THE COOPERATIVE FARMERS ELEVATOR NEWSLETTER

125 YEARS CFE Views

Sharing New Perspectives & Information From Your Co-op



Short corn might allow us to push population levels higher while minimizing the risk of lodging, potentially increasing yield.

REACHING NEW HEIGHTS
PAGE 22

VOL.9, NO.4 2024

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Celebrating 10 Years of Serving Pig Farmers.





A premier partner of CFE's Feed team, IDEAL Animal Nutrition strives to provide research ahead of the curve in a fast-paced and ever-evolving swine industry.



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BEHIND THE SCENES OF FALL HARVEST

Harvest is a busy time of year at CFE, and not just at the elevator. Each fall, our agronomy research team hits the field to uncover the results of their season-long research trials. These findings are important to CFE members and the entire industry, as we learn more about seed varieties, mangement practices and more that will shape the future of farming.

See snapshots from fall harvest on ***pages 16 and 17,*** then read about one of our primary research trials from the past couple of years on ***pages 22 and 23.***





COOPERATIVE FARMERS ELEVATOR

ABOUT CFE

Cooperative Farmers Elevator (CFE), is a member-owned cooperative, serving 4,975 members at 27 locations in Iowa, Minnesota and South Dakota. The cooperative provides products, services and expertise in the areas of grain, agronomy, feed and lumber.

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ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

CFE Views is the official news publication of Cooperative Farmers Elevator (CFE) and distributed to co-op members and customers. The publication serves as the source for stories, highlights and features about the people, places and industries that encompass CFE.

A CornerPost publication.

CONTRIBUTE TO CFE VIEWS

Your ideas are welcome! Submit stories and topics for future publication issues by emailing news@coopfe.com.

www.coopfe.com

Honoring the Past. **Shaping the Future.**

A MESSAGE FROM ROB JACOBS, CEO.



2024 marked the celebration of 125 years since the formation of our first legacy cooperative. For over a century, we have served members and customers throughout the territory. Just as it was in the very beginning, your cooperative operates on the same premise it was founded on–to provide goods, services and markets for our members at a price and consistency they could not do alone. The many incredible changes we have seen over the past 125 years have not altered our purpose and today, your cooperative still operates with the very same goals that have always been at the foundation of our business.

From drought to flood and back to drought, the weather patterns of 2024 were far from predictable. This fall's harvest, we saw large variations in yield across our territory. Grain receipts in places like Hudson, Hawarden, Inwood and George were some of the most we have seen in years, while our locations to the east saw significantly decreased bushels received.

> ***Your cooperative still operates with the very same goals that have always been at the foundation of our business.***

We were very close to a 10-year average in bean receipts while corn came in at 92% of an average take. Overall farmer selling this fall has been about average despite depressed grain prices. Early fall and winter corn local basis have been strong. Local processor and feed demand remains solid as we enter early January.

Looking back on the past year, there were plenty of challenges to overcome, but plenty of opportunities as well, and we are proud of our financial success. Strong volumes, service revenues and earnings all helped make the 2024 fiscal year a success.

As we enter 2025, there are many obstacles our cooperative and producers are facing. As stated previously, grain prices are much lower and with the decreased production in some areas many of our producers will struggle in profitability. Continued large increases for CFE in cost of interest, insurance, repairs and maintenance, health insurance and several other key expenses are concerns. We are always looking for ways to operate more efficiently through investment in automation, equipment and alignment of business units. All the while leveraging our vendor relationships, while maintaining the level of service you have come to expect from your cooperative. 2025 certainly looks to be a harder year for both our patrons and CFE, but I am sure we will overcome those challenges together.

Thank you for your continued business and support.



Guiding Growth

A LOOK AT 2024 BUSINESS.

In this 125th year of our cooperative's legacy, CFE has much to be proud of, amidst some notable highlights and challenges. One of those points of pride is honoring the cooperative spirit, and CFE is thrilled to carry on the tradition in distribution of patronage to our members.

CFE's dedicated Board of Directors is tasked with making well-intentioned decisions that benefit our member base—a task they have diligently carried out as shown in our financial returns. For the 2024 fiscal year, CFE allocated $5.5 million in qualified patronage: $2.4 million in cash and $3.6 million in deferred equity.

The cooperative has returned over $74.5 million to members through cash patronage, deferred equity and equity retirements since 2016. Returning value to our members has been a guiding principle of CFE and our legacy cooperatives for over a century, and it is a custom we intend to uphold for generations to come.

Alongside patronage, our board has allocated $4.34 million in IRS Section 199A domestic production tax deductions to our members, bringing the cumulative return to over $50.4 million since 2016. These financial returns and tax savings underscore our dedication to advancing initiatives that benefit our members. In a rapidly changing industry, CFE remains committed to driving efficiencies and delivering financial support where it's most impactful, all while maintaining our cooperative's core mission.

As we reflect on 2024, we look back with great admiration for the obstacles our community overcame this year, and we look forward to 2025 with renewed excitement and an unwavering commitment to guiding growth for our members, their operations and their profitably. <<

$5.5M
2024 QUALIFIED PATRONAGE

$74.5M
RETURNED TO MEMBERS SINCE 2016

$4.34M
2024 IRS SECTION 199A DOMESTIC PRODUCTION TAX DEDUCTIONS

$50.4M
IRS SECTION 199A DOMESTIC PRODUCTION TAX DEDUCTIONS SINCE 2016



CHANGES ON THE HORIZON

PREPARING FOR UPCOMING TAX LAW CHANGES

We have been discussing expiring, or sunsetting, tax provisions since the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was enacted in December 2017. The TCJA includes several temporary provisions that changed the existing tax law, but only for a defined time period. Without new legislation that extends or modifies the temporary provisions, they will expire—many on December 31, 2025—and revert to the law as it existed immediately prior to the TCJA being signed into law. Since 2025 will be the last tax year under current rules, producers should consider how the changes will impact their tax situation and evaluate opportunities to make business decisions accordingly.

