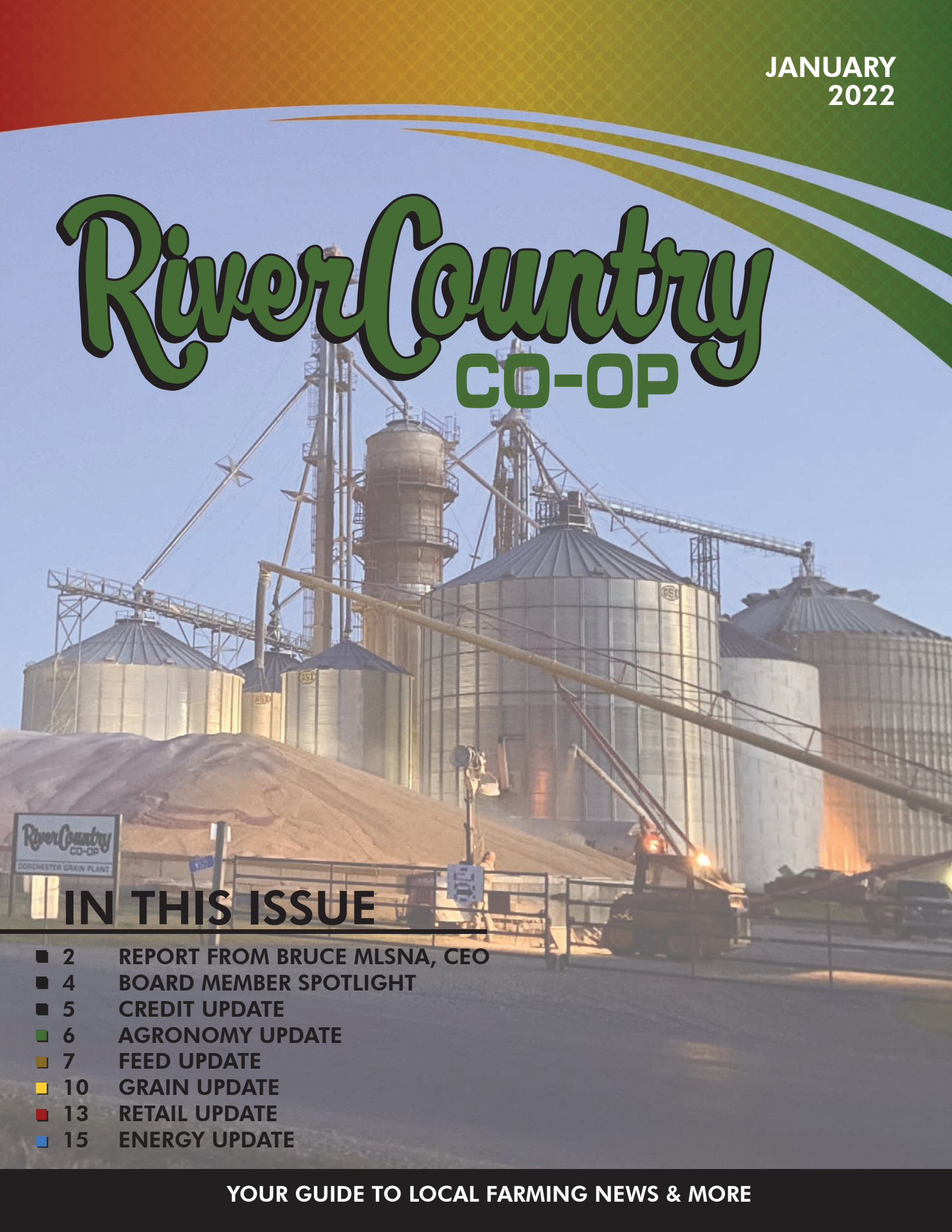


JANUARY
2022

RiverCountry CO-OP



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YOUR GUIDE TO LOCAL FARMING NEWS & MORE

Continual Combined

2022, its finally here... As I write this, we are in the middle of one of these "Polar Vortex" cold snaps so it's a good day for the energy business at your Co-op ☺. **In December, we had our 2nd Annual Meeting** of the merged Co-ops of Heartland and River Country, the first one in person as last year was virtual. Unfortunately, the day we had this meeting, the weather didn't cooperate as the fog was pretty intense and limited attendance to mostly patrons within short driving distances.

Reports were given on the activities for the past two years and focused on the progress made and where your board and management team see the Co-op headed for the future vision. Our audit firm from Clifton Larson Allen presented the financial highlights with sales of almost \$260 million this past year with a bottom line of around 2.5%. Patronage dividends on these earnings will be distributed in February.

