



Kevin Babcock,
General Manager/CEO

BE PATIENT. BE SAFE. FARM EQUIPMENT IS ON THE MOVE



At this time of year, rural drivers can almost expect to share the road with large farm equipment. It is important that both drivers and farm equipment operators remain alert and aware of their surroundings in order to prevent accidents.

Drivers should always be on the lookout for machinery. During the harvest season, tractors and farm equipment could turn onto public roads from a field or driveway at any time. While following farm machinery, remember to slow down and keep a safe distance in order to prevent a rear-end collision. Before passing farm machinery, there are safety precautions that should be taken. You should always make sure there is no oncoming traffic and there is enough roadway space to safely pass the equipment. Machinery operators may slow down and move to either side of the road to prepare for a wide left or right turn. Always be sure of your surroundings before attempting to pass. Even though you see the machinery, it does not mean the operator sees you.

There are also safety measures farm equipment operators should take. Equipment operators should also be aware of traffic, whether they are traveling down the road or turning in or out of a field. It is also important to make sure lighting and flashers are working properly, display a slow-moving vehicle sign, and be careful of roadway obstacles such as mailboxes, bridges, and road signs. Large equipment operators are also reminded to use caution when working near powerlines. Sometimes it can be difficult to see powerlines when operating large equipment, and using a spotter may help you stay safe. It only

takes a few seconds to look up, look out, and keep equipment away from powerlines. Your safety is worth the time. If your machinery does make contact with a powerline, make sure you and those you are working with know what to do.

Tips to Keep You Safe:

- Know where powerlines are and how to stay clear of them before you begin your work.
- Power lines may sag over the years. Do not attempt to raise them. Call the utility to have them repaired.
- Keep machinery, equipment, and yourself at least 10-18 feet away from overhead powerlines in all directions, at all times.
- Be sure everyone you are working with knows proper safety and emergency procedures.

What to do if you are on equipment that makes contact with a powerline:

- Do not exit the equipment.
- Call 911.
- Warn others not to come near the equipment.
- Wait for the utility to de-energize the line.
- Confirm it is safe to exit equipment.

If the equipment is on fire and you must exit, you must jump clear of the equipment with both feet together. Hop as far from the machinery as you can with your feet together.

COMPUTER UPGRADE COMING IN 2018

Jackson Electric will be upgrading its customer information system in February 2018. This upgrade will enable staff to handle member inquiries more efficiently, and provide user-friendly bill pay options for members.

As we get closer to the “go-live” date, it will be important for you to watch your mail for updates regarding the upgrade. For now, keep watching for information in this magazine, the December member newsletter, and Jackson Electric’s Facebook page.



PLANNING A NEW BUILD?

If you’re planning to build a house, shed, or livestock facility and need electric service installed, please contact Jackson Electric Cooperative to schedule an appointment to discuss your electric service needs. We can also help with electric heating and cooling options, water heating, and Energy Star rebates for residential, business, and agricultural.

Frost Charges

If you plan to have Jackson Electric install electric service on your property after November 1, an additional charge may be applied if the conventional method of electric service installation is not feasible due to frost.

If you’re planning to build a structure during the winter season and will need electric service, please contact Jackson Electric now so that any line builds can be arranged.



Eric Jacobson, Fed. Co-op, helps students look for deficiencies on a corn plant.



GROWTH through *Cooperation*

If you've ever stopped by the Jackson Electric office, you may have noticed an eight-acre field located to the far right of the building. Maybe you saw a group of people out there walking around, or caught a glimpse of signs along the edges of the field. And maybe you noticed the field, but never gave it a second thought. It's just another field in Wisconsin, right? This eight-acre area is more than just a field—it's the Black River Falls FFA Test Plot Cooperative. This test plot is a real-life example of cooperation among cooperatives, the sixth cooperative principle.

In 2008, Jackson Electric moved to its present location and found itself with eight acres of idle land. Jackson Electric staff contacted the Black River Falls FFA to see if they would have interest in using the land for a test plot. Brad Markhardt, Black River Falls FFA advisor, asked his students if they would have interest in the proposed idea. In 2009, their test plot activities began.

