

SEPTEMBER
2020

RiverCountry CO-OP

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YOUR GUIDE TO LOCAL FARMING NEWS & MORE

2020...A Year of Challenges

Here we are, the end of August.

The days are getting shorter, small grain harvesting is going on, corn is tasseled and crops in general are looking good. We have done a 180 in terms of yield and quality from 2019 and it comes at a critical time for everyone. As I write this, we are finishing up small grains harvest and I would expect by the end of September, someone, somewhere, will be bringing in corn or beans for new crop delivery.

It is hard to update anyone about the co-op without some correspondence on COVID-19.

I doubt many of us had even heard the word prior to 8 months ago. It has had a profound effect on everyone and some of our co-op business units have been affected more than others with the loss of revenues. The most challenging areas have been in retail; the c-stores, hospitality and restaurants. When the governor enacted the Safer at Home order, we saw traffic declines of 40%+ on highways and internal walk-in traffic in the c-stores. **In early April, at the middle of the "Safer at Home" directive, we had daily sales revenue declines of 25%+.** Since that period, as the restrictions have dropped, we have rebounded and, in certain geographical areas, seen some increases. Traffic counts have been down overall as tourism in general has declined. The convenience stores overall; we have updated several with new pumps, islands and tanks to meet the 2020 required guidelines to operate. The stores continue to provide consistent revenue and allow us to promote our dairy, beef and other agricultural markets as much as possible.

Our Ag business units are doing better than expected considering the pricing challenges in milk and grains. **Volumes in agronomy are up in the ten to fifteen percent plus range** as the spring weather assisted us with some timely rains and good soil conditions that allowed planting to be done on a timely basis across the trade area. Some of our preplanning activity on maintenance of certain facilities has paid off as, for the most part, our spring ran efficient and fast. The new equipment added in several areas, along with some staffing changes, allowed us to increase business and speed and develop and realize the synergies we had budgeted.

The feed division has seen some moderate gains in tonnage as we are making adjustments integrating our two former feed companies into one. **Using the strengths of our feed assets** and the development of some merger synergies to better facilitate speed and quality of service, along with the addition of some new people talent, has helped increase profitability in feed. For those of you in the Dorchester and Greenwood areas, we have torn down these feed facilities in an effort to reduce some expenses as they were no longer operating assets. This past winter, the board approved the addition of two new large feed distribution/bulk trucks to help us be more efficient and rotate out some older equipment that was not returning an adequate return on investment because of age and size. These units will be delivered sometime this fall. The Owen mill continues to be the centerpiece of the feed division and we are working towards using this asset to increase our efficiency. We have completed

Our Ag business units are doing better than expected considering the pricing challenges in milk and grains.

the rail connection to the Owen mill and are now able to receive rail cars of feed. This will allow us more competitive pricing in certain commodities.

The grain division has been challenged as the crop brought in the fall of 2019 was not the best quality overall with yields running 25% lower than average.

This along with the China tariff issues, COVID and USDA crop reports, have contributed to some depressed markets on grain pricing. Our intermodal shipping business, where we ship containers of grain to mostly the Asian Pacific rim, has shipped less volume as we have been challenged to find grain grades that meet criteria for foreign export. This is important since this is our best basis market for our grain customers as other local markets accessed by truck are not as competitive on average. We have been making operational changes to merge the two grain systems into one, updating equipment in grain systems in all areas to improve unloading processes, while also trying to do as much preventative maintenance to limit breakdowns in season. **This season we expect to handle 12+ million bushels of grain.** The challenge will be what can we do to keep facilitating customers as we

& Success

by Bruce Mlsna, CEO



near capacity at locations.

Our energy business, which is bulk oil, refined fuels and propane is having a successful year. We have or are in the process of consolidating multiple routes and are confident we can drive out 15% plus of operating expenses going into 2021. We purchased some new delivery trucks, hired some new talent and are ready for the fall and winter business. We are leveraging our energy business model to improve our pricing and, along with greater synergies in 2021, we look for substantial improvement.

This past winter, the board and senior management spent considerable time discussing the co-op's operations, along with forecasting futuristic models and scenarios in each major division. **In each respective division, what I describe as "hard thought" was given as to what needs to be done at present to maintain our competitive posture and plan out for the next five to ten years.** Out of these discussions, we developed

some strategies and concepts to what we feel is imperative for long-term survival in our business. These plans are "fluid", meaning they can and will change as no one can accurately predict the future, but we do have a "plan" and are focusing on some of the high priority items here in 2020.

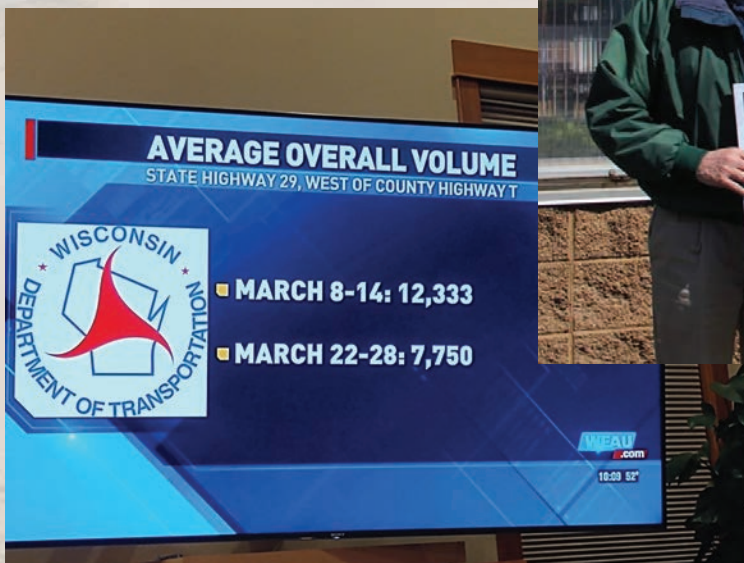
Financially speaking, the fiscal year ends in August and preliminary financials indicate a profitable year. The board this past year has also retired a significant amount of stock and approved stock retirements for stock holders of the former Heartland Co-op age 70 requests, which will be coming out soon. There has been some change in specific policies and we are working to unify all the differences in the former co-ops under one umbrella by September 1st so to provide uniformity at all locations. I think most people can

identify with the statement:

because of the experience you get. From a personal perspective relating to this merger, I can qualify that as an accurate assessment. We will improve all over as we learn a great deal about what worked and didn't work in 2020, and that is our goal.

"we are smarter today than we were yesterday"

As we go into fall, I wish everyone a safe, prosperous harvest and good health. Our staff will work hard to provide you with products and serves to improve your business. Thanks again. ■



HWY 29 Traffic counts during Safer at Home enactment.