The fall grain harvest was tremendous in our market area. Yields and quality were above average and we saw our grain flow intake increase by 20% or more in most grain plants. At some facilities, we took in nearly 200% of storage capacity. **Early estimates put our corn intake volume this fall near 7.5 million bushels and soybeans at 4 million bushels.** We did fill to capacity at all plants and logistically were challenged to keep space for taking in grain near season's end. Some positives, our soybean intermodal shipping market continues to be strong and basis on these markets helps keep our pay process high in the soybean market. Markets overall show some strength in the near future. In December,

we sent out DPAD tax credits in the amount of .40/bushel and we will pay a dividend on all grain purchases. As we stepped back and evaluated our grain processing and look toward the future, we have made a decision to construct another bin in Dorchester this spring and are looking for some economical ways to speed up the unloading process in other facilities.

...we have made a decision to construct another bin in Dorchester this spring

Our other business units, such as the convenience stores, continue to do well. **Sales are up overall and the new Merrill store, which reopened in August, has exceeded projections in revenue.** The bulk fuel and propane divisions are beneficiaries of the cold weather we have been having. Prepay volumes have been slightly ahead of last year as people locked in some gallons for 2022 usage.

Feed volumes continue to increase monthly. The feed manufacturing team in Owen is working to more diligently process higher quality feed and be more efficient. We are upgrading some feed delivery trucks in the next six months, which will improve our delivery schedule and reduce down time. We are utilizing our rail unloading system more frequently, which has allowed us to buy at better prices in certain commodities. Our feed nutrition staff has some new

young talent that started in January and we are excited about their potential and what it can bring to the feed department.

Agronomy has some new staff in several areas. Similar to feed, we have hired some young agronomic employees that will just take some time to gain field experience. We are fortunate to have some older mentors on staff to help guide these new staff members.

Fertilizer prices have seen significant increases, certain chemicals are allocated such as Round-up and others are hard to procure. We are upgrading the application technology, such as row sensors (to keep wheels off the rows) and with our additional precision dry air-flow applicator units added, we will have more of these units available for use in the Dorchester, Athens and Marathon City trade area.

Our goals are simple, but the formulas to make it happen are complex.

I spoke at the recent Annual Meeting of being relevant, proactive and progressive. Our goals are simple, but the formulas to make it happen are complex. While I believe the merger two years ago made us better and stronger, we have an upward trajectory to get where we need to be. We understand the challenges presented in front of us, we have a plan and are working to improvement in all areas.

Thanks for the business. ■

Growth

by Bruce Mlsna, CEO



2021 Annual Meeting – Curtiss, WI

The 33rd Annual Meeting of the stockholders of River Country Co-op was held on December 15th in Curtiss, WI. This is the first in-person Annual Meeting of the former Heartland Cooperative Services and River Country patrons. Due to inclement weather, attendance was smaller than expected. Board President, Randy Mahr, started the meeting and spoke about the Co-op's stock redemption, Bylaw changes and other events of the Co-op this past year. This year marked the first year of the mail-in balloting for directors. Incumbent directors, Jeremy Goessl and Les Danielson, were each re-elected to three-year terms on the board.

Randy also gave out leadership plaques to Tim Hager and Terry Gumz. Tim and Terry both served on the board for many years; Tim with River Country Co-op and Terry with Heartland Cooperative Services. With the board reduction to eight board members, their director positions were eliminated. CEO, Bruce Mlsna, gave a report of the Co-op's business activities, highlights of the past two years and some insight for the next year for the Co-op. ■



River Country Co-op staff serving the lunch buffet.



Todd Hasenbank from Clifton Larson Allen giving the audit report.



Randy Mahr, Board President, presenting a leadership plaque to Terry Gumz for his years of service on both the Heartland Cooperative Services and River Country Co-op boards.



Bruce Mlsna, CEO, presenting highlights of the past two years and future plans.

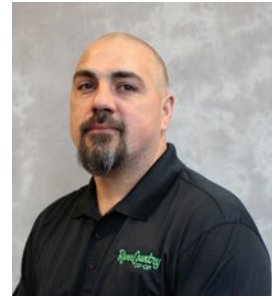


Randy Mahr, Board President, presenting a leadership plaque to Tim Hager for his years of service on River Country Co-op board.



Jeremy Goessl and Les Danielson were each elected to three year terms.

Board Member Spotlight: Doug Geiger



Hello, my name is Doug Geiger. I had served previously on the Heartland Cooperative Services board, and now on the River Country Co-op board as a representative from the East side, living in Dorchester. My wife, Tanya, and I have four children together who all help out on the farm in some capacity. Tanya helps with bookwork and computer entry, our oldest, Brynia, 18, feeds calves, Mabrie, 15, helps on evenings and weekends, Brennan, 13, helps with field work and Maya, 10, is currently training with the calves.

Besides the handful of hired hands and the help from my family, I mainly run our farm, Clark Co-Line Dairy, with my late uncle, Dennis, who recently passed. We milk 550 cows, have 370 heifers, and farm 800 acres of corn, 500 acres of hay, 200 acres of soybeans and 40 acres of oats. All of our crops are mainly used to feed our livestock.