The cooperation among cooperatives does not end there. Federation Cooperative, a local supply and marketing co-op, has also been supportive of the test plot. Fed. Co-op has helped with inputs, agronomy advice, collecting and analyzing data, and the storage and marketing of the crops. Co-op Credit Union (CCU), a local financial cooperative, also assisted with the initial "seed money" to get started during the plot's first growing season.

Since then, the BRF FFA Test Plot Cooperative has "grown" in many ways and has made an impact on those in-

involved. The test plot was not always a cooperative. The Black River Falls FFA Test Plot Cooperative formed in December 2010, after the plot's second growing season. The cooperative was formed to help manage the test plot itself. CCU provided advice on how cooperatives are formed and assisted with the development of bylaws for the cooperative.

"We run this just like a cooperative," explains Brad. "We even have an elected board of directors."

To become a member of the cooperative, students must be a current Black River Falls FFA member and contribute a one-dollar membership fee. While there is not an academic credit incentive for co-op participation, members receive the benefits of patronage dividends. Attendance at activities is tracked. At the end of the year, the elected board decides what kind of dividend it will pay. The more activities a student attends, the greater his/her patronage dividend will be.

"It allows students to share in the real-life benefits of cooperative membership," shares Jacob Markhardt.

Jacob has been a member of the Test Plot Cooperative since seventh grade. He started his freshman year of college this fall. Asked how he will apply this experience as he makes the transition to college, Jacob shares, "The college I'm going to isn't exactly ag-focused. My primary use of this experience would be to spread awareness and educate people about the importance of agriculture."

Through cooperative activities, students are exposed to a real-world application of science and can see how it applies to agriculture and other fields of study such as business and technology. Not all students have the opportunity to experience production agriculture firsthand. Knowledge of what it takes to produce a crop can be beneficial to all students, no matter what area of work they go into.

Zach Johnson, a junior at BRF High School, has been involved for four years. He says, "The greatest takeaway has been applying the steps in growing. I've grown things like peppers and peas, but to know what it is to grow an entire field has been a great experience."

Through this firsthand application of agriculture, students are also introduced to the use of cutting-edge technology. Fed. Co-op has demonstrated how images of the test plot can be obtained by using a drone. "We were using drones long before they became fashionable in the ag-ed community," shares Brad.



This year's experiment involves four test areas within the plot.



1. Jacob Markhardt (left) and Zach Johnson (right) use their reference books as they observe the growth of the corn plants. 2. Test plot members Zach Johnson (left) and Chase Manske (right) mark the plot's four variables. 3. Zach Johnson (right) observes as Mike Mathson, Precision Ag Technician at Fed. Co-op (left) demonstrates how a drone can be used to capture images of the plot. 4. Black River Falls DFFA Advisor Brad Markhardt helps Chase Manske (left) determine what type of deficiency is affecting the corn plant.

The BRF FFA chapter also entered a Disease and Stress Image Contest sponsored by The Climate Corporation. This contest invited FFA chapters to submit photos of crop diseases and/or stressors. Through participation, the group can utilize The Climate Corporation's satellite data program and view the test plot in infrared. This will show the students a visual difference between their test areas in the plot.

Spotlight on this year's study:

Question: Is a split application of nitrogen, both treated and non-treated, in corn more profitable than a single application of nitrogen, both treated and non-treated? (treated = stabilized)

Hypothesis: If we use a split application of nitrogen, then it will be more profitable. A treated application of nitrogen will be most profitable.

Independent variable: The amount of nitrogen applied—everything is the same except the split application.

Dependent variable: Profit—the data collected is bushels per acre for each of the test areas. They will determine if the difference in yield is enough to offset the cost of split application.

There are also other benefits of being a Test Plot Cooperative member. The students have the opportunity to work with adults in the community. "The students actually have to find an adult willing to help us plant, help us harvest—all of those logistical things," shares Brad. "It's a great chance for the students to practice communication skills and gain real-world experience working with adults."