While not an income tax provision, the expiration of the increased estate and gift tax exclusion is an important consideration in farm estate and succession planning. The estate and gift tax exclusion, currently $13.61 million, will increase to $13.99 million in 2025, but then, without action from Congress to either extend or modify the law, it will decrease by roughly half. Portability, the provision that allows one spouse to elect to use their deceased spouse's unused exclusion, is permanent and will not expire. The exclusion decrease will not impact everyone. Farmers with net worth greater than approximately $7 million if single and $14 million if married are most likely to be impacted. Farmers and ranchers should discuss the implications of their situation with their estate planning attorney.

The qualified business income deduction, also called the Section 199A deduction, will be eliminated after December 31, 2025. Currently, businesses receive a 20% deduction for qualified business income from pass-through entities, which lowers the individual owner's adjusted gross income and therefore tax liability. This will impact farms and ranches that show a profit and are operated and taxed as a sole-proprietorship or pass-through entity. Without a new law, 2025 will be the last year to take advantage of the qualified business income deduction.

Bonus depreciation, or additional first-year deprecation, is phasing out and will be eliminated by 2027. For property placed in service in 2024, bonus depreciation is limited to 60% of the cost of eligible assets. This will be reduced to 40% for 2025, 20% for 2026 and eliminated for 2027. Section 179, which allows producers to expense rather than depreciate certain assets, will continue as-is since it is not a temporary provision. The 2024 section 179 limit is $1,220,000 and will increase to $1,250,000 in 2025.

Individual income tax rates are scheduled to increase starting in 2026. Not only are marginal rates scheduled to increase, but the tax brackets will also change, resulting in more income taxed in higher tax brackets. This is important for all individual taxpayers but particularly important for sole proprietors and pass-through entities such as partnerships, S corporations and limited liability companies that are taxed as a partnership or disregarded entity.

We do not know whether Congress will enact new legislation that extends some or all of the expiring tax provisions. For now, what we do know is that under current law, several tax provisions that are beneficial to farmers and ranchers are set to expire. It is important to take the changes into consideration while also keeping an eye out for new legislation. <<



THE EXPERT:

KRISTIANA COUTU

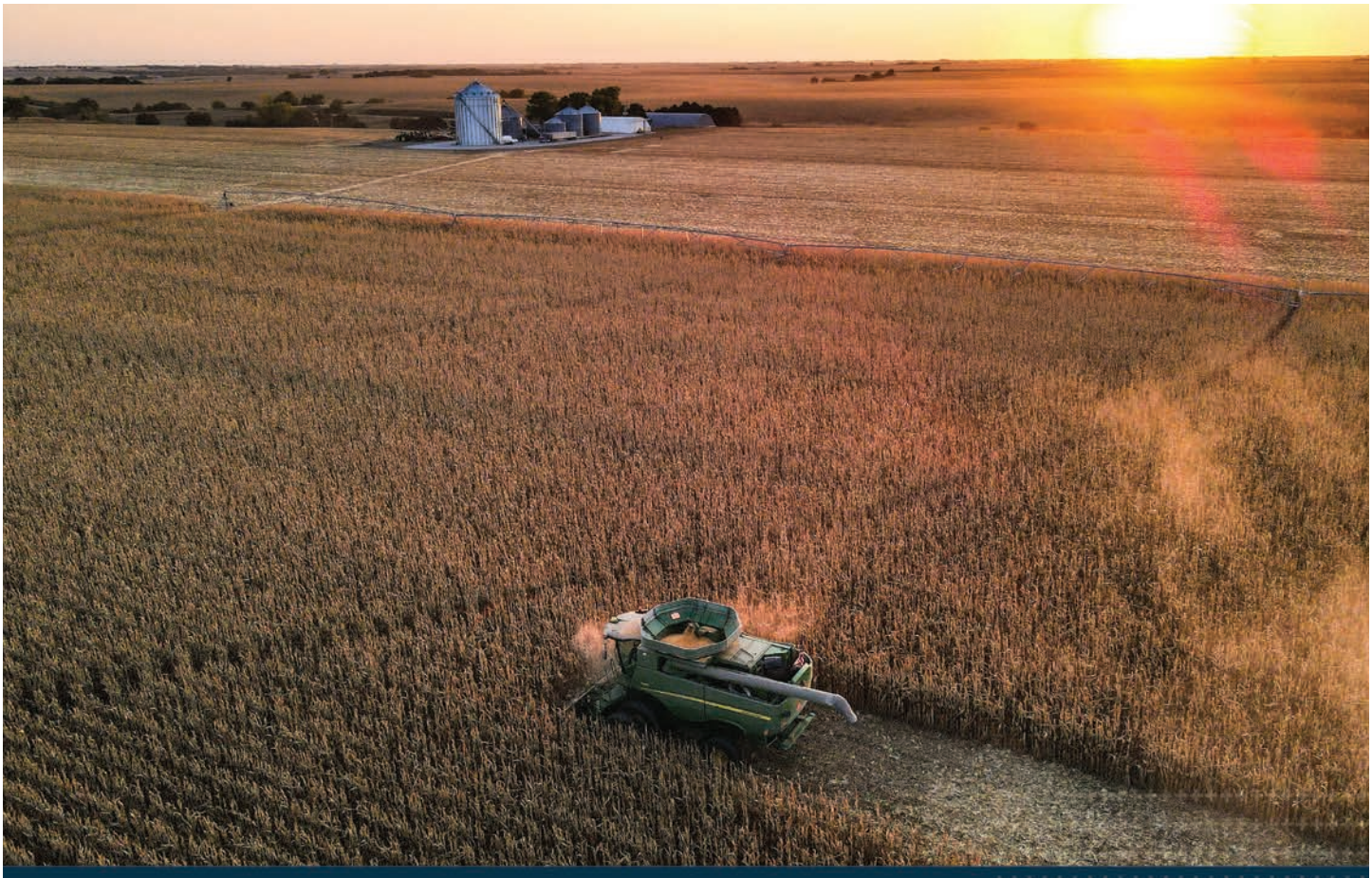
Senior Counsel, Center for Agricultural Law and Taxation

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Kristiana brings her passion for agriculture and experience in agricultural law and tax to provide legal analysis and educational materials for producers, policymakers and industry stakeholders.