Our dairy cows produce about 4,000 gallons of milk per day, which we have picked up daily and sell to Nasonville Dairy to make cheese from. An interesting and unique tidbit is that I use ice cream cones in the feed mixture for our cows. We have one barn that has all baby calves, from 2 days old up until 3 months

old, and the other two barns contain our full grown herd. Recently, we invested in a new program that tracks activity per cow from a tag in their ear. Some of the detailed reports that I receive right on my phone contain information on individual gallons, heat activity, nutrition and sickness.



I enjoy most all of the typical Midwest activities, especially deer hunting, which is by far my favorite.

I think the biggest and most important assets at River Country Co-op are the employees. If you need answers, there are knowledgeable and qualified employees in every department that can help.

I would say my philosophy as a director is profitability. A co-op must remain profitable while being able to provide products and services at a competitive, yet fair rate. It's also very important to me that River Country Co-op is able to pay back equity to the older generations that started these co-ops.

My vision for the Co-op is to grow when it makes sense. I would like to see River Country Co-op around and still thriving when my kids and grandkids are farming.



I would like to thank you for your continued support of River Country Co-op. We look forward to the years to come! ■





Credit Update

by Brad Lieders, Credit Manager
bradl@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-654-6705

River Country Co-op has been working on doing business with us easier and more convenient for you. This consists of tools for managing your River Country Co-op account and financing your agronomy purchases.

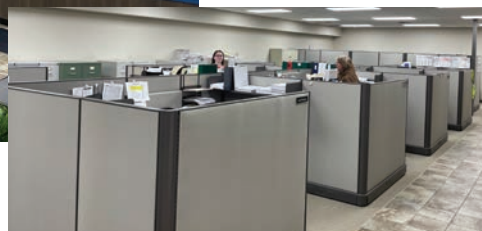
Did you know, you can have your monthly statement emailed to you? Just contact Theresa at 715-438-6617 or theresa@rivercountrycoop.com, or me at 715-654-6705 or bradl@rivercountrycoop.com with the name on your account and your account number. We will set you up and no longer send printed statements. This saves you on mail and your Co-op on postage, paper, and labor costs. It is also better for the environment!

Did you know, you have River County account information literally at your fingertips? **Just go to www.RiverCountryCoop.com and click on "My Account" in the upper right hand portion of the page.** There you will find instructions on how to create your account. Here are some of the convenient tools provided on the website for you:

1. View current or past invoices and month-end statements.
2. Pay your statement or select invoices online through the secure payment program.
3. Order Energy products.
4. See details on all your pre-paid contracts or budget home heating account.
5. Get details on your grain activity including loads, contracts, settlements and deferred payments.
6. Be provided with details on your patronage balance.
7. Easily create a summary level report of your purchases.



Owen Office



This saves you time, postage, and assures that you receive your available feed and agronomy discounts.

How about an easier way to pay for your charges? You can have your River Country monthly statement paid automatically from your bank account on the 15th of each month. This saves you time, postage, and assures that you receive your available feed and agronomy discounts. Energy customers, you can automatically pay on an invoice level to get your available discounts. Call 715-654-5134 or email me to request an ACH form.

River Country Co-op has a number of convenient agronomy finance options with good financing terms. **Interest rates as low as 0% with deferred payments** are available from suppliers like Syngenta/ NK, BASF, Bayer Crop Protection, DEKALB Asgrow, CROPLAN Seed & Signature Crop Protection (WinField United), and FMC for approved accounts on select finance programs. For loans up to \$350,000 you may only need to complete a one-page application.

To determine what agronomy financing option is best for you, go online to www.rivercountrycoop.com/credit. You will find a summary of the available programs, along with details on each program and how to apply. For John Deere Financial and Rabo Agri-Finance, you will even find a link to apply online. Your local River Country Agronomy location also has information on the finance programs.

If you have any questions on your account or finance programs, please call or email me. Thank you for your business and have a great spring! ■



Rabo AgriFinance



JOHN DEERE FINANCIAL



Looking Back Looking Ahead

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

With the growing season of 2021 in the rear-view mirror now, we can look at some lessons learned from it. For the most part, yields were pretty good as were commodity prices. We had some issues with wind a few times as well as moisture – both not enough and too much – at times. But the season overall went pretty well. Hopefully, this continues into 2022.

Commodity prices took a wild ride in 2021 and that will continue into 2022. As we came off the growing season of 2020, inventory worldwide was pretty high. Prices responded by being quite economical in the first part of the year. As volumes of planting and fertilizing ramped up, supplies quickly dwindled and prices shot up dramatically. **As we head into 2022, this has continued with both high prices and questionable supply outlooks.** In addition to the basic supply and demand problems, there's a logistics problem on top of that. There are just not enough drivers nationwide to insure timely delivery of any product. While we are positioned as well as possible, there's a possibility that there could be kinks in the supply chain for everyone. Certainly not just us.

As volumes of planting and fertilizing ramped up, supplies quickly dwindled and prices shot up dramatically.

