

Missouri boy likes it in Illinois



For Starters

By JOSH FLINT

I'VE been an Illinoisan for about four years.

Having been born and raised in Rolla, Mo., my deep appreciation for the Land of Lincoln began about a year ago when I removed a flower bed in our back yard.

The planting area was completely overrun with haphazard tulips, some extremely ugly bushes and something I'm sure you're familiar with: weeds. I approached the flower bed with a shovel, a rake and a heavy-duty mattock.

For those of you who've never had the pleasure of visiting the Ozark "Mountains" of Missouri, a mattock or a long wrecking bar are quite necessary digging implements for the rocky clay that is passed off as soil there. Therefore, you can imagine my surprise and joy when I planted the shovel in the Illinois ground with only one foot!

In about an hour, I had removed most of the growth from the flower bed. In Missouri, this would have been an all-day affair.

The next time my family came up to

visit, I took a shovel out of the garage and said, "Watch this." They were amazed with how easy the rich, black Illinois soil spilled forth. In fact, my father mentioned the last time he saw dirt that black in Missouri, it was in a bag from Sauget, Ill.!

When Missouri folks come up to visit my wife and me, they always comment, "There are cornfields everywhere you look!"

I say, "I know, isn't it beautiful?"

Becoming a resident

My journey to Illinois started when I graduated from Truman State University, in Kirksville, Mo. I took a job with the Suburban Journals Group as a reporter for the *Belleville Journal*. I covered politics, schools, festivals and a host of other events.

It was here that I met my wife, Tiffany. We were married in 2005. Shortly thereafter, I took a job with Country Journal Publishing, based in Decatur, as the editor of *Milling Journal* and associate editor of *Grain Journal*.

During my time at Country Journal Publishing, I visited flour mills and grain elevators across the United States and developed an interest in grain and a passion for ag journalism.

With manufacturing jobs running overseas at a breakneck pace, it's refreshing to cover an industry the U.S. does better than any other country.

Give me a call

When I accepted the position of associate editor at *Prairie Farmer*, I was extremely excited, but also nervous. It's quite a proposition to write and edit for a magazine that has been published since 1841. Then it occurred to me that *Prairie Farmer* has such a rich tradition because of the strength of its readers.

This is your publication. I will work hard to fill the pages with information that will assist and interest you. However, I will never confuse this as "my magazine." This periodical is very much yours, as it has been and always will be.

Please give me a call and let me know what you would like to see in future issues. My phone number is 217-877-9070 and my e-mail address is jflint@farmprogress.com.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Share your view

Prairie Farmer welcomes opinions and comments on issues that relate to your farm business. Send an e-mail to Executive Editor Frank Holdmeyer at fholdmeyer@farmprogress.com, or write to us at *Prairie Farmer* Letters, 1301 E. Mound Road, Decatur, IL 62526. Include your name, address and phone number for verification purposes. Please limit comments to 300 words or less.

Letters

Looking for a mentor

I am a family of five looking for a farm to work and live on.

Having no background in farming, I hope there is someone that is interested in selling their farm and willing to stay on to teach me some of the tricks and secrets they know for the first year or until I can plow through on my own.

My search has been hard in that most of the farms we have seen are rented lands and owned by investor groups. I am not a 1031 exchange, but when I sell my home and another property we own I believe we will have a good enough down payment. Unfortunately, based on input costs per acre, average yields and even the high price of corn per bushel today, I don't seem to see how there is such a high asking price for farm land and how there is excess money to survive.

Basically, in a nutshell I am looking for 150 to 300 acres of tillable farmland that I can take over and be mentored through the learning process and in the end be able to support my family.

Please let me know if you see or hear of anything that might possibly work.

Tom Caravette
Chicago
773-851-1776

More at stake than a bovine hormone



Guest Editorial

By TOM J. BECHMAN

A DAIRY producer told *Prairie Farmer* recently that he had no choice but to sign the affidavit saying he would no longer use bovine somatotropin. Otherwise, the dairy would no longer buy his milk.

He can tell you how much money

it's costing him not to use a technology that has been utilized without problems for a decade. He's a smart guy; he also knows there's no way the dairy can detect whether he's using it.

So that creates a dilemma. He could ignore the affidavit, but that would set a dangerous precedent for his own integrity. He farms with grown sons, and continuing to use the hormone would set the wrong example for them, he insists. He's not ready to sacrifice the sanctity of his word and signature.

Hats off to him, but woe to those that created this diabolical debacle. And if you're ready to flip the page because you don't milk, keep reading. While the current hubbub is about dairies not accepting milk from cows treated with BST, the real issue runs much deeper. Once activist groups smell blood in the water. Which technology will they target next? Someday it might be one that improves your bottom line.

All-out war

Terry Etherton, an Extension animal scientist from Penn State University, has fought the good fight for years. Unfortunately, one voice alone can't fend off attacks from every environmental and fringe animal-activist group.

"The fight over BST is just one battle," he told a group of livestock producers recently. "It's a battle that moves at the speed of the Internet. But the war is against agricultural technology."

The lunacy of the dairy battle indicates what could lie ahead if farmers don't step up and fight, Etherton says. BST is basically somatotropin. All animals make it; so do humans. It's sometimes used to treat diabetes. "Apparently it's OK for human medicine, but not in food," he quips.

Aside from the activists with a set agenda, some consumers are innocently duped. People tend to equate hormones with chemicals. Yet plants are loaded with hormones. Make no mistake, Etherton warns: This battle is not

about food safety. The Food and Drug Administration said milk from cows treated with this product was safe more than 10 years ago. "This drive to get rid of BST is a manufactured campaign," he emphasizes. "And it's not the end."

That's the scary part: It may just be an early salvo in the war against technology. Just within the animal industry, there's a plethora of targets, Etherton says. These include antibiotics in feeds, GMO feedstuffs, Rumensin — even artificial insemination and cloning.

There's no silver bullet to make this threat to technology go away, but that doesn't make it any less real. Both Etherton and Wes Jamison, an animal welfare expert from the University of Florida, believe farmers must fight back. "You've got to represent your industry," Etherton says. "These threats are real, and no one else will do it for you."

Prairie Farmer agrees. Telling your story about raising wholesome, low-cost, safe food is long overdue. Be proud of what you do and the techniques that allow you to do it. And at the same time, don't take jabs about the high cost of food lying down. It's energy costs for transportation, not just food costs, driving higher food prices.

Don't be bashful about sharing these messages with urban friends. It's time to quit denying that agriculture technology is under siege. Instead, show it's worth fighting for.

Bechman is a Farm Progress editor based in Franklin, Ind.