Donation to the Athens FFA program for greenhouse updates.

Board Member Spotlight:

Jeremy Goessl

by Lisa Hardy
Marketing & Graphics Coordinator



Jeremy, and his wife, Krista, run a 150 head dairy farm with his parents and sometimes even get the help from their three kids (9, 7 and 4 years old). The Goessl family farm between Owen and Dorchester, in Clark County started in 1884 and is on its 5th generation. **Jeremy was elected to the former Heartland board in 2018 and is part of the new 10 person board for River Country Co-op.** Amongst milking their herd twice a day without any extra hired hands, they also farm 400 acres of corn and alfalfa which is mainly used to feed their cows. This helps with minimal purchasing of dry corn or hay, depending on the crop season.

Jeremy worked in artificial insemination for 11 years prior to coming back to work on the family farm. With this experience, he and his wife are able to do the insemination and care for cows right on site with minimal outside calls. **They built a new free-stall barn in 2013 for their herd with the main focus on "cow comfort and health".** Jeremy emphasized that, although they want to get the most out of each animal, they don't push them too hard, which is why they run a slightly older herd compared to others.

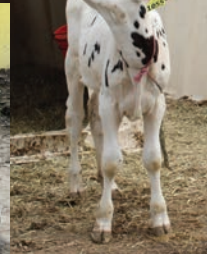


"Ag is very much a people business as much as a crop and animal business. It's where a handshake actually still means something."

Jeremy made a great point, that the area in which he resides has a wonderful infrastructure for supporting the ag business. The younger farmers are stepping up and making good choices to keep their family farms alive. There are local businesses that are available to visit to get supplies or something fixed whereas, if you travel 30-40 miles in either direction from Curtiss, you might have to travel quite a ways to get that same luxury. **This is another reason he believes building the new mill in Owen was such a great idea; it's located in the heart of a wonderful ag community that will utilize it.**

While Jeremy doesn't use robots to milk his herd, he does like the idea of progressive medicine or techniques. "Not all new science is bad, sometimes it just makes things easier", he says, he has enjoyed having Angela Blume, a River Country Nutritionist, out at his farm doing calf trials. She's been very

helpful and he highly recommends having her stop out to your farm if you're interested in learning new techniques or feeding strategies. He believes that in order for River Country agronomists to be successful in the field, they need to ensure the farmer is successful by using all the technology available to them. **Jeremy is a strong supporter of the newly merged co-op.** He sees the changes made and wants the co-op to be there for his kids. He is excited to be part of this board and looks forward to the future potential. Again, it all comes back to working together and that trusted handshake. ■



10 minutes after I left the Goessl farm, this red Holstein baby calf was born!



Financial Update

by Marty Goss, CFO
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I am writing this article on August 10th, which means the end of our fiscal year is approaching quickly. The first fiscal year of the merger will end on August 31st. The merger of the financial data by the accounting team was very successful; we continue to produce accurate and timely monthly financial statements for the management team and board members. We will be ready for our annual audit which will occur the first week of October. Financial results will be available at the annual co-op meeting that will take place in early December.

River Country Co-op has a great deal of financial information that is available to you, the patrons, both electronically and through our website.

- Electronic Statements – you can receive your monthly statement via e-mail. Just send a request to theresa@rivercountrycoop.com and she will set you up.
- eAgVantage – this on-line program has many features for an account holder including:
 - Review your statements and invoices in full detail
 - Review your patronage balance
 - Retrieve copies of 1099's
 - Retrieve a year-end report
 - Review your grain activity
 - Make payments via ACH

Since the merger, we have been sending out 4,000 statements on average per month. We currently serve approximately 25,000 customers in our database. All this work is done behind the scenes with our office staff at Chippewa Falls and Owen, along with some other smaller staffs at other locations. Monthly we improve in all areas and as we look to 2021, we look to more synergies and can develop.

If you would like to sign up for eAgVantage please send me an email at cfo@rivercountrycoop.com. I will send you instruction on how to sign up and how to use the various features listed above.

If you have any questions or concerns you can call me anytime at 715-723-2828. ■



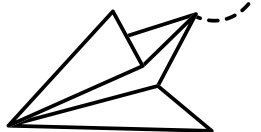
Owen office



Chippewa Falls office

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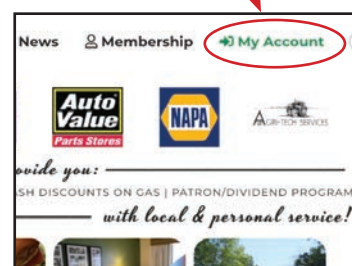
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Looking Forward/ Looking Back

by Steve Hanvold, VP of Agronomy | steveh@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-492-0875

As we analyze the first full growing season of operation of the new River Country Co-op, there are many great things that happened. While that doesn't mean there's not room for improvement, there were certainly things that went well – way beyond expectations. The crew melded together nicely and operations ran hard, but, quite efficiently. All of this happened in what nobody would call a normal year.

As we look at the crops in our trade area, as of this writing, they look wonderful. According to the DATCP growing degree accumulation as of the end of July, we've accumulated more units than last year. Eau Claire had accumulated 1,585 already in 2020 compared to 1,407 in 2019. The "normal" being 1,517. Wausau had accumulated 1,205 in 2020 compared to 1,125 in 2019. The "normal" being 1,376. **So, if the crops look better than last year, they should.** If things proceed normally from here to the end of the year, we should have a good harvest.



Barley Hopps being combined in August.



Geopolitical concerns are, once again, shaping markets for the coming year, with the Chinese situation being one of the most unpredictable things going forward. For example, India needs lots of urea – yet, they are

Any of the world's diseases, political tensions or market conditions seem to affect all of the rest of the world as well.

denying the Chinese a chance to sell to them because of political tensions. So, that will put pressure on the rest of the world supply. Likewise, the Moroccan's have been hit with a lawsuit about "dumping" phosphates into the American market. So, depending on who wins that dispute it will have "an" effect on our markets. I wouldn't anticipate it would be a huge thing either way. But it will affect us – as will the continuing Coronavirus pandemic. Any of the world's diseases, political tensions or market conditions seem to affect all of the rest of the world as well.

As we continue to look forward, we'll keep doing what we've been doing. **We're going to continue to upgrade equipment and facilities as earnings allow.** Your board and management have been very diligent about addressing issues and opportunities. I think we'll all be pleased with the changes going forward.