Crop protection products are affected by the supply crunch as well. **Glyphosate gallons (Roundup) are going to be allocated**

this year. Bayer Crop protection is treating us as well as can be expected. But, there's just a supply issue with raw ingredients coupled with plant operational disruptions because of the hurricane that went through the gulf. While the plant is functional again, their disruption in production has clearly affected overall supply. So, with the variety of new pest problems emerging in the Midwest and the shortage of certain crop protection products, it's in all of our best interests to have a "plan B" for pest control in the event of supply disruption. **Again, I think we're going to be adequately supplied. But, there won't be a lot to spare.**

As has been the case in previous years, we're seeing retirements from our crews. It's no fun to see a valued employee leave, but it's happening everywhere. We are replacing these people with young, hungry talent. So, stay in touch, stop in and let the new folks introduce themselves. We feel confident in their abilities. We'll be bringing in some interns this year. Being exposed to good talent and having them exposed to us is never a bad thing. **We look forward to grooming the future talent of River Country Co-op in this manner as we go forward.**

As always, we're replacing and upgrading equipment. We're always rotating trucks out. **The most notable improvement will be the addition of a second airflow unit on the East side of our region.** The demand for the first one was better than anticipated. This warranted this addition. We look forward to any customer being able to use the benefits of this application method if they wish to.

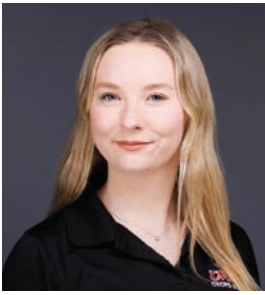
With that, I wish everyone much success, happiness and health heading into 2022. We thank you for your business and look forward to a fantastic year. ■



Athens Fertilizer Plant



Dry Airflow Applicator



Introducing Sarah

by Sarah Anderson, Agronomist
saraha@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-255-7204



My name is Sarah Anderson and I am a new Agronomist at the Athens Agronomy location.

I am originally from Antigo, Wisconsin, and grew up on a small family operated dairy farm that now does only cash cropping. This past summer I was one of the Agronomy interns and decided to come back full time after graduating this previous December from UW-River Falls with my undergraduate degree in Crop and Soil Science.

At UW-River Falls, I was involved in the Crops and Soils Club through holding an officer position in 2020-2021. I presented club and internship posters at the 2021 Students of Agronomy, Soils, and Environmental Sciences Conference in Salt Lake City, and competed in the 2020 and 2022 American Forage and Grassland Council Forage Jeopardy Bowl to help secure the second and third consecutive victories for UW-River Falls. **I can assist in many agronomic areas; crop scouting, farm plans, soil testing to name a few.** Give me a call.

Some interests of mine include hiking, fishing, spending time with family and friends, golfing, and shooting sporting clays. ■



Introducing Raleigh

by Raleigh Frankewicz, Nutrition Specialist in Lactating Cows & Small Calves
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River Country Co-op is excited to welcome Raleigh Frankewicz to the Feed Division sales staff!

Raleigh was raised in Thorp, Wisconsin. **She was an intern here at River Country Co-op during the summer of 2021.** She grew up working at her family's business, Joe's Refrigeration Inc., in Withee, Wisconsin. Raleigh graduated in December of 2021 from the University of Wisconsin - Platteville earning her Bachelor of Science degree in Agribusiness and her Minor in Dairy Science. While working towards her undergraduate degree, she worked as a teaching assistant in the animal science department. She also worked for the athletic department on campus doing video graphics at every home game. Her emphasis will be on calf raising and lactating diets. **Raleigh can offer assistance in those areas and has a great feed team at the Co-op to mentor her as she gains experience. Give her a call for help.**

Besides working with animals, Raleigh enjoys traveling, shooting trap, watching sports, and spending time with family and friends. ■





Time to Book Inoculants

by Brian Streveler, VP of Feed
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Winter is here again. Hopefully everyone's water pipes are flowing and your tractors are starting on these cold mornings! With winter weather, we have many of the same problems in the feed mill as many of you have on the farm. Equipment and vehicles don't want to start in the morning, and our molasses product doesn't flow as well as we'd like.

Thank you to everyone who gives us advance notice when ordering feed. This helps us plan to be efficient and gives us extra time to get you feed timely, when mother nature freezes our equipment and gives us snowy roads to drive on. With everyone working together, we can get everyone the feed they need and keep everyone's cost down.

This year, the feed market has continued to move high into the new year. South American weather has been hot and dry. Also, last year's canola crop was very small. Both of these factors have caused the market to move high with a lot of volatility. **Soybean meal future prices have increased \$100/ton since late October.**

We have also seen firmer basis on all ingredients. We have seen prices increase in many of the mineral products we use as well. Most of them have increased \$20 to \$50 per ton.

The largest increases have been urea. Just like the price for urea, we all use for fertilizer, feed urea prices have increased \$500/ton. Most of these increases are from freight, labor and other inflationary pressures.