Kristiana is focused on meeting the changing needs of agriculture, and her experience includes lending for the farm credit system, practicing as a certified public accountant, practicing law and engaging in policy work. Kristiana has worked with producers and agricultural organizations across the country, giving her a unique and holistic perspective on the diversity of agriculture and the varying needs of producers.

Kristiana received her J.D. from Michigan State University College of Law and her B.S. in Business Management from the University of Connecticut. Kristiana also has a M.S. in Taxation from Grand Valley State University.



~~RISK.~~ REWARD.

The Advanced Acre® Rx program is just what your season ordered.

Help mitigate risk and make the most of your season with more rewarding data and insights. The WinField® United Advanced Acre® Rx prescription program helps increase profit potential per acre and lower per bushel costs. If your customized plan doesn't get 105%* of your Approved Yield you'll receive a service warranty payment.

Contact your CFE Agronomist for more information.

*Agreement is required and conditions, restrictions and service fees apply. Percentage goals for the APH crop yield range from 95–105% for corn and 95–100% for soybeans. Only available to corn and soybean farmers who enroll a minimum of 250 acres of an individual crop in the program. Due to factors outside of WinField United's control, results to be obtained cannot be predicted or guaranteed by WinField United. Results may vary.

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CFE Cooperative Farmers Elevator

Advanced Acre® Rx

ASK JIM



SAFETY ON THE FARM: A FEW SECONDS COULD SAVE A LIFETIME.

By: Jim Jensen, CFE Director of Risk & Safety

As a farm mom, farm safety is always a concern for me. How can I ensure the safety of my family and coworkers while working on the farm?

JIM SAYS: Agriculture consistently ranks as one of the most dangerous industries. On the farm, long hours, hazardous equipment, weather extremes and other challenges can create serious risks. Research from the Marshfield Clinic highlights the importance of farm safety, particularly for children. Their studies show that one child dies every three days in an agriculture-related accident, and 33 kids are seriously injured every day.

It's easy to bypass common safety practices when you're in a hurry, but taking a few moments to ensure everyone's safety is crucial. This means replacing missing guards, having an observer for high-risk tasks like entering grain bins and speaking up when you see something unsafe.

This sentiment is echoed in a poem by Don Merril, a safety director who emphasized the importance of watching out for one another. Agriculture accidents can have lifelong impacts—not just for the individual but for their families, coworkers and communities. It may feel uncomfortable to remind someone to slow down or follow safety guidelines, but those few seconds can save lives.

Safety on the farm starts with a commitment to protecting yourself and everyone around you. Remember, it only takes a few seconds to impact a lifetime! <<

I COULD HAVE SAVED A LIFE TODAY

I could have saved a life that day,
But I chose to look the other way.
It wasn't that I didn't care,
I had the time, and I was there.
But I didn't want to seem a fool,
Or argue over a safety rule.
I knew he'd done the job before,
If I spoke up, he might get sore.
The chances didn't seem that bad,
I'd done the same, He knew I had.
So I shook my head and walked on by,
He knew the risks as well as I.
He took the chance, I closed an eye,
And with that act, I let him die.
I could have saved a life that day,
But I chose to look the other way.
Now every time I see his wife,
I'll know, I should have saved his life.
That guilt is something I must bear,
But it isn't something you need share.
If you see a risk that others take,
That puts their health or life at stake.
The question asked, or thing you say,
Could help them live another day.
If you see a risk and walk away,
Then hope you never have to say,
I could have saved a life that day,
But I chose, to look the other way.

Don Merrell
donmerrell@hotmail.com

BUILDING SMART

You've finally decided to make a big change—whether that means upgrading your current place or starting from scratch to build the home you've always wanted. Maybe you're dreaming of a fresh kitchen remodel, a new wing or even an entire custom-built home. A space crafted just for you, bringing both comfort and added value should you ever decide to sell. A lasting investment with real benefits.

These projects add significant value, whether you're remodeling or building from the ground up, and with that kind of commitment, it's essential to hire the right professional. When you invest in quality work, you're securing a space built to last, without the worry of cut corners or unfinished details.

With this in mind, where do you start to look for a contractor you can trust? You can ask friends and family who may have recently done some work, or you can ask your trusted industry experts: the CFE Lumber team.

Over the years, CFE Lumber has seen many contractors come and go in the industry—those who do quality dependable work and those who are not so dependable. But one thing that stands out in selecting the right one is knowing the homeowner's lifestyle.

"When a customer comes to us to inquire about choosing a contractor, I first try and understand who they are and how they live," shares Jerry Schoo, manager at the CFE Lumber location in George. "For example, I ask questions about everything from entertaining and design they like to timelines and how they like to be communicated with. Some people just want the work done and some want to be a part of all the decisions. Getting that information helps me align them with a contractor that would be a good fit for them."

Jerry emphasizes that, above all, it's essential that customers feel heard. "The most important thing when making the final decision is to ask yourself, 'Did they take time to listen to me?'" he explains. "A good contractor will be willing to explain construction decisions and what costs to expect. They will have good ideas to bring to the homeowner."

Whether you are remodeling or building new, choosing the right contractor is a significant step in creating a home that truly reflects your vision. With CFE Lumber's experience and dedication to connecting homeowners with trusted, reliable contractors, you have a partner in making that decision. In the end, your home should be a place of quality and comfort, built by professionals who understand the importance of craftsmanship and trust.





