



# THE EAR

September 2011

## Manager's Report



**Kevin Hartkemeyer**  
Interim General Manager

I've had the privilege to serve as your General Manager on an interim basis for the past 3 months. I was asked to help Top Ag this summer when your GM decided to leave. Your Board at that time decided to hire an interim manager until a few unusual issues that came up this year were resolved most notably: the tornado damage in Okawville and Pierron, an OSHA inspection that took place in Okawville and a Department of Labor audit. All of those things were very serious in nature and were going to be a large "distraction" for the company for several months making it a less than ideal time to attract a new manager. I'm happy to report that those issues are all behind us or at least quantified at this point, the grain facility damage in Okawville can't all be repaired until after harvest when the bins are full so crews can more easily work on the roofs. The OSHA and DOL inspections have been a great experience for the company and with a lot of real hard work and commitment by the employees at Top Ag are behind us with little significant impact financially but your cooperative is a much safer place to work at today!

We have recommitted Top Ag to an aggressive sales and marketing strategy in the agronomy business bringing in experienced sales agronomist while developing a marketing support structure within the coop to make Top Ag the best in the business. You will see 2 of these

individuals introduced in this newsletter. I will have hired a location manager for

Pierron and will be close to placing a sales agronomist in Pierron by the time you read this. Top Ag's Board and management are committed to Pierron and are very aware of recent turnover. Our goal is to put in place an experienced staff that will be committed to Top Ag Pierron and provide stability there that has been missing.

Your cooperative has just completed one of its best years ever and we are waiting for the auditors later this month to complete their work so we can share the results with you. Your coop is very financially strong! Please attend the annual meeting in November where we can explain in detail this year's results.

It has been a pleasure to get to know many of you and your communities! I've been a cooperative GM for 20 years in NW Iowa and have been either a farmer or in Ag business for 35+ years and I can tell you that you have a very good company. While every company needs work in areas you have very good dedicated employees who are concerned about their customers and you have a committed board that is focused on the long-term. Most importantly I have visited with many customers in the various communities that Top Ag is a part of and have felt a real loyal feeling of ownership! It takes all of those for a cooperative to be successful and you have them.

I know I speak for all of Top Ag when I say Thank You for your business and support! We look forward to serving you long into the future. Please have a safe harvest!

After 5 years of leasing,  
we purchased the  
location in Mascoutah to  
better serve your needs!



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<http://www.topag.net/>

## Grain Insight

### Scott Harre

Grain Manager

First of all, Top Ag would like to thank all of our patrons for helping us set a new grain volume record this past fiscal year. We were able to handle over 17,000,000 bushels this past year even with two of our locations receiving extensive damage by the February 28<sup>th</sup> storm. The Okawville location has for the most part been repaired and is running back at full capacity. There is still some roof work on both 750,000 bushel bins that will be repaired after harvest. This will not interfere with the fall harvest.

The Pierron location should be wrapping up its repairs by September 14<sup>th</sup> and be ready for harvest. These improvements will greatly speed up the process and get our customers out to the field more quickly. We look forward to handling your needs at the Pierron location this fall.

The past year we have seen prices on corn and soybeans increase over \$3.00 per bushel from this time last year. With the current tight stocks-to-use ratio on corn and the uncertainty of this year's total corn acres & yield, we could be in for an interesting year. The soybean market has a slightly better stock-to-use ratio, but still will make for some energized markets. The wheat market is the one market that has good stocks worldwide and will, for the most part, ride on the corn and soybean market. One thing that will have a large impact on the wheat market will be the dry weather in the southern plain states for fall planting.

Top Ag storage rates this fall will remain the same for both corn and soybeans at \$0.16 through January 1<sup>st</sup>. We are in a good position to take care of all your grain needs this fall at each of our locations. Please call Scott, Seth or Mike for all your pricing needs.

**Interested in receiving the market prices straight to your phone?  
Call Mike Fuhler today to sign up!**



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### Mike Fuhler

Grain Merchandiser

### NON GMO & Specialty Grain Programs

Hello to all TOP AG producers. This has been a challenging growing season. Starting with a wet spring, followed by a hot July and dry August, it is easy to understand why yield projections have continued to decline over the past few weeks. Fortunately the market has responded by moving higher. For the most part, the entire corn and soybean belt has had similar weather issues. Since the end of July corn has rallied nearly 50 cents, soybeans 25 cents and wheat 70 cents.