Now is also the time to be booking your forage inoculants, preservatives and plastics for the upcoming year. We will be carrying the same products as last year and adding a new line of forage inoculants. Our new products are River Max and River Max Plus. The new line is a high-quality product, at a more competitive price point. Contact your local mill or salesperson to lock in the best prices of the year. This past fall, we added a new bulk feed truck to the fleet. With the additional business we have taken on, we needed to add delivery trucks to keep our service up. Heading into spring, we are working toward making higher quality feed and to improve service times. Our feed department averages 9,000 tons per month so we have a lot of moving parts working together all the time to get this much feed delivered.

We have also hired a new sales person, Raleigh Frankewicz . She started for River Country Co-op in

We will be carrying the same products as last year and adding a new line of forage inoculants. Our new products are River Max and River Max Plus.

January of this year. Raleigh will be doing dairy nutrition and calf feed sales. Please welcome Raleigh to the team!

Thank you for your business! ■





Much Needed Minerals

by Jim Meyer, Livestock Production Specialist
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It's been awhile since some of you have heard from me and I hope everyone had a blessed, healthy and joyful holiday season. I also wish to thank all of you, whether I work with you personally or not, for your business, time and support of Purina products and River Country Co-op. **Well, 2021 is in the books and we continue to see volatility in the commodity, mineral and additive markets (especially fat based products) either due to lack of moisture in South America or supply shortages in general,** from labor issues to ships stuck in harbors unable to unload, among others that seem to never end.

We as a nutrition team here at River Country Co-op are constantly striving to bring you competitive pricing, new products and ideas to give your operation choices to continue on a profitable path. If you have not already done so, please reach out to discuss how we may be of assistance. **As I am writing this, current markets have Class III milk looking good.** The butter market is currently very active, and so far I'm seeing very good components in the dairy herds. As tempting as it may be to help lower cost in a dairy ration by lowering energy based products such as palm fats, etc., you may want to look closely at the value the creameries are putting on butterfat and protein before making too drastic of changes. **Right now, Purina Propel Balance energy nugget is a viable option** that could be looked at to replace certain fat or palm products and reduce cost in your overall lactation mix without sacrificing performance. Energy is a critical factor in early lactation cows and lack of it can lead to numerous health and even breeding issues. I encourage you to

discuss further with me or someone here on the nutrition team.

Now let's talk BEEF! Finished cattle markets are steady and looking to stay strong. When looking at futures and numbers on feed, the western markets saw a few beef herds dispersed this past year, no thanks to the extremely dry year mother nature handed them, which in turn forced some calves to come to market early. **With all of the different events that took place this past year, the feeder cattle market on beef cattle strengthened this fall into early winter** and, looking at futures for late summer, is even stronger at the moment. With that in mind, I would like to remind you of the importance of proper nutrition when it comes to a very critical time in a beef cows calving cycle, which is the third trimester. This is what most spring calvers are rapidly approaching if not in already by the time you read this. **Body condition is very important during this time due** to the fact a cow uses approximately 30% of her energy during the coldest time of the year to support fetal growth and development. A proper diet is very important, but we also do not want cows too heavy at calving time, which I have seen cause plenty of issues. If you have questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to one of us. **We can assist with suggesting the proper ration and mineral supplement, such as Wind & Rain loose mineral or tubs,** which we currently have a booking event on until

the end of January. Another thing to consider with a strong feeder market in the current future is creep feeding your calves at about 3 to 4 months of age until wean. Research shows creep fed calves gain more and wean healthier. Until I get the next opportunity to write, feel free to reach out with any and all questions on calves, beef or dairy. ■



Sheldon Mill

SAVE THE DATE

02.03.22

SLEEP INN & SUITES
EAU CLAIRE, WI

DAIRY PRODUCER CONFERENCE

hosted by

Invest a day of your time with the River Country Co-op's Feed Team. We will share ideas and thoughts that will impact your farm for the rest of 2022!



Lifestyle Animal Nutritionist

by Ashley Dums, Lifestyle Animal Nutritionist
ashleya@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-965-4773

Hello, my name is Ashley Dums. I have worked within the feed department for the Co-op for the past six years and interned two summers prior while I attended UW-River Falls. From River Falls I attained my bachelor's degree in Animal Science with an emphasis in Equine Management. Throughout my time with the co-op, I have spent a majority behind the counter at the old Dorchester feed mill then transitioned over to the new Owen feed mill. Since the Owen mill has been up and running, I have been able to switch roles over to feed sales, working with lifestyle animals such as equine, whitetail deer, cattle, dogs and cats. I spend some time each week working at our country



stores in Merrill and Antigo as well as our various feed mills. When not at work, I enjoy spending time with my husband, Blake, two dogs, and three horses. My hobbies include hunting, fishing, and riding horse. I also help my parents with their whitetail deer farm, give horseback riding lessons, as well as train and show horses.