HIRING THE RIGHT CONTRACTOR

Here's how to find a contractor who will deliver excellence, from start to finish.

1 KNOW YOUR BUDGET

Before you start looking for contractors, decide what you want to do and how much you're willing to spend. Whether it's a remodel, a new room or building from the ground up, decide what you can afford and work within those limits. If you're building from scratch, costs can add up quickly. Figure out which materials, finishes and features are most important to you, and budget for those first.

2 DETERMINE THE CONTRACTOR YOU NEED

With your budget in place, the next step is to identify the type of contractor you may need.

Specialty Contractor:
Perfect for smaller projects like cabinets, windows or other specific installations. This is ideal if you're just remodeling a room or two.

General Contractor:
Good for larger projects, whether it's a remodel or building an entire home. They'll handle hiring subcontractors (plumbers, electricians, etc.) and keep the whole project running smoothly.

Design-Build Contractor:
A one-stop shop with in-house designers and builders, taking care of everything from plans to the finishing touches. This might be the best route if you're looking to build a home from scratch or complete a major remodel.

3 DIG INTO THEIR BACKGROUND

Once you've got a list, do a little digging. Look over their websites, read reviews and make sure they specialize in the type of work you need. If you're building an entire home, check that they've done plenty of new construction. If it's a kitchen or bathroom remodel, look for examples of that kind of work. Look for a solid portfolio with before-and-after photos to see their quality firsthand.

As you narrow down your list, make sure each contractor carries the right insurance. General liability and workers' comp insurance are essentials; you don't want to be on the hook if there's an accident on your property.

Once you know who you're looking for, ask around for recommendations from friends, family or your local CFE Lumber team, as we've worked with some of the best. You can also do a local search online and check reviews on sites like Angie's List, Yelp or the Better Business Bureau. Aim to gather a few names to give yourself options if one doesn't work out.

4 GATHER REFERENCES AND GET QUOTES

Ask each contractor for references, especially for similar projects. Call past clients and ask how things went. Did the project get done on time and within budget? Has the work held up well? Are they still happy with the outcome? The more you ask, the clearer picture you'll get of what it's like to work with them.

At this stage, it's essential to address costs. Schedule site visits with the selected contractors to assess the project and provide formal bids. Review each proposal in detail, making sure it covers everything from project description and timeline to materials and payment schedule. Go with the contractor whose bid fits your budget and project goals. Just remember, the lowest price isn't always best if it means sacrificing quality.

5 DO A FINAL WALK-THROUGH

Before the project wraps up, schedule a final walk-through with your contractor. Look over every detail together and bring up any issues that need fixing. Once you're happy with everything, there might be a couple of documents to sign, like a "final payment affidavit" or "lien waiver," which confirms that the job is done, the contractor's paid and you're happy with the work. <<





WOMEN in AG

POWERED BY CFE

SAVE the DATE

FEBRUARY 21, 2025

CROSSROADS PAVILION
SHELDON, IOWA

View the agenda and get registered online at coopfe.com!

FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

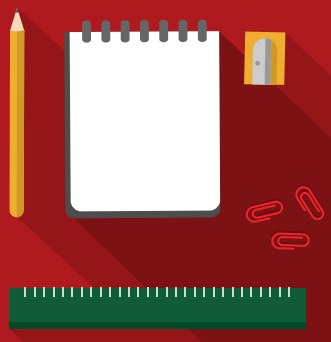
CFE SCHOLARSHIPS, SPONSORSHIPS AND MORE.

For CFE, planning ahead doesn't just mean for the next fiscal year or farming season—it means ensuring a path for the next generation of passionate agriculture professionals. Each year, our cooperative opens applications for various programs that help young individuals pursue a career in agriculture.

Deadlines

Scholarship and sponsorship applications are due **March 18, 2025**.





Five $1,000 Scholarships

Our cooperative offers five $1000 scholarships to graduating high school seniors of Class A or B members annually. Students must intend to study an agriculture-related major at a college, university or technical school, while displaying a desire to work in the industry and the drive to succeed.

Three Full-Tuition Sponsorships

CFE also offers three full-tuition sponsorships for college students attending a participating technical college pursuing an associates of applied agriculture science degree. These students will receive tuition assistance with the agreement of employment within our cooperative upon graduation.

We are also proud to offer job shadowing opportunities, internships and various entry-level positions to continue supporting young adults on their career path and journey within the agriculture industry and cooperative system. Visit our website to learn more about all our program offerings! <<



THE MARKET OF THE FUTURE

PROVIDING STREAMLINED ACCESS TO CARBON MARKETS FOR CFE GROWERS.

CFE CARBON



December marks the official launch of CFE's latest initiative: CFE Carbon. The program, led by CFE conservation agronomist Ashilyn Hulstein, connects local growers with carbon credit programs through a streamlined enrollment and data management process. This creates an opportunity for growers to receive financial benefits for including sustainable practices on their operation, many of which may already be in place.

UNDERSTAND CARBON MARKETS

Carbon markets allow businesses and organizations to offset their greenhouse gas emissions by purchasing carbon credits, often sourced from industries like agriculture that implement practices to sequester carbon or reduce emissions. These credits are verified reductions in carbon emissions that help companies meet sustainability goals. For growers, carbon markets provide financial incentives to adopt and maintain environmentally-friendly practices like no-till farming, cover cropping and reduced nitrogen usage—all of which can improve soil health and lower carbon footprints.

Participating in carbon markets involves enrolling in specific programs that have different requirements and incentives. Through these programs, growers can earn money by recording and verifying sustainable practices that are rewarded with carbon credits.

"CFE Carbon is about simplifying access to these markets," Ashilyn explains. "We're setting up an easy, accessible enrollment process that links growers directly with the programs that suit their operations and practices best."

