



Beef Business

►A look at **current events** affecting the **cattle industry**

Number of farmers under financial stress expected to rise

Eighty-four percent of U.S. agricultural professionals surveyed say the probability that many producers will experience financial stress in the next three years is “high or very high.”

According to a recently completed survey of 2,300 ag professionals by the Regional Risk Management Education Centers and the Center for Farm Financial Management

at the University of Minnesota, on a national level, 62% of the respondents said 10% of the producers they work with are currently experiencing stress. Thirty-eight percent said less than 5% were currently financially stressed.

The full report can be found online at <http://overton.tamu.edu/farmrisk2009.pdf>.

Bozeman recovering from explosion

Recovery efforts were ongoing at press

time following a March 5 explosion in downtown Bozeman, Mont. According to Montana news stations KBZK and KRTV, a NorthWestern Energy spokesperson questioned immediately after the explosion said the company did not yet know the cause of the blast, which destroyed six businesses and damaged others.

American Humane Certified to launch online training

The American Humane Certified™ farm animal welfare program announced March 11 that it will launch an online Humane Care Training Program for food producers to use in educating employees, growers and contractors who handle animals.

American Humane Certified currently conducts a national program of auditing and certifying the humane handling of animals raised for food.

The new curriculum will be developed by John McGlone, animal and food science professor at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, in association with Farm Animal Care Training and Auditing (FACTA LLC), which provides independent, professional, science-based animal care training and auditing services. More than 50 million farm animals are now covered by American Humane Certified. For more information, visit www.thehumanetouch.org.

Merck, Schering-Plough to merge in \$41.1B deal

Drugmakers Merck & Co. and Schering-Plough Corp., already partners in a joint venture, are planning to merge under the name Merck in a stock-and-cash deal worth about \$41.1 billion, according to *The Associated Press* (AP).

According to the two New Jersey pharmaceutical companies, Merck's top executive, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Richard Clark, will lead the combined company. However, the transaction is to be structured as a reverse merger. As a result, Schering-Plough will be the surviving public corporation but will be renamed Merck, according to AP.

Stimulus package provides energy efficiency tax credits

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, also known as the federal stimulus package, includes a number of provisions aimed at reducing the amount of money Americans spend on their energy usage by installing energy-efficient upgrades to existing homes.

"Homeowners who plan remodeling projects should know about the tax incentives that went into effect on Feb. 17, 2009," North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension Service energy educator Carl Pedersen says.

Improvements that possibly could qualify for the tax credit include replacing or installing new windows, doors, insulation, and heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment. In addition, biomass stoves, solar energy systems, small wind-fuel cells and certain cars also will qualify for the tax credit.

To determine which improvements qualify, visit www.energystar.gov and click on the Tax Credits for Energy Efficiency tab.



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