

Feeding the soil means providing nutrients

By Ron Wilson
Director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University

If you want to get eggs, you have to feed the chickens. If you want your car to go, you have to feed it gas. If you want to get milk, you have to feed the cows. And if you want to raise the best crops, you have to feed the soil.

Perhaps we don't think of "feeding the soil" in the same sense that we feed our pets or our livestock, but providing precise nutrients to grow crops has led to a revolution in production agriculture. Scientifically feeding the soil, along with other crop enhancements, has created dramatic improvements in yield and productivity, thus helping to

feed the world. It's also benefitted rural economic development, as entrepreneurial businesses have been created to help supply those products.

Doyle Pearl is general manager of J.B. Pearl Sales and Service, one of those businesses providing soil nutrients. Doyle is a son of J.B. and Eileen Pearl, who started this business in 1961 while farming near St. Marys.

"Anhydrous ammonia (fertilizer) was fairly new and not everybody had the equipment to apply it, so Dad saw an opportunity there," Doyle said. J.B. mounted a small tank on the back of his tractor and used it to apply the anhydrous ammonia for other farmers, while his wife brought it to the field. He kept records in a spiral notebook in his

shirt pocket.

That was the beginning. As the fertilizer business grew, his sons joined in. After serving in the military, Doyle entered the business, becoming general manager when his father retired.

"Dad was such an innovator," Doyle said. "He was always trying different formulations and wasn't satisfied with the status quo. His focus was on service."

Through the years, the business expanded into other products to feed the soil. In the 1990s, J.B. Pearl Sales and Service moved into precision agriculture.

Today, J.B. Pearl Sales and Service is a full-service agribusiness offering a wide variety of products, services and knowledge. These include custom application of fertiliz-

ers, lime, crop protection products, liquid and dry fertilizer applicators and diversified seed sales. J.B. Pearl Sales and Service offers crop consulting by certified crop advisors, soil testing and mapping using global positioning satellites and geographic information systems, and variable application of products to meet specific, targeted crop nutrient needs.

Computers and other advanced technologies have made this possible. These computerized data bases are a long way from the spiral notebook in J.B.'s shirt pocket, but the goal is the same: Provide the best possible product and service for the producer.

From its beginning with just J.B. and his wife Eileen, the company has grown to 27 employees and

three locations serving rural Kansas. In addition to the home office in St. Marys, the company now has locations in Lawrence and Perry, Kansas, population 906 people. Now, that's rural.

Doyle and his wife Laura are in the business as are his brother Don and his wife Patty. Now their sons are the third generation in the family business.

"We have dedicated and skilled employees who are passionate about what they do," Doyle said. "It all hinges on service. We want to give the grower the information and tools they need to succeed."

"Some agronomists say that modern corn genetics could produce 600 bushels of corn or more per acre, and we're at only a third of that today," Doyle said. "You need

to feed the soil to reach maximum yield potential."

If you want to get eggs, you have to feed the chickens. If you want your car to go, you have to feed it gas. And if you want to raise the best crops, you have to feed the soil. Feeding the soil for maximum crop production is the purpose of agribusinesses such as J.B. Pearl Sales and Service. We salute J.B. and Eileen, Doyle and Laura, Don and Patty, and all those involved with this business for making a difference by feeding hungry fields as to feed a hungry world.

And there's more. Doyle is now in a national leadership position for the agribusiness industry. We'll learn about that next week.

country clovers 4-h club

January

The regular monthly meeting of the Country Clover's 4-H Club was held on Monday, Jan. 24, at the Sherman County 4-H building. Acting President Garrett Nemechek called the meeting to order. Ella Ihrig and Taitem Ketter led the club in the flag salute and club pledge. The also led the club in the "ABC Song." Roll call was answered by the member's favorite winter activity. There were 20 members, two leaders and five parents present.

Secretary Kaitlyn Daise read the minutes and they were approved as read. Treasurer Jamie Nemechek gave the treasurer's report and it was received as read. Trevor Daise, reporter, stated that an article

was submitted to the newspaper. Council member, Mikal Freeman, reported on the council meeting. Mikal stated to get in enrollments if members have not done so. He reminded the club to enroll for 4-H days and talent night and that Creative Tables is on Wednesday, Jan. 26. Members need to also call the extension office if you have any ideas for a fair theme.

Leaders, Glenda Cochran and Diane Zelfer, gave the leaders report. Glenda Cochran discussed model meeting practice dates and mentioned the committee needs to get together to organize the meeting. She also mentioned the sign up for county club days and talent night. Diane Zelfer discussed the

beef weigh in is on Saturday, Feb. 26. Diane also discussed the community service project, after the meeting the members need to sign up to adopt a grandparent.

There was no old or new business.

For the program, Taitem Ketter, gave project talk about her goat project. Evin Bergquist gave a health and safety talk on "How to walk on ice." Peri Sieck played the piano. Parker Nemechek led the club in a fun game of "4 Corners."

It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting by saying the club motto and putting up their chairs.

The Nemechek family brought delicious refreshments that were enjoyed by all. The next meeting will

be at 7 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 28.

By Trevor Daise, reporter

February

The regular monthly meeting of the Country Clover's 4-H Club was held on Sunday, Feb. 27, at the Sherman County 4-H Building. President Parker Sieck called the meeting to order. Kate Zelfer led the club in a song of "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." Kate Zelfer also led the club in the flag salute and club pledge. Roll call was answered by the member's favorite president. There were 19 members, two leaders and 11 parents present.

Secretary Kaitlyn Daise read the minutes and they were approved as read. Treasurer Jamie Nemechek gave the treasurer's report and it

was received as read. Trevor Daise, reporter, stated that an article was submitted to the newspaper. Council member Mikal Freeman stated there was no council report.

Leaders Glenda Cochran and Diane Zelfer gave the leaders report. Glenda Cochran discussed the upcoming model meeting at 7 p.m. on Monday, March 21. The practice for the model meeting is at 4 p.m. on Sunday, March 20 and the club will also practice today right after the meeting. Glenda Cochran also informed the members to watch for upcoming dates in the extension office newsletter. Diane Zelfer reminded the members about the upcoming County 4-H days and talent night on Friday, March 4. The

extension office will send a schedule in the mail.

There was no old or new business.

For the program, Jarod Lake gave a project talk on his art project. Matthew Nemechek gave a project talk on his Lego project. Peyton Sieck gave a health and safety talk on "Vision and Hearing Protection in Hunting Sports."

It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting by saying the club motto and putting up their chairs.

The Sieck family brought delicious refreshments that were enjoyed by all. The next meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Monday, March 21.

By Trevor Daise, reporter

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Men's group to sing at Oberlin

The 4 Hymns of McCook will be singing in concert at 1 p.m. (Mountain Time) on Sunday at the Oberlin Gateway Center.

They sing a variety of music ranging from country gospel, contemporary to a capella. The quartet's harmony explodes as the four singers enjoy making music together.

They include: Bruce Lester, senior pastor at McCook Evangelical Free church; who sings lead and second tenor; Jim Ladd, a retired Wyoming police officer; first tenor; Jesse Stevens, operations manager of KIOD Home Town Radio in McCook, first tenor, and Dan Stevens, baritone, a hearing specialist in Mc-

Cook. Accompanying the group is Christy Stevens, McCook.

This is a season ticket event or \$10 for adults and \$5 for students grades 1-12 at the door. For details, call Ella Betts (785) 475-3557 or Mary Henzel (785) 470-0218.

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