ENROLL IN CFE CARBON

The CFE Carbon enrollment process is designed to be straightforward and efficient. The CFE team will gather essential data about each participant through a short questionnaire that asks for basic information—such as name, contact information and address—along with details about farm practices and equipment.

"Our questionnaire also asks about specific practices, like tillage methods, crop types and livestock presence," Ashilyn says. "These details help us categorize each grower and match them with the right programs."

After collecting this information, CFE will match growers with carbon programs offered by partner organizations, such as Truterra and Arva. Each carbon program has unique requirements, which may include specific farming practices or crop varieties. For example, some programs might require specific crop rotation or the usage of certain cover crops.

"If a grower already uses these methods, we can connect them to that program and discuss potential earnings," Ashilyn explains. "They can then decide whether to proceed with that program or wait for a different opportunity."

> *CFE CARBON IS ABOUT SIMPLIFYING ACCESS TO [CARBON] MARKETS.*
>
> ASHILYN HULSTEIN,
> *CFE CONSERVATION AGRONOMIST*

Through this tailored approach, we have simplified the enrollment process to the best of our ability. The CFE team handles most of the paperwork and data entry, filling in any information we can collect independently. Growers will be expected to provide specific data points our team doesn't have access to, such as planting dates. For growers interested in carbon programs, proactive data collection can make or break their success. Each program has a limited number of acres that can be accepted, so the sooner growers enroll, the better.

"We recommend that farmers collect relevant data year-round," Ashilyn says. "If they gather information as they go, it's much easier to enroll when a program opens, rather than trying to catch up during the busy harvest season."

PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

As with any government-influenced sector, changes to carbon markets may occur with new political administrations. However, CFE is optimistic that the fundamental aspects of carbon markets will remain steady due to bipartisan interest in carbon credits.

"Both Republicans and Democrats see value in carbon credits, largely because of the financial incentives," Ashilyn shares. This stability is a positive indicator for farmers considering long-term participation in carbon programs.

One area where potential adjustments could occur is the 45Z tax credit, a sustainable fuel incentive that may affect growers involved in ethanol production. Ethanol companies are required to meet specific carbon intensity scores, and their partnering farmers must also maintain CI scores to qualify. While the basic requirements are unlikely to change, some standards for calculating CI scores may be updated soon. Our CFE Carbon team will be ready to help support growers through this transition when the time comes.

CFE Carbon represents a significant step toward creating a structured, accessible pathway for CFE growers interested in carbon markets, with built-in support and tools designed to make the transition smooth and manageable. Together, we can embrace the benefits of sustainable practices that support your operations and the environment. <<

Contact Ashilyn Hulstein by scanning this QR code with your phone.



Bringing in BUSHELS

2024 FALL HARVEST

Fall is a special season, from crisp weather and family time to falling leaves, football games, bonfires and plenty more. For CFE farmers, fall marks another special season: harvest. Fields of green turn to gold, meals are eaten from the combine and buddy seats are full. Elevator lines get longer, bins get fuller and cows get put on stalks—all little yet memorable tokens of another year's crop coming out. Just as fall harvest is a key time of year for farmers, it is just as important for our cooperative as we receive the grain we will use, store and market for the year ahead. Additionally, harvest is an opportunity for our agronomy team to uncover data that will fuel an even more productive crop next year. The fall harvest season is a cornerstone of our cooperative filled with its own rewards and challenges. Here's to our farmer members—CFE is proud to partner with you in producing, storing and marketing the bushels you bring in. <<























CENTER STAGE

WITH CFE IN HAWARDEN

A HIGH LEVEL VIEW OF ONE OF CFE'S LOCATIONS.

While every CFE location offers a unique array of services and facilities, one constant across all locations is the presence of great people who are dedicated to their members and their work. Here are some details about our Hawarden location.

HAWARDEN



THE TEAM:

- **Jerry Burns**, *Location Manager*
- 16 Full-Time Employees
- 7 Part-Time Employee
- 5 Agronomists

KEY SERVICES:

- Agronomy & Grain

BEST KNOWN FOR:

The location is backed by a crew of five full-time agronomists dedicated to helping farmers improve crop production. Whether it's planning fertilizer applications, troubleshooting issues, or finding the best solutions for the field, they're there to make sure farmers succeed.

Hawarden isn't just about its facilities or services—it's about the people. Whether in the field or around town, this team works together to get the job done, no matter what's thrown their way.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN HAWARDEN:

The CFE Hawarden location is a workhorse for area farmers, delivering premier services and facilities. In 2023, the location saw the addition of an 8,500-ton state-of-the-art fertilizer plant, streamlining operations to handle and spread approximately 25,000 tons each year. Also in 2023, Hawarden added a 750,000-bushel bean bin, boosting upright storage to 1.85 million bushels and providing another 800,000 bushels of flat space. Handling millions of bushels of corn and beans every year, Hawarden keeps operations moving efficiently for its members.

When floods hit the area in June 2024, Hawarden didn't back down. The team, along with the community, rolled up their sleeves and got to work rebuilding in time for the season. It's the same spirit that drives efforts like relocating the local food pantry to a better space—proof that Hawarden doesn't just support farmers but steps up for the whole community. <<

Generational Strength

LONG-STANDING BARNS, LONGER-STANDING TRADITIONS.



In the 125th year of our cooperative's legacy, we reflect on the strong farm families and agriculture community that created this longevity. As we look forward to another 125 years, we believe in preserving the artifacts of our past that got us here–just as the Martens family is protecting the history of their family farm.

The Martens farm sits on Lyon County, Iowa, land that has been in the family for seven generations, dating back to its original purchase in 1882. It took multiple years to build a homestead with adequate housing, workable ground and, notably, an impressive barn that six of those generations have been able to enjoy. This farm has shaped over a century of crop and livestock production, as well as plenty of memories along the way.

