

RSS news feeds increase Web productivity

By WILLIE VOGT

PRAIRIE Farmer's new Web site offers a lot of functionality, so it may take you a little time to learn it all. That's why each month since the launch, *Prairie Farmer* has carried a feature story about the new system, highlighting one of the many features available.

This month's topic is the use of "news feeds" for your site. A technology called RSS (for Really Simple Syndication) provides a way to bring new information onto the site so you can use *www.PrairieFarmer.com* as a one-stop Web site for keeping updated on key information. The new site offers a bundle of Web modules, or feeds, that are available the first time you log in. However, not every user has the same needs. If you want to enhance the site to your specifications, using RSS feeds can help.

RSS feeds available

To save you time and speed up the learning curve a bit, the site already provides a wide range of RSS feeds you can easily add as new modules. Just select "Click here to customize page," and you will get a large drop-down menu of new features. These include some locally relevant feeds, or modules, you may want to consider.

Key Points

- RSS feeds allow you to bring wide-ranging content to one spot.
- "Prebuilt" feeds are available for readers to add to their site content.
- Bringing outside content to your site is easy to do with RSS.

For example, under "News" on the left side of the "Customize" section, you'll find "Farm Progress," "National News," "Local News" and "Local Sports" choices. These are tailored to your part of the country. Say you want to see local sports from a regional paper. You'll find those choices ready for you to add. Want to keep up on what's happening at Fox News? You can select that, too.

When you do, the feed opens as a new "window" or module on your home page. Click on a headline and you're taken right to the story. It's that simple.

Bring in outside content

Second, you can add your own RSS feed. Say you have a favorite site with new information appearing on a regular basis that provides that information by RSS. On that same "Customize" section, you'll see a button called "Add an RSS feed." Click on that and you get a window where you can paste in the ad-

dress for the feed, and another window where you can give that feed a name.

The key is to make sure the site has an RSS feed. The graphics above show visual cues some sites use for feeds. You'll also find instructions for adding the feed if you click the button "Add an RSS feed" on the site.

This is a powerful tool for getting information from a favorite supplier (many are starting to use RSS) or for a specific pastime. Having this tool available at *www.PrairieFarmer.com* allows



LOOK FOR THE SYMBOL: Many Web sites use a symbol like the ones shown here to signify that they offer an RSS feed. Click on it to get the Web address to the feed. You can use that to add that information to your *FarmProgress.com* state site.

you to keep up without spending a lot of time searching the Web.

Try it out. If you have a problem, e-mail help@farmprogress.com. We'll get back to you as soon as we can.

Set up a market alert on your phone

THERE'S a special feature on the site — available if you register — that allows you to use your cell phone as a quick alert on market movements. In the "Risk Management" module there are several tabs — "Grain," "Livestock," "Charts," "Prefs" and "Alerts." Click on the "Alerts" tab and you'll get a screen that allows you to configure a free alert.

Click that and you go to a screen that allows you to change your password, but there is also a tab that says "Alerts." Just click on that and fill in the needed information.

Got a corn contract you want to keep track of? Say you want to know if December 2008 corn goes above \$6? You can set the system up to send you a message when that happens — no matter where you are. This alert can help you stay "on the ball" with key market moves as you need know about them, even in the heat of harvest or other fieldwork.

Check it out today.

