

## Ripley dairy struggle gets another twist

By PAULA MOHR

**T**HE struggle over the proposed Ripley Dairy in Dodge County just took an unexpected turn. The neighboring city of Claremont, interested in economic development, wants to annex the dairy's land so the 2,140-cow business will operate within its city limits.

During January meetings, Claremont city council members voted to study the idea of annexing the dairy's land. The council will specifically study the annexation's economic, legal and zoning ramifications to the city and its residents.

When Bill Rowekamp, a partner in Ripley Dairy, was asked by Claremont's city administrator if the dairy would be open to annexation, he was shocked.

"I almost fell out of my chair," Rowekamp says. "They are thinking so far out of the box." Both Rowekamp and landowner-partner Ben Zaitz are pleased that the city is interested in their dairy business and the economic development it will bring to the area. The dairy would offer 32 to 35 jobs with an annual payroll of nearly \$1 million.

The dairy itself is just part of the potential influx of new money for the Claremont community. Down the road, Rowekamp envisions a local heifer-grower business supplying replacements and new main street businesses to support ag growth.

"With the city making this step, who knows what attention Claremont might get," Rowekamp says. "With an ethanol plant on the west and an ultramodern dairy with a manure digester on the east, Claremont could be a 'center.'"

In addition to the economic growth the proposed dairy could bring, the city of Claremont is also interested in the dairy's digester. The electricity generated from the digester's methane gas would be able to power all the homes in Claremont — up to 400 residences.

### Siting challenges

More than three years ago, Rowekamp and Zaitz started plans for a new dairy facility in Dodge County. However, some local residents and township officials opposed their project and passed an interim ordinance prohibiting certain businesses, including large livestock operations.

With legal fees mounting to \$135,000, the dairy owners decided last November to put their proposed operation on hold.

# Soybean growers discuss checkoff

By PAULA MOHR

**M**INNESOTA soybean growers agreed to support a proposed voluntary commercial fertilizer checkoff if the funds were only used for research and production education and communication.

Delegates discussed the topic at the Minnesota Soybean Growers annual meeting in Morton in January. They also agreed to support the checkoff if board membership is limited to one representative for each contributing entity; checkoff funds are refundable only to producers or growers; annual audits are done by outside party and made available to farmers; and no checkoff funds

are used for management or administration.

Other resolutions voted on by delegates included:

■ Passing a 5% biodiesel directive for Minnesota

■ Approving a resolution to extend the current farm bill for another two years

"The WTO should be understood and standards set before we do the farm bill," says Bob Worth, MSGA's president from Lake Benton.

Biodiesel's bumpy ride in late 2005 following the Sept. 29 2% mandate was a series of unfortunate events, according to Ed Hegland, Appleton, MSGA board member.

"A lot of things came together at the wrong time — a late start, cold weather, hurri-

canes, the federal excise tax [which made diesel significantly cheaper] — and people put in higher blends than recommended, up 50% to 100%," Hegland says.

Variances through Feb. 10 were put into effect after receiving complaints about clogged fuel filters. Out-of-spec product was the alleged culprit.

Both the Minnesota and National Biodiesel Councils requested variance extensions. "We wanted time to allow production plants to implement quality controls," he says.



BOB WORTH



## Couple named as Minnesota Young Leaders

**R**YAN and Cindy Gravenhof, Worthington, were selected to represent Minnesota as the 2006 American Soybean Association/DuPont Young Leaders.

The couple has farmed in the area for 14 years. They grow soybeans, corn, wheat and alfalfa, and own a registered Angus herd.

The Gravenhofs will represent the state at the Commodity Classic in California in March and participate in leadership training.

# Growers support uniform siting law

By PAULA MOHR

**D**ELEGATES to the Minnesota Corn Growers Association annual meeting in January approved a resolution that supports uniform siting for all agricultural businesses.

MCGA president Rodney Moe says delegates passed a resolution that supports statewide uniform standards for livestock siting, ethanol plants, chemical storage and all other agricultural enterprises.

MCGA does not support township planning and zoning.

MCGA also approved reso-



RODNEY MOE

lutions supporting:

■ The idea of a fund to protect all agricultural interests (livestock, drainage and siting issues)

■ A proposal to have uniform drainage rules and regulations administered from county to county

■ A checkoff for commercial fertilizer if ag producers are involved in the implementation and if the checkoff will be voluntary

## Governor blasts anti-livestock groups; encourages exports

**G**OV. Tim Pawlenty told Minnesota corn growers at their annual meeting that there are positive and challenging events happening in Minnesota agriculture.