From the days of manual pulleys, draft horse teams and locomotive engines to power tools, motorized hay elevators and GPS farming technology, the Martens family farm has seen decades of evolution. That same mentality where progress is the priority has not only allowed the Martens to expand and change their operation but also maintain their beloved barn, which is over a century old.

Setting the Foundation

What has come to be a staple of the Northwest Iowa farm community started quite literally as a foundation of Sioux Quartzite. With wooden beams and wooden floors raised above it, this impressive structure was completed in 1896 and, with the determination and diligence of its stewards, is still standing tall and strong to this day.

Featured in print by The Iowa Barn Foundation and listed as a stop on the Iowa Barn Tours program, this is far from the first time the barn has

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garnered publicity. Looking back to the barn's inaugural year, the Rock Rapids Review brought attention to the materials Lou Martens was compiling as he prepared to build in March 1896. In 1897, the Lyon County Reporter published one of many announcements of a barn dance, where the hayloft was transformed into a dance hall fit with a stage. Rumor has it a piano was even lifted in via the hay trolley and pulley.

With its removable walk-up staircase to the loft, the barn saw many community members throughout the years. Mainly in the spring and early summer before hay filled the space, it served as a perfect venue for neighbors to socialize and support one another. That same communal spirit lives on today as the Martens family proudly shares their barn and history with others, something they happily believe brings other farmers and other Iowans together.

The Background Behind the Barn

The Martens' story is much more than just a barn, though. Their family and entire farming operation are a true testament to the hard work and dedication that make up the agriculture industry. From pioneer times to the modern day, from hardships to victories, working the land and running the farm has been a family affair.

One of the biggest adversities facing the Martens family legacy was World War II. During that time, the Army and Navy efforts called fourth-generation farmers and brothers Art and Vern into action, leaving their parents to resume the everyday duties around the farm. Third-generation owners, Bill and Grace, went above and beyond to care for the land and livestock while their boys were away. Their determination did not go unnoticed, as they were awarded the

Martens Family History

1st Generation

John and Fredireka moved to the U.S. from Germany in 1861 and settled in Freeport, Illinois, before moving permanently to Wellsburg, Iowa. Here, they grew their family, having 10 children while also growing their farming operation. In 1882, John purchased an additional plot of land in Lyon County.

2nd Generation

In the mid-late 1880s, John's son Lou bought part of the Lyon County land and began the difficult task of working the ground. Lou married his wife, Ella, and the couple slowly built and expanded a home on their land. Upon its completion, the couple set sights on building and completing a barn in 1896.

3rd Generation

Lou and Ella's son, Bill, went on to take over the family farm in the early 1900s. Bill and his wife, Grace, continued expanding the operation and upkeep of the impressive barn. Bill was known for his love of horses and had a reputation for high-quality equine as he preferred to use his teams over tractors.







"CFE is a wonderful asset to our community providing professional services locally. They understand the needs of our farming operation and truly care about their customers."

LINDA MARTENS, CFE MEMBER

"Food for Victory" merit from the Des Moines Register & Tribune Company in 1945. This award recognized Iowans who exceeded expectations to produce food despite wartime handicaps like labor and machinery shortages.

From the Rock Valley elevator explosions and fire in 1966, the '80s farm crisis and the great flooding in '93 and this past summer, prevailing perseverance is something CFE knows well. Just like the Martens family, our CFE community has always faced challenges with strength, poise and an eagerness to overcome such obstacles. It's one of the many rewarding parts of working in our local communities—witnessing the strength of the family farms and the spirit to keep moving forward.

The devotion of the Martens family represents the long-standing legacy of many of our CFE members. The farm's fifth-generation owners, Bob and Linda, have been long-time members of CFE—and UFC before that. Both their children, Steve and Sherry along with Sherry's husband Matt, are also CFE members. "CFE is a wonderful asset to our community providing professional services locally. They understand the needs of our farming operation and truly care about their customers," says Linda. This is a value our cooperative will strive to uphold for the next generation, just like Matt and Sherry's children, who mark seven generations on their family farm.

Strong barns and stronger family roots are part of what makes our work at CFE so special. In our 125th year, we recognize not only our own legacy, but the legacy of our members that have allowed us to reach this special milestone. <<

4th Generation

Bill and Grace had two sons heavily involved on the farm. Art and Vern worked closely, both helping with livestock and crops while also managing their own separate dairy cattle. When World War II called both boys into action, Bill and Grace took the workload head-on until their sons returned home.

5th Generation

Vern's son, Bob, took over with his wife, Linda, and they are the current owners of the family land. While farming methods and practices have significantly changed over time, the generations before them instilled a strong work ethic, something that has been used to maintain their very special barn for 128 years.

6th Generation

Currently, Bob and Linda's children, Steve and Sherry, and Sherry's husband Matt are involved on the farm. Steve actively farms with his parents, and Matt and Sherry live on the acreage where they are raising their four children, teaching them the same family values that have been passed down for over 150 years.

7th Generation

Matt and Sherry's four children are the seventh generation to call this land home. Kirra, Mason, Sydney and Kade get to grow up on the same farm that so many family members before them have lived and worked on. They enjoy playing in the barn and helping maintain it, hopefully for more generations to come.



REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

IS SHORT-STATURED CORN THE FUTURE OF FARMING?

The height of a farmer's cornfield has always been a point of pride. For generations, as each 4th of July rolls around, families gather to snap photos among the towering stalks, capturing each year's growth and progress. With this in mind, the idea of purposely growing shorter corn may sound crazy to some, but is it?

The History of Corn Genetics

Since the 1930s, seed companies have been tasked with developing crop varieties to produce higher and higher yields. Genetic modification continued in 1990 with innovations that allowed corn to terminate insects, and tolerate more aggressive herbicides to aid in weed control and crop tolerance. These innovations in crop production have been aimed at meeting the demands of a growing global population and economy.