As we move into fall, we are assessing what we can do to improve operations. We plan to have an airflow applicator available in our eastern area for 2021. This is part of our precision agronomy application that we feel will benefit you in 2021. We want you to try it out!



We also are leveraging our size to improve our pricing. Our agronomy department will move over 50,000 tons of fertilizer this year. As we now are through our 1st spring, we have a better handle on what to expect and have some ideas to implement to improve.

Our agronomy department will move over 50,000 tons of fertilizer this year.

As we look into 2021 (isn't that hard to believe – that it's going to be 2021?), I would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone for their patronage in 2020 and we look forward to working with you all again. ■



Boone loading fertilizer in Bloomer.



Fall Thoughts

by Brad Krause, Owen Agronomy Manager
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When we think of fall, we tend to think of harvesting our crops, but it is a key time to be thinking ahead to our next cropping season the spring of 2021.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself:

1. Did I plant the right varieties for my soils?

River Country agronomists have the tools with the help of our seed partners Croplan, Legacy, NK, Dekalb and Brevant (previously named Mycogen) to help you choose the seed varieties that will best return a profit to you.

Check out the seed variety plot just north of Withee on County T.

There are 32 corn varieties with maturities of 81-91 days, along with a few silage specific varieties.



Ed Stephen's Farm
N15249 County Road T,
Withee, WI

2. Am I satisfied with my fertilizer and chemical program?

Fall is a good time to evaluate the fertility and chemical programs on your farm.

One management tool still available is a late season corn stalk nitrate test. The feedback from this test will show whether there was an adequate, excessive or insufficient amount of nitrogen supplied this past growing season.

Applying potash on alfalfa fields can help aid with winter survival.

Soil sampling and applying lime in the fall allows you to get a start on next year planting inputs.

Scouting fields this past summer showed that there still is a problem with giant ragweed. Water hemp is starting to become more of a problem in our area. One pass spraying on resistant weeds limits the effectiveness on spray control. Your agronomist can help you come up with a two-pass program that will give you optimal control.



Luke Peterson on our soil sampling machine.



Owen Agronomy Plant

3. Should I plant a cover crop?

Planting a cover crop can aid in weed suppression, reduce soil erosion, and has some soil health benefits.

When choosing a cover crop, try to avoid bin run seed that could potentially introduce new or increase existing weeds on your farm.

Determine how you are going to control/terminate the crop in spring before planting.

Cover crops such as winter rye, triticale, wheat, radishes, and a few varieties of clovers are great cover crops. Determine what you want to accomplish with your cover crop. Our agronomists would be happy to stop out and help pick the right crop to accomplish your goals.

River Country agronomists want to be on your team to answer questions and help you come up with a fall and spring game plan. We are looking forward to working with you, our valued customer, so you achieve the goals you have set for your business operation. ■



Having a Plan

by Bill Buescher, Agronomist
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My name is Bill, and I work out of the Bloomer location. I have worked for River Country Co-op for 5+ years and the last four as an agronomist. As we wrap up another agronomy year, the challenges we face as growers, agronomists, as a company, and as a country, continue to evolve. We are continually faced with an uphill battle to stay relevant in our industry and to stay in business doing what we love to do.

So how do we fight this battle?

First, we need to have a plan going forward each spring season. The plan doesn't need to be followed to the "T", but should be used as a guideline to ensure an opportunity at success. The more detailed plan we have, the less likely we will make a hasty and costly decision. **Take time, sit down with your agronomist and make a detailed plan for each field.** Talk about the challenges that may arise. Prepare the options to avoid and deal with the issue with an educated approach. We only have one attempt to plant and harvest a crop and to be successful at each opportunity we receive.

Second, we can all practice more empathy. As an agronomist and someone in the customer service business, "the ability to understand and share the feelings of another" is crucial in the success of our relationship with the growers. We should not only listen to what the grower is telling us, but understand how important what they are saying to us is to them. We all want to be part of the solution. So if we become a crucial partner in their farming operation, we must embrace the art of empathy.

Lastly, we must display integrity.

We must do what we say we are going to do, when we are going to do it. Remember even if we do everything right, mother nature still plays a vital role in complete weed control. If we receive too little rain, the chemical may not become activated. If we receive too much rain, like in certain areas the past few years, the chemical can be broken down too quickly and we lose the residual effect. **Resistant weeds are slowly progressing northward, however, they are not everywhere.** Roundup and other chemicals still effectively kill weeds if the label is followed correctly. The recommendation for most weed height is 1"-4". This is crucial for great weed control. Communication is also critical when it comes to weed control. Let us know when the crop is planted to assure timely spray application. Let's work together to maximize our crops potential!

I heard a quote once that said, "To know and not to do, is to not to know". Have a safe harvest! ■

The more detailed plan we have, the less likely we will make a hasty and costly decision.



Bill B. standing in a producers field with over hip high soybeans!



A truck full of green beans waiting to head to Lakeside Foods in New Richmond for processing.



A green bean harvester in a field West of Chetek.



Agronomic Notes from the East

by Luke Peterson, Agronomist | lukep@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-897-2807

Hi, my name is Luke Peterson. I've worked at the Dorchester agronomy location for the past three years and interned two summers before while I was attending UW-Stevens Point. From Stevens Point I attained my bachelor's degree in Soil & Land Management with a focus on agronomy. During my time at the co-op, I have spent most of my time as an applicator and have transitioned to more sales and precision ag. In 2017, I attained my certified crop advisor certificate (CCA) for Wisconsin. When not at work, I enjoy hunting and fishing. I also farm a couple of hundred acres with my father, raise beef and hogs, log during the winter months, and tap maple trees in the spring.

With almost a full year since the merger of Heartland Cooperative Services and River Country Co-op, I believe we had a fairly smooth transition and successful season. We are working on some significant changes to buildings and operations here at Dorchester. With the demolition of some older buildings and upgrades to others, we are working to improve our equipment and other capabilities in the agronomy department. It's great to have a larger pool of coworkers to get ideas from and try to solve common struggles with.

Overall, crop conditions in my area are looking excellent. It started out with a fairly early spring and cooler ground temperatures than I would have liked to see for crop planting. However, there weren't very many fields that suffered. I only saw a handful that suffered from cold shock and poor germination. It's not very often most corn fields are 4-5 feet tall around July 4th. We've had a lot of heat and timely rains for key growth stages: grain fill for small grains,

pollination for the corn, and the start of reproductive stages for soybeans. Hopefully we can finish the year as strong as it started and not have to fight mud and snow come fall.

