THOUGHTS FROM 109 KILDEE
Agricultural and economic thoughts

Some of the mid-November agricultural newspaper headlines are sobering: “Feed costs to rise if EU stalls on GM.” “Downturn hits tractor dealers.” “Pressure grows as milk prices take further hit.” Others are more positive: “Grain price variations to level out, says expert.” “New gear from Deere is an operator’s dream.” “Rolling with nature.” And a few are somewhat inspiring, or at least intriguing: “Farmers refuse to sell.” “Growing green fuels: the low input varieties.” “We need alternative farm structures.” And one piece by Joe Barry, accurately titled, “We may moan but regulations are crucial to farming in future” reads like a history lesson. In fact, it begins with these words, “Back in the 1950s, we slowly began the transition from low-tech farming with a high-labour requirement to high-tech crop management with a rapidly-reducing labour force. We started using new machinery to replace manual workers. We also began to use a new generation of sprays and fertilizers to replace hand-weeding and farmyard manure.” The author goes on to say that over time, these high-tech actions resulted in higher land prices, fewer and larger farms, fewer farmers, and a great deal of reliance on chemicals for modern farming. Ultimately, the consumer spoke, the government stepped in, and farmers are again changing their ways. Rules and regulations on the use of drugs in livestock production, pesticide use, manure management and lessening environmental impacts are now part of the current agricultural world. And as the writer explains, “We often complain about these restrictions, but the reasons behind them are sound.” Does any of this sound familiar? All headlines, content and writer name are from the Irish Independent’s Farming section, dated Nov. 18, 2008. (You can read many of these articles on the Irish Independent Web site here http://snipr.com/70d75 The final article by Joe Barry is available here http://snipr.com/70dae) IPIC director John Mabry was in Ireland recently and brought back this issue of the paper. As I read the headlines and articles, I could see Iowa and U.S. agriculture, especially livestock producers, and the economic issues facing us all. Truly, we live in a global society with global economic consequences from our actions. We might be competitors for the consumer dollar, but we’re also collaborators and colleagues in the best sense of those words.

NEWS
New book on using distillers grains in livestock diets
A new book on distillers grain usage appears to have all its bases covered: internationally known experts write of their experience and research, specific chapters include information for swine, beef cattle, dairy cattle and poultry, and current opportunities of both domestic use and export possibilities all are in this
free 282-page booklet available from The Midwest Agribusiness Trade Research and Information Center (MATRIC) at ISU. The book is provided in pdf format and available by download only from the MATRIC Web site here http://www.matric.iastate.edu/DGbook/ In the introduction by Dermott Hayes, the reason for the book is simple, "The purpose of this book is to bring together into a single publication the available knowledge of internationally renowned experts to help market participants understand how best to utilize this product in either world export markets or the domestic U.S. market." Hayes is well-known as Pioneer Hi-Bred International Chair in Agribusiness, a professor in both the ISU economics and finance departments, and co-director of the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute. You can read a news release about the book's availability on the ISU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Web site here http://snipr.com/70abo

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Swine help with human health issue
Until now, the only way to study development and potential treatments for Cystic Fibrosis (CF) in humans would be to experiment on children with the disease. But that’s no longer the case, thanks to the efforts of scientists and researchers from the University of Missouri and the University of Iowa. Announced in the journal Science this fall, these scientists said they created genetically engineered piglets with the same mutation that causes CF in people. And that’s good news. UM’s Randy Prather said, “Right now, if you want to do experiments to find treatments or therapies for the lung disease that is fatal for people with CF, you would have to experiment on kids that have CF. … That’s why these new swine models are so important. We have been able to get them through the initial stages of the disease, which they display just like humans, and now we are just waiting for them to grow and potentially develop the lung disease so we can start experimenting in ways that have never been possible.” To learn more, see this segment of the UM (University of Missouri) Web site http://snipr.com/3xtc9 The page also has a video link (in wmv format) of interviews and more specific details on the research and its implications for those with CF and their relatives.

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Pork referendum – yes or no?
Starting next week, USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service will ask eligible pork producers and importers whether they want a referendum on the Pork Checkoff Program. According to a news release from AMS, only those who want a referendum on the program should participate in the voluntary “Request for Referendum” that will run from Dec. 8, 2008 through Jan. 2, 2009. To be eligible, producers and importers must have been, “…engaged in pork production or importation hogs, pigs, pork or pork products between Jan. 1, 2007, and Dec. 31, 2007, and were at least 18 years of age on or before Dec. 31, 2007.” Producers will participate at the county FSA office where their administrative farm records are kept. To participate, people will use form LS-54-1. If at least 15 percent of the total eligible producers and importers request the referendum, it will be held within one year after the results of this request for referendum are announced. At least 10,417 eligible producers and importers must request the referendum in order for it to be held. You can read more in the USDA AMS news release here http://snipr.com/6zr5f and on the USDA-AMS Pork Checkoff Web page here http://snipr.com/6zrld

IT’S A DATE
Continuing. PQAPlus certification sessions. See the IPIC web site here http://www.ipic.iastate.edu/PQAPlus.html for date, location and contact information.

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Dec. 3-4. Iowa Farm Bureau Federation annual meeting and trade show. Polk County Convention Complex, Des Moines. Dec. 3, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Dec. 4, 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. IPIC and IPPA will share display space in booth #29. Stop to say, “Hi” if you’re attending the conference.

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Dec. 9. Pork Quality Assurance Plus™ Advisor Training. Memorial Union, ISU campus. Applications are due TODAY, with payment from approved applicants due prior to the program date. Download the application form here http://www.ipic.iastate.edu/PQAPapp1208.doc
Dec. 17. Pork Niche Market Working Group. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. IPPA offices in Clive. See the PNMWG Web site for more information http://snipr.com/703wq

Dec. 18. IPIC Advisory Board. 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Kildee Hall, ISU campus, Ames. See current members on our Web site here http://www.ipic.iastate.edu/about.html. We are in need of a producer for a three-year term on the board. If you’re interested or know someone who might be, let us know at ipic@iastate.edu

DID YOU KNOW?
Iowa pork producer named to EPC
Gov. Chet Culver named Dr. Eugene Ver Steegh of Inwood as the newest member of the state’s Environmental Protection Commission. Ver Steegh’s term, which requires an active grain or livestock farmer, will run through April 30, 2011. He takes the place of Ralph Klemme who resigned this fall. This appointment is subject to Senate confirmation during the 2009 session. Ver Steegh is active in pork producer associations, including serving as president of the Iowa Pork Producers Association in 2006-07. Read more in this news release from Gov. Culver’s office: http://snipr.com/703pd

FOR THE RECORD
Holiday gift idea with great taste
It’s the first of December and holiday gift-buying time is slipping away. For those who have nearly everything or those for whom a meal without pork just isn’t complete, consider this: The Pig Next Door offers a “bacon of the month” subscription in 6-month and 12-month lengths, with options for one and two packages each month. Each membership includes a welcome kit, complete with information, a coffee mug, bacon-related goodies and more. There are two clubs, traditional and heirloom, so named for the types of pigs raised for each category. Customs restrictions limit shipping to U.S. only, but that’s okay because the shipping costs for domestic addresses start at nearly the cost of the subscriptions (lowest price is $99 for a package monthly for 6 months.) http://thepignextdoor.com/ The real kicker? This is a California company that doesn’t identify its farmer/producers. We suggest searching a little closer to home. For starters, use the “For consumers” link on the Pork Checkoff’s Niche Pork Web site http://www.nichepork.org/

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