While corn developers may have never intended to create stalks that reach for the stars, historically, taller corn plants have been known to produce higher yields. Because of this, geneticists have used selective breeding to choose seeds from the tallest, most productive corn plants to maximize yield potential, resulting in corn that averages eight to twelve feet in height today. For decades, the towering corn has served its purpose well: record yields of high-quality corn.

Now, consider this: a study by the National Science Foundation's Center for Atmospheric Research estimates straight-line winds have been increasing over the past four decades, causing billions of dollars in damage in the Midwest. Their study, Nature Climate Change, suggests climate change is the cause.

In 2020, the Midwest experienced historic derecho winds, causing almost $11 billion in damage in just one season. While the devastating winds destroyed acres upon acres of corn, one type of the corn still stood in scattered research plots amongst flattened regular corn: short-stature corn.

A Solution for the Future

"Short-stature corn has been a concept in development for a while," states Jeff Blauwet, CFE Agronomy Technology Specialist. "However, interest surged after the August 2020 derecho swept through central Iowa." The aftermath left buildings and grain bins destroyed, and the widespread sight of wind-lodged corn across countless acres drove the point home. "What really stood out," Jeff shares, "was that research plots with shorter corn varieties were the only ones left standing against the storm. This observation spurred a new wave of interest in exploring the resilience of shorter corn hybrids under extreme weather conditions."

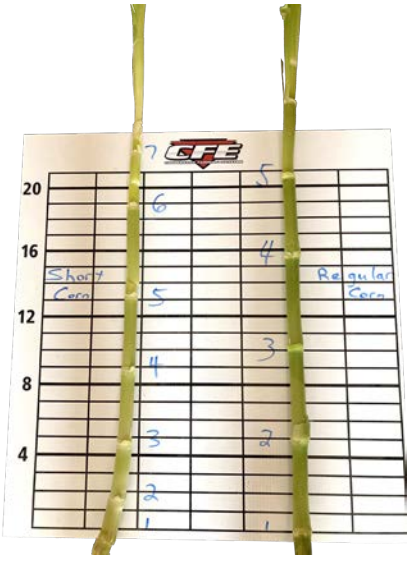
For more than 20 years, Bayer has been developing short corn that stands around five feet tall. Other companies such as Stine Seed and Corteva have also been working to offer short corn hybrids. While the primary focus has been on developing corn that can better

withstand high winds, researchers point out that shorter stalks also make it easier for farmers and retailers to navigate fields without high-clearance equipment—whether applying fungicides or seeding cover crops for the next season.

"Short corn might allow us to push population levels higher while minimizing the risk of lodging, potentially increasing yield," Jeff says. "As more grower-owned self-propelled sprayers become common, the appeal of short corn grows. It could make late-season applications of fertilizer or fungicide available without needing high-clearance machinery or aerial applications."

While these are great advantages of short corn, the new concept still has its challenges, including balancing ear height for the ease of harvest. To ensure compatibility with current combine headers and prevent extra wear on machinery, corn ears need to be positioned at specific heights above the soil surface. In addition, short corn doesn't work well in some variable or sandy soil types. For these reasons, Bayer and other companies are still refining the hybrids.

"It will probably be at least another couple years before we really see short-corn as an alternative option for farmers," Jeff explains. "While there is a lot of excitement around what short corn could offer to the ag industry, it's going to be a bit before it's ready for mass production. Each field has unique and complex factors that influence yields, and today's corn is bred with those diversities in mind. At this point, short corn is not at that level, nor are seeds readily available at the quantity needed to make that change."



Will photo-op traditions on the 4th of July soon be a thing of the past? Only time will tell. Bayer is hoping to have more of these newer hybrids available within a couple of years. More GMO traits are coming in the pipeline later this decade, which will speed the breeding process and hybrid availability. CFE farmers can trust that when short corn does become readily available, CFE has already done field trials to be ready to help you decide if it will be the right choice for your production.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR SHORT-STATURE CORN

PROS

Weather Resilience: Short-stature corn shows greater resistance to root and stalk lodging and greensnap under high winds and adverse weather conditions.

Field Access: Farmers can access fields more easily throughout the season to apply fertilizer and pesticides using ground equipment.

Yield Potential: Short-stature corn has robust root systems that can access more soil volume than traditional hybrids, and it performs well in higher plant populations and narrower row configurations.

Efficient Harvesting: More consistent standability from robust stalks will aid in consistent harvest.

Silage Quality: Silage isn't necessarily thrown out the window here, as short corn has the same number of leaves and a bigger stalk, meaning it may yield more than you think. Plus, the lower lignin content can enhance the quality of silage, making it more digestible.

Drought Tolerance: These corn hybrids have shown potential for greater resilience in drought conditions.

CONS

Yield Potential Limitations: With a smaller plant canopy, short corn may capture less sunlight initially if improperly placed in the wrong fields, which can lower overall yield, especially in suboptimal growing conditions.

Uniformity Challenges: In fields of these bred short corn hybrids, there may be a very small percent of off-type plants that exceed the intended height are more noticeable, potentially affecting overall field uniformity. The GMO traits coming will nearly eliminate this issue.

Harvesting Adjustments: The height difference may require modifications to standard harvesting equipment to ensure efficient cutting and ear collection.

Limited Soil Types: Short corn does better in heavier soil and is not designed at this time for lighter soil types or more variable soils.