Hopefully we can finish the year as strong as it started

With 2020 progressing as quickly as it has, it is an excellent year to catch up on field maintenance that may have been neglected the past few years. Fall is an excellent time to pull soil samples and consider spreading lime, potash, and DAP. Talk to your agronomist about how variable rate fertilizer and lime could help make your farm more profitable. Another thing to consider this year would be summer seedings following small grains to get a jump start on 2021. Another option would be cover crops; the longer we can keep a living root in the soil the healthier we can keep the soil and also reduce erosion of topsoil, the most valuable part of your farm. **Another very important discussion to have with your agronomist is what worked the best for you this year;** whether that be seed variety, herbicide applications, and fertilizer programs, such as split applying nitrogen.

We are excited about the potential of this merger and we have made major steps in the past 12 months. We look forward to working hard for your business. **Give me a call and I will stop out and show you some new ideas, such as airflow application of dry fertilizer.** Hope everyone has a safe and bountiful harvest! ■





Future Crops

by Nathan Utecht, Agronomist
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Hello everyone, my name is Nathan Utecht. I am a new agronomist for River Country Co-op as well as a seasoned applicator out of the Athens agronomy location. I grew up on my family's crop and dairy farm on the north side of Marathon City. My family started working with Athens Co-op many years ago and has continued to support the co-op throughout all of the changes and mergers over the years. It was an easy decision for me to make to start working for the co-op as an applicator in 2017. I have enjoyed working with the crew and customers at the Athens location over the past four years.

This May, I graduated from the University of Wisconsin - River Falls with a BS in Dairy Science and Animal Science. I minored in Crop Science and Ag Business as well. While at UWRF, I was very active in several clubs including Dairy Club, Block & Bridle and Crops and Soils. I have always enjoyed farming and learning about the new innovative technologies in the agricultural industry. **The last few years, we have been doing corn plots on our farm.** It is interesting to see how the different hybrids do year-to-year. **We also do other trials on the farm such as fungicides on beans at varying rates and various fertilizer rates on the corn.** I am hoping to learn even more insights on how to improve the crops, not only on my family farm, but on my future customers' farms as well. Following the crop from seed, throughout the growing season, through harvest, and even as far as into the animal is what I am passionate about. The whole cycle of the crop is important and you can learn so much from each stage.

Whether it is to make better feed for your animals, or a better grain harvest, learning never stops in this industry.

Being a custom applicator and striving to do the best job on their farms that I can has been a highlight of working here the past four years. I look forward to taking it a step further with sharing what I have already learned and continue to learn with future growers as an agronomist. **We are only as successful as our growers are**

The whole cycle of the crop is important and you can learn so much from each stage.

and it is my objective to help them reach their goals for their businesses. I can't wait to get out to some of your farms very soon and start assisting in the planning process for next season. ■



Aerial picture of Athens feed, grain, hardware and agronomy center



Ashley Wilson and Mike Neuman working at Athens Agronomy



Jim Bollech filling fertilizer in the Terragator



Feed Update

by Brian Streveler, VP of Feed
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Finally, in the rail business!

The final stage in our Owen office/ feed mill project was finished this past spring. **Our rail expansion that leads to the new mill and adds additional rail storage capacity has been completed and inspected.**

This expansion will allow us to bring feed ingredients in by rail, which will allow us to keep prices competitive and allow us to look at products from other parts of the country that were not possible before. It will also allow us to bring in larger shipments of fertilizer and give us the opportunity to ship grain out on rail in the future. We have also purchased a trackmobile to safely move the cars into position, without damaging cars and our equipment. We have added 3,400 feet of track and have room for additional track to be added in the future.

Our siding is connected directly to the main Canadian National line that comes out of Canada through Duluth, Minnesota, to Chicago, Illinois, and goes all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. Part of the reason we built the new mill in Owen was to be on this rail line, which will be here for the foreseeable future. We are also working with other businesses in the area that have a need to be on rail. We currently work with the propane terminal in Owen and have had many requests from other businesses looking at utilizing our siding.

Feed continues to make improvements in operations. We continue to look for ways to increase capacity and lower operating costs while maintaining quality feed production. With your help, we have improved the efficiency of our delivery trucks. Thank you to everyone that gives us advanced

notice for feed delivery and everyone that give us a two or three day window in which to deliver your feed. This has helped us greatly with keeping our trucks full as they leave the mill.

Sales have increased in our first fiscal year. We

continue to grow our conventional feed business and run the ration for more cows than we did a year ago. Our organic feed sales have doubled this year with a strong focus on that part of the business. Our country feed stores in Antigo, Cornell and Merrill are having a great year, as this is one area where the COVID-19 pandemic has helped our business. More people are staying closer to home and growing or raising more of their food. The demand for some farm and home supplies is so high this year that we can't get some products. Our suppliers are sold out for the year.

Our organic feed sales have doubled this year...

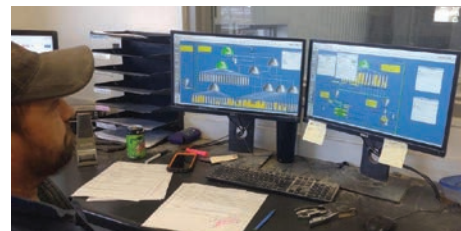
As we come into fall, we have a full line of forage inoculants and preservatives on hand to protect our harvested feeds. **Fall is also usually the best time of year to lock in your feed costs.** River Country Co-op offers many contracts for feed. You can lock in your entire mix or



Rail cars at Owen getting pushed in by our rail car mover "Chuck"



just one ingredient. Contracts can be secured for one month or the whole year, as there are many options. Call me with questions.



Chuck at Owen mill mixing feed through the computer.

It is hard to believe we are almost done with our first fiscal year of the merger. As with anything, there have been some bumps in the road, but we are headed in a good direction.

Locations are working well together and we are all pulling in the same direction! With a continued focus on customer service and a great team, we will continue to see success. Thank you for your business! ■



Sheldon Notes

by Jeff Polivka, Sheldon Division Manager
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When can you recall heat units and rainfall as timely as they have been in 2020? At River Country Sheldon, we are preparing to receive what looks to be a very respectable crop!

Clean up, calibration, greasing legs, drier maintenance, and even a little paint readies our elevator for fall harvest.

Fall post-harvest is the ideal time for soil testing and lime application. The first step in nutrient management is correct soil pH. **Check with Will or Charles and schedule your fall lime application needs.**

Thanks for your patronage and we look forward to serving your future needs. ■

Silage Corn Test Plot Day:

Malisheski Farm

W 15948 Spur Road

Sheldon, Wisconsin

Legacy Seed: Mark Tomaszewski Rep.

Brevant Seed: Eric Weaver Rep.

Friday September 11th, 10:00 – 2:00

Lunch will be provided.

