 30.

Hans Stein, U of I animal sciences associate professor, will speak about "Utilization of Co-Products from the Biofuels Industry in Swine Nutrition." His April 6 presentation runs from 4 to 5 p.m.

For more information, call the Center for Advanced BioEnergy Research at 217-244-9270. CABER is currently housed in Rooms 34-36 of the Animal Sciences Laboratory, at 1207 W. Gregory Drive, MC-630, Urbana, IL 61801.

Source: University of Illinois