As we start the new year, looking back at 2021, it has been great to get back to the normal routine. With things like shows being back to full capacities, local and national fairs back to full swing with doing in person clinics as well as a live sale for the market animals, and animal related clubs members gathering together to share their similar hobbies and lifestyles while spreading ideas and success stories. I'm thankful to spend time and share my knowledge with the youth as well as adults. **If you or your local 4H club would be interested in my assistance during a meeting by doing an educational presentation with some hands-on learning feel free to**

...(continued on page 15)



Marathon Feed & Grain

by Todd Heise, GM of Marathon Feed & Grain
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Happy New Year from all of us at Marathon Feed and Grain!

The 2021 growing season stayed on point. **We increased our tons in both liquid and dry fertilizer and increased our application acres.** We were fortunate to have a bumper crop of both corn and soybeans. Our bins are full, and we have been hauling out corn to make room for the rest of the corn that needs to be harvested yet.

SPRING 2022! We are ready. Our agronomy department has seed, fertilizer, lime and chemical pricing available. Give them a call to discuss

how we can assist you with your spring inputs. We are upgrading equipment to improve efficiencies and lower breakdowns.

Tracy and Megan, our customer service staff, are available to help answer your questions or direct you to the right person and department. Call Samantha or Jackie, one of our feed nutritionists, to help you with your feed diet needs. We would also like to welcome Stacie Parks to MFG. She assists the counter and helps in the fuel department side of River Country.

DID YOU KNOW MFG will take your grain, corn, corn



cobs, soybeans, oats, or barley and mix it into your very own feed batch? The feed can be mixed and bagged, put back into your gravity box, or delivered to your farm. All it takes is a call, some planning ahead, and we can make it happen. Marathon Feed & Grain also has extensive knowledge in the crop of ginseng, soil testing, fertilizer application and chemicals to get to harvest.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to give us a call. ■



Marathon Feed & Grain

by Coleton Bloch, Agronomist
coletonmfgagronomy@gmail.com | 715-551-7296

Hello, my name is Coleton Bloch. I work in Marathon Feed & Grain's Agronomy Department as a salesman and an applicator. **I live north of Marathon City in the town of Hamburg.** Having lived in Hamburg my entire life, I am a proud Volunteer Fireman for the Town of Hamburg for over 9 years. Being raised with strong work ethic and great family values, I know the true meaning of hard work. Even though I was not raised on a farm, I have worked in the agriculture industry helping with ginseng, baling hay, and driving a tractor. My wife, Mickey, and I enjoy raising chickens and in our spare time enjoy making maple syrup, playing softball, hunting, ice fishing, snowmobiling, and watching the Packers.

My journey at MFG started in the fall of 2015, when I asked Todd for a part-time job. I started bagging corn at nights after my full-time job. It quickly grew into a full-time job, and I started a hauling route and bulk feed. In spring of 2016, I moved to the agronomy side of the business and knew it was the place for me. Having operated heavy equipment with my family, the transition into operating a sprayer and floater was not difficult. **I really enjoy getting out in the fields applying and getting the job done as accurately and efficiently as I can.** Working alongside Josh Krautkramer, I quickly acquired the knowledge needed in the field. In 2019, I joined the sales team, and I have not slowed down! I have been putting test plots in the Marathon area to collect data on yields and responses to liquid and dry fertilizers to get the best results possible for our growers. I am always striving for new ways for our team



to succeed and obtain knowledge. I use the word "team" because our staff and our growers are working together to achieve the same goal; healthier crops and bigger yields makes both sides of OUR team successful.

Spring 2022 is looking a little crazy with the price of inputs compared to input prices of 2021. Do not let that shy you away from prepaids and bookings for this upcoming season. Working through input budgets with growers this season, it does look attractively priced. Comparing last year's input prices to this year's is not comparing marbles to marbles. We need to be looking at the whole picture, watching the grain market as prices differ each year. **We still have an attractive discount schedule coming up before spring 2022.** My thought for our growers is to get your seed, starter fertilizer, chemical and then think about top dress or side dress fertilizer a little closer to spring,

Comparing last year's input prices to this year's is not comparing marbles to marbles.

getting the essentials for a good start and being successful in 2022.

I am looking forward to meeting and working with our growers this 2022 season.

If you cannot find me at Marathon Feed & Grain, give me a call. I'm always happy to help! ■





Grain Update

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

As we enter the new year and the weather turning colder on us, it gives us more time to reflect on how things went last year as well as prepare for the upcoming planting season. I hope everyone had a good harvest season this past fall with the decent harvest weather and the generally good yields across the territory. It was nice to have such a bountiful harvest this year. Space was a difficult thing to find this harvest, once all the piles were out and ethanol plants were full. It made the end of harvest difficult as we all moved grain out as quickly as we could to make space.