Tours will be on-going. See you September 11th!



Feed Supply Chain

by Regina Raven, Feed Purchasing Manager
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My name is Regina Raven. **I am the Logistics & Supply Chain Manager for the Feed Division of River Country Co-op.** I work out of the new feed manufacturing facility in Owen. I purchase and schedule deliveries of both bagged and bulk ingredients into our feed mills, as well as various other types of products that we sell at our retail outlets. We have a large warehouse space here and use this location as our central storage facility for many of our products. From here we are able to supply our smaller mills and country stores with stock to replenish their inventories. **This allows River Country Co-op to buy more products in larger quantities and take advantage of discounts and truck load prices.**

We make sure to take advantage of buying programs that are offered by our suppliers and watch the market to keep our ingredient cost as low as possible. I work with all three of our feed brands, Purina, Form-A-Feed and Vigertone. I am responsible for maintaining proper quantities for our facilities, to maintain freshness of the feeds and to make sure we don't have extra inventory or inventory that is no longer being used.

We now have our new rail system that comes to our new mill in Owen. It has allowed us to look at products that we have not been able to in the past. Now rail is also an option for some ingredients that we previously could only bring in by truck. This new rail gives us more flexibility and options for where our products can come from. With our large warehouse and rail option, we have started working with some of our suppliers to store their product for distribution. This is an additional source of income to help pay for overhead and allows us to buy at a better price than our competitor on these products.



Wrapping machine for palletized bagged feed, ready for delivery.

My job is to leverage our volume to get the best prices in our feed division. With Brian's help, we work with the markets to bring in products when most beneficial. ■



Both Ends of the Equation

by Toby (Randy) Langhoff, Nutritionist
randyl@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-897-2827

Hi, my name is Randy Langhoff. I am married to my wife, Tammy, for 40 years this October. We have three adult children, one daughter-in-law, and two awesome grandkids. I've been with the cooperative for 40 plus years. In those 40 years, boy have things changed. We have seen it go from can milk to robot milking, and from bag feeds to bulk feeds. With all of the changes we see, it is still amazing how much is the same in how we do business as we still listen to both the cows and the producers. That's enough on this end of the equation.



When I started forty years ago, most cow feed mixes where cob corn, oats, soybean meal and/or oil meal(linseed) and a basic mineral.

The biggest difference was how much protein the farmer wanted in the mix. **Today, we test the forages on your farm, take those results and balance a ration specific to each farmer's needs and production goals.** Now, we don't only adjust protein, but we balance for bypass protein and amino acids. We adjust the amino acids to not only influence pounds of production per cow, but also the amount of fat and protein in the milk. It doesn't seem that long ago when we only got paid for pounds of milk! Times have changed. With the changes in technology and consumer demand, we sell conventional feed along with Organic and NON-GMO feed. We need to balance these rations with the limited ingredients that are available for these customers and still get the desired production.

It's nice to see, from my first day at the old Hamburg mill, to today at River Country Co-op, how much the co-op is still looking at and planning for the future. With all of the options available today, always looking at ways to



purchase, manufacture, and market products for all of our customers' needs and wants. **No matter what end of the equation we are on, we all are currently experiencing some very challenging times.** In these times, we are still here with you and for you, and we are looking forward to the day that we can look back at these times in our rear-view mirror. ■



Dairyman Ken Tesch of Dorchester showing his parlor

RiverCountry
CO-OP

Organic & Non-GMO
FEEDS
All Under One Roof



NON-GMO FEED

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Cold Weather & Calves

by Angela Blume, LPS, Purina Animal Nutritionist
abrandner@landolakes.com | 715-314-0901

In case you are seeing my face for the first time, let me introduce myself. I am Angela Blume, LPS with Purina Animal Nutrition. I have been working as an LPS for the past 2 ½ years. I work with all types of large and small ruminants, calves, cows, sheep, and goats.

With fall on its way and leaves beginning to change colors, this also means cooler weather is on its way. When it is cooler outside, calves need more nutrients to maintain growth. The main source of nutrients for a young (<6 weeks) calf is from the milk or milk replacer. If the energy for that calf to stay warm and survive in its environment exceeds what we are giving them, then that calf will be at risk for diseases and possible death.

When it is cooler outside, calves need more nutrients to maintain growth.

Here are a few things we should consider when entering cold weather:

1. Keep milk feeding temperatures consistent (102° to 108°)
2. Feed enough volume for weather energy demands
3. Keep feeding intervals as equal as possible (12-14 hrs)
4. Offer free choice water to allow for increased starter intake

Quality Forage

Every successful dairy, whether it be cows, sheep, or goats has one thing in common, Quality Forage. Here are a few helpful tips for producing quality forages.

1. Work with your nutritionist or a local forage quality expert to develop a forage quality plan associated with forage production, harvesting, and storage.
2. Increasing pack density of forages by 3 lbs/cubic foot can reduce dry matter loss by 2.5%.
3. Dropping the pH quickly preserves nutrients and reduces dry matter loss. No matter what type of storage structure, the goal is the same, to drop the pH and do it as quickly as possible.
4. Seal effectively, meaning not only cover your feed but make sure there isn't any opportunity for added air to reach the feed. In a bunker, put enough weight evenly over the plastic and in a bag to make sure to seal the ends effectively.
5. Monitoring results, when used properly, acids and inoculants can be very cost effective. Preservatives can have huge returns, not only in production, but in reduced purchased feed costs, better conception rates, and increased health. Make sure you are really seeing what these added products are doing for you.



Please take a look at your calf feeding program as the cooler fall weather is on its way. We can help ensure your calf program doesn't have any issues when transitioning into the cooler weather. We do offer a wide variety of Land O' Lakes milk replacer and can help find which product best suits your farm. Your calves are the future of your operation. I will do free CMF trials to show you how to improve your calf growth program. We want them to be the best they can be for your success. ■



Owen feed mill



Marathon Feed & Grain

by Todd Heise, GM of Marathon Feed & Grain
todcrishei@aol.com | 715-581-8889

We have had a very busy spring and summer. Sales have been good and our volumes, fertilizer and feed are up 5-15%. Year end sales look to be near 15 million this year as we near the fiscal year end.

Many have been asking: What is going on around here with the large equipment and dirt moving? We are expanding our offices to the south, with additional office space and breakroom for our employees. We are short on administration space as we have grown in size since we built the original facility.

This spring we added an additional 63' x 196' warehouse. The warehouse was built on our existing grain bunker slab. There is an 8' wide concrete path that connects our two warehouses. The building is complete with Energy Savings sections of LED motion detection lighting.