The positives include the state's position in numerous Top-10 U.S. ag commodity lists.



GOV. TIM PAWLENTY

The challenges include keeping the importance of ag in front of average Minnesotans, exports, livestock and value-added agriculture. "I challenge all of you, as you speak to colleagues, the media and in your community, to remind people that we need a healthy, whole state with a stable, prosperous agriculture," he said. One in five jobs are related to agriculture in Minnesota.

Looking ahead at export and value-added product potential, he pointed out that China offers tremendous potential. "At 1.3 billion people, having a slice of that action is incredibly important," Pawlenty said. "We need to find ways to increase our market share, and government can help do that."

Regarding livestock, Pawlenty reiterated its importance in the state and then blasted groups that have been anti-livestock growth. Specifically, he named Land Stewardship Project. "Land Stewardship Project policies are very destructive to livestock growth and expansion," he said. "We have to strike a balance. These groups have pressured township officials that they can't get their jobs done." Pawlenty added that we "can't squeeze and suffocate our livestock industry."

## MCGA corn yield winners

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association corn yield contest recognizes the accomplishments of top corn farmers all across the state. Winning entries indicate the direction of high-yielding genetics and excellent farming practices.

PLACE	NAME	COUNTY	BRAND	HYBRID	YIELD
<b>Northern, Minimum Till, Irrigated</b>					
1	Greg Lanners	Wright	Pioneer	38H68	201.8610
<b>Northern, Minimum Till, Nonirrigated</b>					
1	Larry Lahr	Stearns	Dekalb	DKC50-20RR	222.4961
2	Kevin Lahr	Stearns	Dekalb	DKC 50-18	216.5633
3	Bob Hamm	Meeker	Dekalb	DKC 51-39	213.8219
<b>Northern, Mulch Till, Irrigated</b>					
1	Ted McCarty	Stearns	Pioneer	38H67	249.8124
2	John & Carl Traut	Stearns	Dekalb	DKC 47-10	242.9745
3	Joe Krippner	Stearns	Dekalb	DKC 50-20	238.3603
<b>Northern, Mulch Till, Nonirrigated</b>					
1	Steve Thayer	Swift	Dekalb	DKC 50-20	242.8214
2	Joel Johnson	Kandiyohi	Dekalb	DKC 52-47	234.4349
3	John Arnold	Meeker	Garst	8888	219.3844
<b>Central, Minimum Till, Irrigated</b>					
1	Winton Nelson	Meeker	Legend	5501BT	221.9004
2	Jason Nelson	Meeker	Legend	5102BT	218.9760
3	Jason Nelson	Meeker	Legend	5396BT	217.3908
<b>Central, Minimum Till, Nonirrigated</b>					
1	Gary LeVan	Wabasha	Dekalb	DKC 47-10	222.8653
2	Mike Hamm	Meeker	Dekalb	DKC 51-39	218.7932
<b>Central, Mulch Till, Irrigated</b>					
1	Ger-Bes Enterprises	Dakota	Pioneer	34N44	261.8738
2	Paul Beskau	Dakota	Pioneer	34N45	248.3761
<b>Central, Mulch Till, Nonirrigated</b>					
1	Mark Schroeder	Wabasha	Dekalb	DKC 58-24	249.6330
2	Bonnie Schroeder	Wabasha	Dekalb	DKC 50-20	248.7371
<b>Southern, Minimum Till, Irrigated</b>					
1	Ronald Thompson	Freeborn	Dekalb	DKC 58-24	238.8763
<b>Southern, Minimum Till, Nonirrigated</b>					
1	Paul M Hamann	Fillmore	Dekalb	DKC 52-47	251.3863
2	Jon Worth	Lincoln	Dekalb	DKC 50-20	249.0675
3	Joseph & James Schieber	Houston	Pioneer	34A15	245.9591
<b>Southern, Mulch Till, Irrigated</b>					
1	Raymond Stevermer	Faribault	Dekalb	DKC 52-40	251.1882
2	Stan Thompson	Freeborn	Dekalb	DKC 51-39	221.4512
<b>Southern, Mulch Till, Nonirrigated</b>					
1	Bryan Voigt	Faribault	Dekalb	DKC 50-20	258.7610
2	Roger Legred	Faribault	Dekalb	DKC 60-13	256.0567
3	Bryan Voigt	Faribault	Dekalb	DKC 51-39	253.6268

For a complete list of contest winners, go to [www.mncorn.org](http://www.mncorn.org).