The test plot meetings are always open. Insurance companies have talked to the group about risk management, and various vendors have talked to the students about types of inputs. Guest speakers have also attended the cooperative's annual meeting.

Each year, Fed. Co-op has helped the Test Plot Cooperative develop their research question. "We always ask the students if they have a question, and then we ask Eric Jacobson at Fed. Co-op if there are questions his customers have asked," Brad explains. "We want to make the question as realistic and usable as possible." Eric attends the meetings and discusses the plot with the students.

Carol Blaken, Jackson Electric, also attends the plot's meetings. "Carol has helped us understand how cooperatives work, how they're organized, and some administrative aspects of cooperatives," shares Brad. "It's been a great real-world



learning experience for the students and myself."

Adam Kaszubowski, a math teacher at the School District of Black River Falls, has been helping with data analysis of the test plot for about three years. "I have seen more students appreciate the application of math," shares Adam. "With this, we're applying math to something the students can actually see. This is a great example of real-life data in a math classroom."

When the students are working side by side with adults, they can see that adults in the community care about their education. If a member of the community has ideas or opportunities that they envision could be helpful to the project, they can contact Brad, Carol, or Eric.

"We are greatly appreciative of the experiences students are receiving because of this partnership," concludes Brad, "because they really do make a difference on an individual and personal level for students." —Brandi Shramek, *communications intern*



DON'T LET VAMPIRE LOADS HAUNT YOU

It's October. This is the time of year when we see children, and adults, dress up as ghosts, goblins, and vampires. We typically see and hear about these spooks on Halloween, but did you know that you may have vampires in your home? Not a real vampire, but vampire electrical loads.

Vampire loads come from devices that use electricity even when they appear to be off. The primary culprits are chargers, set-top television boxes, instant-on televisions, and gaming systems. These are only a few of the items. Look around your house. If you have an appliance with a digital clock or its light is on, it's a vampire load. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, nearly 10 percent of the average household

electric use is from vampire loads.

Let's talk about chargers. When your device is charging, the charger is obviously using electricity. You unplug the device from the charger, but keep the charger plugged into the electrical outlet. You think, "I'm not using electricity because my device



Left: Your set-top television boxes and other devices that have a digital clock or lights displayed will draw electricity when plugged in. Right: This iPad isn't plugged into the charger, but the charger is still drawing a small amount of electricity because it is plugged into the electrical outlet.

is not plugged in." Contrary to your thoughts, the charger that is plugged into the electrical outlet is still consuming a small amount of electricity even though it is not connected to a device. That's a vampire load.

Nowadays, many households have a gaming console. The typical gaming console can use as much energy as a regular refrigerator even when it's not being used. Make sure to check the console settings and disable automatic updates, which is where the energy drain comes from. Games on the console are frequently updated, which requires a lot of electricity.

Are there ways to rid the vampire loads from your home? Probably not all of them. But, you can be proactive in recognizing what devices are using energy even though they're not being used, and unplug them if possible.

Deter the Vampires

1. Unplug chargers when not in use.
2. Invest in smart power strips.
3. Turn off the instant-on function of your TV. Turn off set-top boxes that do not contain the DVR functionality or use a smart power strip.
4. Disable automatic updates in gaming consoles and turn the console completely off when you finish using it.

MEET YOUR DIRECTOR, CHRIS CURRAN



Chris Curran, District 4 board member, is an animal nutrition consultant for Land O'Lakes/Purina Feed at Countryside Cooperative. Chris and his wife, Mary, have two children, Zack and Grace, both of whom recently got married. Asked what he is

most proud of, Chris shares, "My wife and children. They are great!" In his free time, Chris enjoys camping, biking, and hiking.

Chris first got involved with the board of directors because he thought it would be interesting to learn more about power generation and distribution. His duties on the board include serving on the Information Technology and Execu-

tive committees, and serving as Jackson Electric's alternate representative to the Dairyland Power Board of Directors.

"Working together as a team to find solutions to challenges, and recognize opportunities as they present themselves" is Chris's favorite part of being a director. He adds that the directors are always focused on members' needs and how to exceed their expectations of the co-op.



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