We are also gearing up for harvest. The early crops will start coming in



Front of Marathon Feed & Grain facility.



Board members touring facilities in July.

soon, and corn and beans will not be far behind. We will be offering our fall liming services along with soil testing.

We have some new faces in the office and in our trucks. Be sure to

introduce yourselves to them and welcome them to our MFG family and your farms.

As always, if there are any questions or concerns, please give us a call.

Wishing everyone a safe and plentiful harvest. ■



Marathon
Feed and Grain



Building of a liquid fertilizer and chemical warehouse and distribution center next to Marathon Feed & Grain operation.



Grain Update

by Paul Kerber, VP of Grain
paulk@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-797-8875

As I drive the countryside between our facilities, it is apparent that most of our crops in our area are looking very good.

It is a nice change of pace from last year to see the crops planted in a timely fashion, generally good rainfall and strong heat units. We are excited to see a crop that will be mature early and plentiful. The big question is whether or not the yields could be big enough to offset the lower prices.

Much like our area, crops appear to be big across most of the Midwest. **Corn prices reflect what appears to be a big crop on the horizon.** After many challenges with coronavirus shutting down ethanol plants and bean processors being full of soybean oil, our overall use in the United States will be down significantly for the 2019/2020 crop year. Many analysts are projecting that the ethanol use was down nearly 500 million bushels in 2019/2020. **China has been a strong buyer of both corn and soybeans, but the market continues to be focused on the overall production potential of**

The big question is whether or not the yields could be big enough to offset the lower prices.

our crops in the field. This has made it hard for the market to rally much or sustain any rallies we have seen. I wish there was more good news on the markets, but currently the crops look very good and the markets are questioning where we are going to with all the grain.

We are in full preparation mode for handling a big crop this year! We are moving as much corn out as we can to the ethanol and export markets. We cleaned up the grain pile pads in Dorchester in preparation for piling corn for additional space. Many maintenance projects are underway to address equipment that we suspect could cause problems during harvest in order to provide the best service we can.

I hired two new grain originators and operations personnel recently. Nathan and Jacob are well versed on our grain programs and will come to your farm and visit with you on your grain pricing. Give them a call!

Please feel free to contact us with questions regarding grain quality or future markets.

Please feel free to contact us with questions regarding plugged bins or grain quality. We have many people with a lot of experience that can give guidance when in a difficult position. Confined spaces are hazardous and everyone should follow safe entry procedures if bin entry needs to occur. ■



Need grain trucking?
Call one of our grain plants today.

Mark Blaha from Bloomer combining his small grain, August 2020.



New Grain Originators

by Nathan LeMay, Grain Originator
nathanl@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-214-5025

Hi, I'm the "kinda-new-guy" here at River Country Co-op. **I am excited to have returned as a full time Grain Originator at the Bloomer Agri-Tech location after completing an internship at the same location in 2018.** I grew up in Chippewa Falls with five siblings and devoted parents who homeschooled me through my freshman year of high school. In 2013, I began my sophomore year of high school at Chi-Hi where I was a member of FFA, and enjoyed doing odd jobs throughout the agricultural community while also managing a restaurant in Eau Claire. **After visiting a handful of college institutions, I decided to pursue a Bachelors Degree in Agricultural Business and Minor in Agricultural Engineering Technologies at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.** During college, I judged livestock, worked in a meat handling facility, poured concrete, built residential and commercial buildings, and managed a residence

hall. The summer following my sophomore year, I had the honor of being hired on by Jeff Polivka at Agri-Tech where I did a little bit of everything, and had a great experience across departments. My final summer before graduating college, I interned for CHS where I was a salesman for their energy department.



My last few months have been busy to say the least. In May I graduated, and shortly-thereafter married my beautiful wife who I met during my first week of college. Ten days after our wedding, I started this



Brokaw grain plant

position at River Country Co-op, and look forward to servicing our members throughout the area. **I will be keeping a close eye on the markets and news to help members make informed decisions on when to sell their grain.** We provide multiple contracting options to match each producer with the right contract for their operation. Feel free to reach out with any questions regarding grain or just to say hi. **I plan on making as many farm visits as I can before harvest rolls around, and would love to schedule a time to see your grain operation and introduce myself.** ■



by Jacob Korzeniewski,
Eastern Grain Regional Manager
jacobk@rivercountrycoop.com
715-255-2339

Hello, my name is Jacob Korzeniewski and I am excited to join River Country Co-op as the Eastern Grain Regional Manager. I will be based out

of the Owen office.

Being new to the area and just having started my job on August 3rd, I am still learning the lay of the land in Wisconsin. In the short few weeks that I have been working, I have been focusing on getting the elevators ready for the 2020 harvest. From the looks of the crops, it appears like we will have a great harvest.

I am looking forward to meeting and connecting with customers once harvest sets in, and I get settled into my job.

Here is a bit about myself. I grew up in western South Dakota and obtained a bachelor's degree in Animal Science and Ag Business from South Dakota State University in 2015. **I started my career in the grain business as the Grain Manager Trainee in Carter, Montana.** My duties were grain procurement and elevator operations. I really enjoyed my time and training there, as it sparked my interest in the grain industry. I then moved back to South Dakota where I worked for Cargill as the Production Supervisor for a thirty-five million bushel terminal elevator. I managed all of the daily operations, inventory management and safety aspects of the facility.

My fiancé, Jessica, and I are excited to make Wisconsin our new home. **We will be getting married mid-November of this year. Jessica will be teaching Agriculture Education and Science, as well as advising FFA at the Gilman School District.** We look forward to exploring the area with our two dogs, enjoying the many fishing spots and meeting members of River Country Co-op. ■



The COVID-19 Effect

by Heather Barrows, VP of Retail-West
heatherb@rivercountrycoop.com | 651-216-6510

2020... Nobody will ever be able to forget, for better or worse. As Covid-19 came into all of our lives, we all had to make adjustments. C-store modifications included temporarily closing our self-service coffee bars, social distancing, sanitation schedules, new hand sanitizer stations, and lots of handwashing. We are maintaining all of these standards still, except people can now get their own coffee. **We emphasize sanitizing, washing your hands, and staying home if you are not healthy.**

Initially during Covid, sales dipped a bit at the stores. The travel stops were the stores most affected; Cadott and Edgar truckstops and the Eau Claire Travel Center. People were just not on the roads like

Interestingly, cigarette, beer, and lottery sales didn't suffer at all!

normal. Our rural stores held their own because people were staying close to home. Our seasonal stores, Holcombe, 12-mile (Holcombe) and New Auburn, have been very busy this summer as many people have found new outdoor hobbies. **Gas prices were a rollercoaster for awhile hitting some record lows but have settled down a bit.** Interestingly, cigarette, beer, and lottery sales didn't suffer at all!