Markets have been strong at the end of 2021 and beginning part of 2022. Much of the news has been centered around hot and dry weather in South America. Temperatures of 100+ degrees were forecasted in the beginning of January and the crops were stressed during the heat. Initial reports of harvest that is taking place in the northern most portions of Brazil are showing lesser than expected yields. With the excess heat affecting the central and southern growing areas in Brazil, the damage could prove to be more extensive throughout much of South America. **It will take a few months before we have a better understanding on how the heat affected production of soybeans in South America.**

This dryness in South America could be a good opportunity to sell some of the crop that remains unsold from last year as well as manage some of the risk on the crop that we will harvest in 2022. At this time, new crop corn prices hover around \$5.00/bu and soybeans prices have traded up above the \$12.30/bu



range. These are good prices that we don't see every year. Make sure to take advantage of selling some of your crop at these prices. We never know which way this market may go during these volatile times.



Corn pile being made in Dorchester.



Bloomer Grain at night.

I also do not get the opportunity to reach out to all of our members about the different marketing alternatives that we offer. **We offer your typical cash, futures-only and basis contracts, but we also offer other unique marketing tools that could help to enhance your marketing plan.** Contact me or one of our grain buyers to further assist you. Sometimes it is good to get a variety of contracting alternatives working when marketing your grain.

I hope everyone has a good remainder of the winter and that the spring planting season goes well for all. It would be nice to see another early planting that could lead to yet another bountiful harvest.

Each year comes with its unique challenges and the plentiful crops created a difficulty trying to keep space open. We have a lot of different grain contracts that you can take risk off the table for you. Nate, Jake or myself will come out and sit with you one on one to explain. Thanks for the business. ■



C-Store Update

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



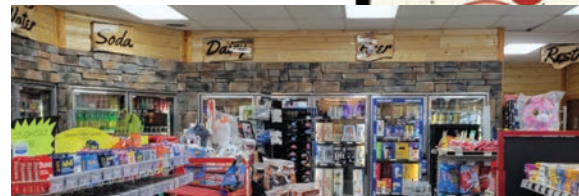
Pay at the pump with confidence! All 21 of our stores are now in compliance and have updated card readers that can read the embedded chip on your credit cards so it limits the fraud that can occur. With that said, please be patient with the process. Instead of removing your card quickly, you will have to leave the card in the reader until the screen tells you to remove it. As security requirements change, we will continue to meet the standards that protect our customers.

Our River Country Rewards cards have gone mobile! Cards that clutter up your wallet can be tossed, and you can conveniently scan your phone at all of our locations. You can easily look up your points, see our current offers, and how close you are to your free breakfast sandwich. It is easy to use and we are able to send coupon offers to you as well. **Also, a perk of the Rewards program is that you will save 3 cents off per gallon at the pump every time you use it and 5 cents per gallon on Tuesdays!**

The Weyerhaeuser store also got a makeover. Our resident carpenter and employee, Skip Licht's, last project before he retired was beautifying the store with our trademark log siding on the inside of the store. We also gutted the old cabinets and replaced with brand new

Our River Country Rewards cards have gone mobile!

cabinets that included a new coffee bar. The pumps were also given a little makeover with new stainless-steel wraps around the island. It is a continued effort to make sure that the appearance of our stores is updated and clean. ■



Weyerhaeuser C-store updates.



Wearing Many Hats

by Bailey Richardson, West Traveling Manager & HR Specialist
baileyr@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-579-2200

Hello, I'm Bailey and I have worked through four different job titles with River Country Co-op since 2015. After graduating from St. Cloud State University in December of 2020, **I gained two of those job titles, West Traveling Manager and HR Specialist.** My recent titles have allowed me to be involved in the company in a diverse way.

As a Traveling Manager, I am an on-call substitute for managers that were either sick, out with surgery, or taking vacation. **During the pandemic, staffing was one of our shortcomings.** I filled in where store personnel were understaffed or quarantined.

Other duties I have obtained are assisting managers with counting, reorganizing, and upgrading inventory procedures. I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know each manager and how each store is uniquely run. Amber Smoczyk (*Pricing Coordinator*) has guided me through our inventory systems and expanded my knowledge greatly. One of my favorite responsibilities this year was helping set-up the inventory in the new Merrill C- store.

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I am also the full-time recruitment person managing all our hiring websites and spend time in HR on the Eastern trade territory. Soon after, I started filing new hire paperwork and welcoming new employees with orientations. Every day I have been learning new tasks and completing various projects, including reorganizing electronic folders, updating driver files, and sending out appraisal dates.

Furthermore, I have appreciated seeing the many things that are done “behind the scenes” in order for things to run smoothly. Assisting in

setting up meetings for the company has given me great experience. **If you**

know of anyone looking for a job, please get ahold of me. We have

many professional job openings in our company as well as part-time positions. ■



Jolie and Bailey working in the Hot Stuff deli at Edgar C-store.



Greenwood C-store



Merrill C-store



2022 Challenges



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

Dealing with inventory shortages this past year has been frustrating for many consumers. The challenges of finding replacement inventory for all of our stores became the norm for 2021.