Something Different: This will look different than what a corn field you are used to will look like. <<

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Kristi Habben
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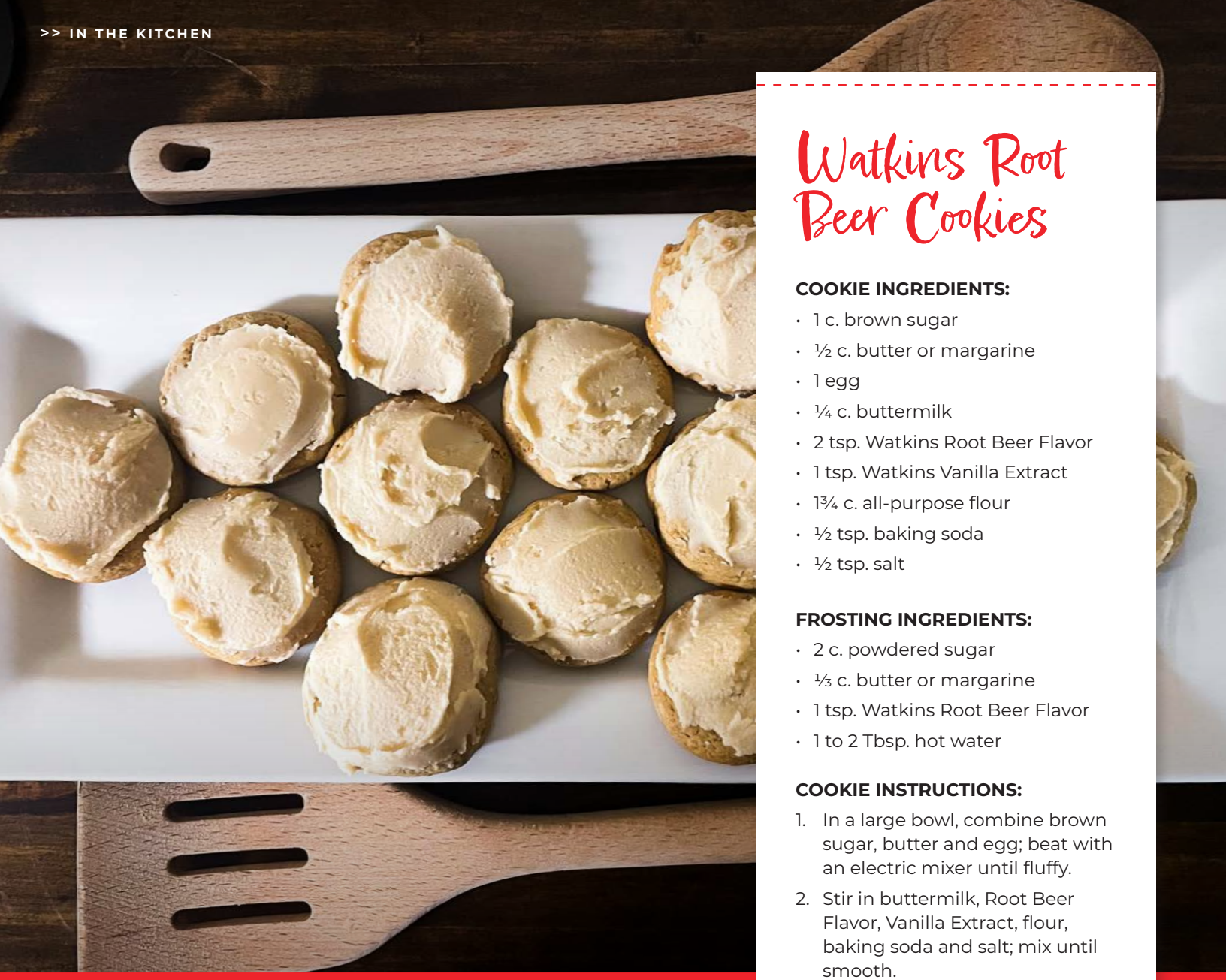
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BAYER PLUS REWARDS

FIND YOUR FIERCE



A Sweet Legacy



Entertaining and quality time run deep in the Martens family, from barn dances to baking cookies in bulk. This Watkins Root Beer Cookie recipe was handed down from Linda's mother, who was a Watkins Sales Representative and an avid lover of baking. These cookies were usually made in very large quantities, so much so that when Linda was first given the recipe card, it was originally quadruple the batch. If you love baking like the Martens family, give these a try!

Watkins Root Beer Cookies

COOKIE INGREDIENTS:

- 1 c. brown sugar
- ½ c. butter or margarine
- 1 egg
- ¼ c. buttermilk
- 2 tsp. Watkins Root Beer Flavor
- 1 tsp. Watkins Vanilla Extract
- 1¾ c. all-purpose flour
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. salt

FROSTING INGREDIENTS:

- 2 c. powdered sugar
- ⅓ c. butter or margarine
- 1 tsp. Watkins Root Beer Flavor
- 1 to 2 Tbsp. hot water

COOKIE INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In a large bowl, combine brown sugar, butter and egg; beat with an electric mixer until fluffy.
2. Stir in buttermilk, Root Beer Flavor, Vanilla Extract, flour, baking soda and salt; mix until smooth.
3. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for one hour. Preheat the oven to 375°F.
4. Drop dough by rounded teaspoonfuls onto greased cookie sheets about 2" apart.
5. Bake for 6 to 8 minutes or until cookies are very lightly browned.
6. Remove cookies from the oven and place on a hot pad. With spatula, remove cookies to a wire rack to cool.
7. In a medium bowl, mix together the powdered sugar and butter from the frosting ingredients until smooth.
8. Stir in Root Beer Flavor and enough water to make a smooth frosting.
9. Frost cooled cookies.

Notes: Frosting can also be used on vanilla cupcakes or plain white cake. Makes 42 cookies.



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* Word, A.B., et al. (2022). The effect of supplementing CLOSTAT® 500 (*Bacillus subtilis* PB6) to yearling steers in a commercial feedyard on health, *Salmonella* spp. prevalence, feedlot growth performance and carcass characteristics. Translational Animal Science. https://doi.org/10.1093/tas/txac131.

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