The hospitality industry has been hit the hardest from the

pandemic. During the shutdown, banquet gatherings were nonexistent and people were not staying in hotels. During the month of April, the hotel averaged 2 rooms a night. Thankfully after the "stay at home" was lifted, we saw a steady increase in business bringing us currently to a 60% occupancy on average, still down from where we should be. Choice Hotels has implemented a commitment to clean program so all rooms are getting sanitized very thoroughly and breakfast now comes in a doggy bag for guests rather than our self-serve continental breakfast.

Our commitment to our patrons is to keep adjusting and make our stores, restaurant, meeting spaces, and hotel a safe, healthy space for everyone to visit. ■



29 Pines Restaurant & Lounge was closed March 18th due to COVID-19 and reopened for dine-in or takeout on May 18th.



Eau Claire Travel Center off of Hwy 29



Self serve machines in c stores had to be closed during initial pandemic mandates.



Truckstop at Cadott



Finishing Touches

by Brad Podevels, VP of Retail-East
bradp@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-897-2822

The transformation is now complete at our two Holcombe c-stores. 12-Mile and Lake Holcombe c-stores received a new look inside their stores last winter, and now the outside has been completed as well. **New pumps, tanks and containments were installed in the spring, along with a fresh layer of blacktop to complete the project.** Our goal has always been to give customers easy access to our filling stations and a great shopping experience inside our stores.

As we all know, this year has been unique to say the least. Our managers and staff continually

clean and disinfect to make the River Country c-stores an enjoyable and safe place to visit.

The NAPA stores have seen sales increase, which during the pandemic people are increasing maintenance on vehicles. The street construction around Owen has made getting to the store a challenge. We are told that will be done in September.

If you haven't signed up for our River Country Rewards, you can do so at any of our c-stores. Receive 3¢ off per gallon on gas or diesel everyday along with point specials inside

the stores. Traveling from Merrill to Prairie Farm, we have 21 locations to serve you. Our stores are profitable and a financial contributor to the net savings.

You are able to charge at any of our stores on co-op credit with prior credit approval. Remember to turn in any receipts to the office of purchases at stores by October to receive credit for patronage. All your purchases can earn patronage dividends. Thanks for your business! ■



Updates on pumps and signage at Sheldon c-store.

Updates on pumps, tanks, islands and blacktop at Lake Holcombe and 12-mile (Holcombe) c-stores.



New look inside the Lake Holcombe c-store.





Athens C-Store Updates

by Kelly Albrecht, Athens C-store Manager
athenscstore@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-257-7587

Hi, my name is Kelly Albrecht. I grew up in Athens on a small dairy farm. I have two children along with seven energetic grandchildren. The co-op was always a big part of our life. I started working at the Athens c-store in 2005. In 2013, I took on the role of store manager replacing my mom (Betty Auner) who was the manager. Betty has worked at the c-store since it opened in 1995. We have a talented, trustworthy team working here, including Kathy Williams, our deli manager.

2020 has been an interesting year. The out-of-stock list is still long. **In late spring, we updated our containment units underground. It was a very costly but necessary update.** With the merger came a new computerized inventory and pricing system for our c-stores which has made our inventory and pricing very precise. We have an accurate handle on prices and have become more aware of product shrinkage and product waste. We are using our sales of dairy and beef products to help promote our ag business. Sales continue to grow and we look forward to 2021. Sadly, the Athens Fair was also canceled. We in Athens will make the 2021 Athens Fair a year to remember. **Don't forget to stop in and try the Cedar Crest hand-dipped ice cream.** If you have any questions concerning our store, please call me. ■



Greenwood C-Store Updates

by Nicole Arthur, Greenwood C-store Manager
greenwoodcstore@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-267-6105

My name is Nicole and I am the manager of the Greenwood location. I live in the area with my husband and two kids. I am glad to be part of the River Country Co-op c-store chain. Here at Greenwood, we do a little bit of everything as we have a full convenience store of items and 30% of our store has hardware items for sale. We have a full deli and sub shop and we are also a feed warehouse where we carry a limited number of items for our feed customers.

This past year has been busy, as we had our own River Country construction crew redo our exterior to a more modern store look that is consistent with our branding. This winter we are going to re-arrange our shelving and spacing inside our store and re-fresh our products with

some new items and change up our look to a more modern store. We are in the process of tearing down the old feed mill across the street, and have already moved that inventory to our store so you will not notice many changes from the feed perspective. I encourage you to use your River Rewards card at our store to save money on gas purchases. The points you earn can be used to purchase other instore items. As part of River Country Co-op, your business here will earn you patronage so, if you do not charge your business, turn in your cash receipts in September for credit of these sales to me.

We are happy to sell our farm products, such as milk and meat. Our dairy farmers are an important part of our business. Stay safe and have a great fall. ■



Merrill Country Store

by Kyle Christiansen, Merrill Country Store Manager
kylec@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-536-2491



What a year 2020 has been! **With everything going on, I would have to say this is the busiest year I have ever seen.** With more people gardening and raising their own meat or just doing more around the house, business has been good. We are more than half way through the year and we all know what that means; fall harvest, cool temperatures, hunting and soon the holidays.

The Merrill Country Store has everything you need for your canning and garden harvest needs. **If you are doing any home meat processing or after you get that deer, stop in and look at our selection of meat grinders, sausage stuffers and casings, as well as vacuum sealers and bags.** As the days and nights get colder and you fire up that pellet stove, make sure you have plenty of Marth Hard or Soft wood pellets on hand to keep warm. We have a good supply of heating pellets in stock! Some of us might not want to think about it, but Christmas is right around the corner. Check out all the Ertl, Breyer and Schleich toys and gift ideas the Merrill Country Store has to offer.



We are in the process of updating our store to a more modern look inside and outside. This will be a fall and winter project. We are looking at changing out some products to improve our inventory selection. If you need something, call me to ask for availability. ■





Making Delivery Efficiencies a Reality

by David Hartley, VP of Energy | davidh@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-492-0987

One of the main items we committed to with the recent merger was to gain efficiencies in the Energy Department.

I am pleased to report to you, we are well on our way to accomplishing that commitment. In March, we started with the refined fuel delivery territories. By restructuring the routes, we were able to go from 8 delivery trucks down to 6, while still offering the level of service you require. During that restructuring of the routes, we incorporated tank monitors on some of your tanks, giving us the ability to better plan the delivery routes. We are able to deliver to the tanks that need fuel and wait on the tanks that don't, gaining major efficiencies.