From convenience store items to Napa auto parts, we have seen many product shortages in the Retail Division. **Soda and beer companies have cut production on some of their lower selling items due to an aluminum shortage.** Gatorade flavors are very limited and M&Ms, candy bars, coffee, cups and straws are just naming a few of the items we struggle to fill the shelves with.

Chicken wings was one of the food items unavailable for a number of months. Petroleum equipment was not any different. The average lead

time for new gas and diesel pumps was 6 to 9 months.

Our NAPA auto part stores were constantly dealing with shipping issues and product back order due to lack of inventory and a shortage of employees in manufacturing. Parts are at limited inventory, but we are starting to see some progress in availability.

Our NAPA auto parts business has been strong as revenue is up 15%. The C-store business is good as inside sales are up 9% over last year. Both business units are profitable assets for the Co-op.

Still through all of the shipping and manufacturing problems in 2021, we have been able to navigate through and still put a quality product on our shelves at a competitive price.

Unfortunately, the shortages at the start of 2022 are still felt across the food and beverage industry. So we can expect to see craft beer, sodas, and any foods that come in an aluminum package dip in and out of availability this year. On the one hand, companies are being more strategic about which products they prioritize at a time when their production capacities are too limited for an exploding demand.

We are looking forward to the many new opportunities that 2022 will bring. ■



Abbotsford NAPA



High Quality vs. Low Quality

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

I'm sure when purchasing new equipment for your farm or business, you look for the highest quality equipment possible. Whether it is the green of a John Deere or Case IH red, you are making a large investment and expect a high quality piece of equipment. After making such a large investment, why would you use just any diesel fuel or lubricant in it? Cenex's Ruby Fieldmaster and Roadmaster diesel fuel is the highest quality fuel on the market hands down. Studies show that using **Fieldmaster vs standard #2 diesel gives you a 10% increase in fuel economy** as well as cleaner operation. With fuel costs continuing to rise, saving 10% on your fuel costs is huge savings for you! On \$2.50 per gallon diesel, your savings over standard #2 diesel is 25-cents per gallon!

After making such a large investment, why would you use just any diesel fuel or lubricant in it?

2022 fuel prices are looking higher than 2021. We can help take out the volatility with some locked-in fuel, give me a call. We have short and long term contracts available.

I am sure your current supplier will tell you that their fuel is just as good as Ruby Fieldmaster or Roadmaster. If they do, ask them to see the additive package that is added to the fuel they are selling you.

Ruby Fieldmaster and Roadmaster have a proven additive package, including detergents to keep your engine clean, demulsifiers to help take out any moisture and a higher cetane to help with better starting and less smoke.

You have made a big investment in your equipment and you want the best performance possible which should include Fieldmaster or Roadmaster diesel fuel and Cenex lubricants. ■



New propane plant in Hatley, WI.

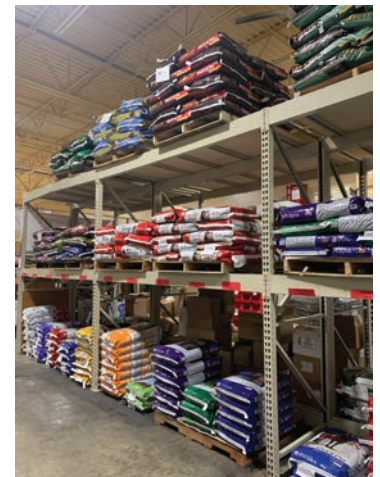
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reach out so we can farther discuss some ideas.

Overall, the hay crop within the last year was great for many, but grain prices continue to increase, causing the daily cost to supplement our animals to go up. To some this may result in cutting down on the number of head, changing to a more cost friendly grain, or maybe even eliminating grain completely and only supplementing with mineral. When choosing which works best for your program, I'm here to help you find the most appropriate option while still fulfilling the needs of our animals.

The horse market has done great in the last year and it appears that desirable horses continue to hold some great value. With this being said, at this time joining the horse industry can be a challenge, while leaving or reducing can be a huge success. I believe this is great for business and look forward to seeing more owners increasing their interest to do the best things possible for their horses. This will not only continue to hold, if not increase the value of those horses, but obtain a healthier and longer lifespan. With winter being in full swing, take interest in getting those horses ready for the season ahead. Spring is right around the corner.

What I enjoy most about my job is helping the people, working with them to help their animals bloom to their fullest potential. I love seeing success, from the 4H student winning first place with their show heifer, to the dog owner finally finding a food that works for their dog, to a lifelong horse enthusiast finally getting some weight put on their 20-year-old riding partner. I look forward to continue to work hard for your business. Give me a call and I will stop out and share my ideas with you while helping ensure that you're doing the best things possible for your animals. I hope that everyone has a successful year and takes some time to enjoy those animals we work hard for. ■



Variety of feed at the Antigo Country Store.



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 Agronomy
(715) 443-6100

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

Sheldon Feed Mill
(715) 452-5116

Weyerhaeuser CENEX
(715) 353-2612