Also during March, we restructured our lubricant delivery routes as well.

We added a semi to the delivery fleet (pictured below) to increase our delivery capacity of bulk and packaged oil, eliminating costly trips. We are in the process of remodeling the storage facility and consolidating products to control costs. With the remodeling, we are able to discontinue renting a facility, again saving time and money for your cooperative.

The next step was restructuring the propane routes which we did in June.

Because of the density of deliveries, we were able to decrease the miles driven and increase the number of deliveries per truck. We were also able to go from 15 delivery routes down to 12 routes, again gaining major efficiencies.

The final step in our process was fully utilizing the Edge Routing Software.

The Edge program assists the drivers with planning deliveries as well as generating delivery tickets. As you can see, we have taken our commitment to you very seriously. As we work through the changes, we

will continue to strive to deliver the best possible service for you. Thank you for your past business and we look forward to serving you in the future. ■



Jim Gawenda
Energy Specialist
715-255-7212



John Holdsworth
Energy Specialist
715-897-2006



Fuel Transport trailer dropping fuel at one of our stores.



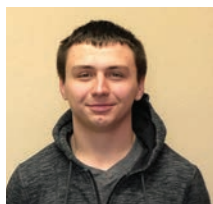
Bulk lube oil and package transport semi

2020 Scholarship Recipients



Wyatt Artac

Graduated: Greenwood High School
Future Education: CVTC
Intended Degree: Diesel Mechanic
Hobbies/Activities: Hunting, fishing & anything outdoors



Ian Riehle

Graduated: Edgar High School
Future Education: Fox Valley Tech
Intended Degree: Aviation
Hobbies/Activities: Spending time with friends



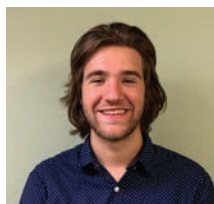
Carley Jo Ciolkosz

Graduated: Thorp High School
Future Education: UW River Falls
Intended Degree: Dairy Science
Hobbies/Activities: Working on a 200 cow dairy 4th generation farm



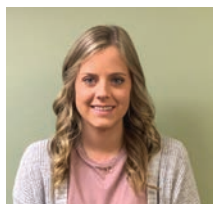
Shantelle Ruf

Graduated: Bloomer High School
Future Education: Winona
Intended Degree: Nursing
Hobbies/Activities: Volleyball, softball, hiking & boating



Alexander Hager

Graduated: Fall Creek High School
Future Education: Vermillion
Intended Degree: Environmental Ed.
Hobbies/Activities: Camping, hiking & running



Emma Seibel

Graduated: Bloomer High School
Future Education: Winona
Intended Degree: Family Social Work
Hobbies/Activities: Basketball, volleyball & anything outside



Claire Henneman

Graduated: Bloomer High School
Future Education: UW Stout
Intended Degree: Hotel/Restaurant/Tourism Management
Hobbies/Activities: Crafting & traveling



Abby Tomandl

Graduated: Medford High School
Future Education: UW River Falls
Intended Degree: Ag Studies
Hobbies/Activities: Teaching dance & FFA showing her beef cattle



Vanessa Jenneman

Graduated: Bloomer High School
Future Education: UW Oshkosh
Intended Degree: Health, Exercise & Sport Science
Hobbies/Activities: Track & Field



Nadia Van Doorn

Graduated: Flambeau High School
Future Education: UW River Falls
Intended Degree: Ag Studies
Hobbies/Activities: Golfing, & participating in National Honor Society



Morgan Jensen

Graduated: Colfax High School
Future Education: UW Eau Claire
Intended Degree: Elementary Ed.
Hobbies/Activities: Track & Field



Abigail Van Rixel

Graduated: Athens High School
Future Education: Concordia University
Intended Degree: Early Childhood Ed.
Hobbies/Activities: Running, quilting & spending time outdoors



Courtney Murkowski

Graduated: Athens High School
Future Education: UW Stevens Point
Intended Degree: Clinical Lab Science
Hobbies/Activities: Volleyball & raising her beef cattle



Kaitlyn Webster

Graduated: Gilman High School
Future Education: UW River Falls
Intended Degree: Ag Ed./Animal Science
Hobbies/Activities: Softball, archery & farming



1080 West River Street
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

Contact us...

12 Mile CENEX
(715) 532-9654

Abbotsford NAPA
(715) 223-6371

Agri-Tech/Bloomer Grain
(715) 568-2934

Antigo Country Store
(715) 623-3516

Athens Agronomy
(715) 257-7676

Athens CENEX
(715) 257-7587

Athens Feed Mill
(715) 257-7591

Bloomer CENEX
(715) 568-2343

**Bloomer CENEX Shop/
Auto Value Parts Store**
(715) 568-2170/
(715) 568-2191

Boyd CENEX
(715) 667-3595

Boyd Feed Mill
(715) 667-3245

Brokaw Grain
(715) 870-2455

Cadott CENEX Truckstop
(715) 289-3953

Chippewa Falls CENEX
(715) 723-7005

Chippewa Falls Main Office
(715) 723-2828

Cornell Country Store
(715) 239-3173

Dorchester Agronomy
(715) 654-5401

Dorchester CENEX
(715) 654-5559

Dorchester Grain
(715) 654-6065

Eau Claire Ferry St. CENEX
(715) 832-0045

Eau Claire Third St. CENEX
(715) 835-2003

**Eau Claire Travel Center
- 29 Pines Restaurant & Bar**
(715) 874-2929
- CENEX Store
(715) 874-0290
**- Sleep Inn & Suites
Conference Center**
(715) 874-2900

Edgar CENEX
(715) 352-2414

Gilman CENEX
(715) 447-5746

Greenwood CENEX
(715) 267-6105

Jim Falls CENEX
(715) 382-4554

Lake Holcombe CENEX
(715) 595-4112

Marathon City NAPA
(715) 443-3460

Marathon Feed & Grain
(715) 443-2424

Merrill CENEX
(715) 536-5600

Merrill Country Store
(715) 536-2491

New Auburn CENEX
(715) 967-2171

Owen Agronomy
(715) 229-4621

Owen Feed Mill
(715) 229-4613

Owen Main Office
(715) 654-5134

Owen NAPA
(715) 229-2181

Prairie Farm CENEX
(715) 455-1490

Sheldon Agronomy
(715) 452-5242

Sheldon CENEX/Shop
(715) 452-5111/
(715) 452-5115

Sheldon Feed Mill
(715) 452-5116

Weyerhaeuser CENEX
(715) 353-2612