We have numerous programs with good premiums for NON GMO corn and soybeans, Hard Endo Corn and NON GMO White corn available for delivery this fall and winter, as well as, next spring and summer.

If you happen to have some old crop NON GMO corn we have a program with a 50 cent premium for first half of September buyers call. This can be old crop or new crop. Beyond that we have nine delivery periods for new crop corn starting with Sep/Oct '11 buyer call through July/Aug '12 buyers call. Premiums range from 25 cents to 48 cents depending on delivery period.

NON GMO soybeans have a \$1.00 per bushel premium with five delivery periods starting with Nov 2011 thru Apr/May 2012. We also have a \$1.40 per bushel premium available for Emerge variety E448 with a Jan/Mar '12 and Apr/July '12 delivery period.

In regards to Hard Endo corn we have 55 to 58 cent premiums available with a Nov '11 – Mar '12 and an Apr-June 12 delivery on a buyers call. This program does have a list of specific hybrids that qualify. If you planted some Hard Endo just give me a call to check your hybrid against their approved list.

NON GMO White corn has a 65 cent premium with a Mar/April 2012 buyers call. All NON GMO White corn hybrids should qualify.

As most of you are aware, I have relocated to the Trenton office, I can be reached at 618-224-7332 or toll free 1-888-508-3477. Give me a call for more details if you have grain that may qualify for some premiums.

## Agronomy News



**Willis Harriss**  
Agronomy Manager

After a very challenging spring and summer, yet another harvest is right on our doorstep. Pricing for fall fertilizer and wheat are now available. We will be accepting your orders for seed corn and soybeans after September 15. Ask your salesman for programs and pricing for this fall. We suggest spraying fields with Canopy EX for 2012 soybeans to keep the winter annuals down and help with marestail dilemmas. We also suggest spraying Basis for use on corn or beans for the 2012 season. If you are interested in GPS soil testing and mapping, please contact your salesman or let someone know at Top Ag.

For your added convenience, we purchased a new 3-wheel floater dry spreader, which will be delivered sometime in October. Please have a safe harvest this fall. We appreciate your business.

### **Gary Cross** Seed Agronomist

It's about that time again to start ordering seed wheat. We offer several varieties to accommodate your preferences. For any suggestions and to learn about discounts, contact your local salesman.

## Agronomy Salesmen Introductions

### **Gary Cross** Seed Agronomist

Gary is originally from Ridgway, Illinois. He was hired recently as a full time seed agronomist. He attended Southern Illinois University of Carbondale and began

working for Ridgway Seed Company. He was a Purdue University Extension Ag Agent, University of Nebraska Foundation Seeds Director, Kansas State Extension Ag Agent, a Nevada Department of Agriculture State Seed Program Director and involved in the University of Missouri Extension Agriculture Rural Economic and Community Development. Gary has spent 25 plus years in agriculture all over the United States.

Please contact Gary for all your seed advising needs at (618) 224-7332.



**Michael Stewart**  
Sales Agronomist

My name is Michael Stewart. I was hired by Top Ag on August 15th as a Sales Agronomist. The area that I am covering is west of Okawville over towards St. Libory, New Athens, Mascoutah and Lebanon. I live on our family farm in between Coulterville and Tilden with my wife of eighteen years, Charlene and our two children, Michaela and Conner.

I was born in St. Louis in 1968. My parents are Larry and Linda Stewart of Belleville. I have one sister Erin Jbor who lives in Collinsville. I graduated from Belleville West HS in 1986 and from SIUC Carbondale with a B.S. in Agribusiness Economics in 1992. I was the tenant farmer of the 280 acre family farm from 1985 to 1995. I have worked for the Farmers Home Administration as an Emergency Loan Supervisor during the floods of 1993. I have also been the Resource Conservationist for the St. Clair County Soil and Water Conservation District in Belleville, IL. Most of my sales experience has been in seed, but I have also sold fertilizer, chemical and seed treatment.

My hobbies include golf, hunting, fishing, and Texas Hold'em. I help my wife run the 4-H group "The Country Crusaders" and I am an active member of the First United Methodist Church in Sparta, IL. There I have served as Missions Committee chairman and liturgist.



## Trucking Department



**Lonny Schultz**  
Trucking Manager

Harvest of 2011 is rapidly approaching and the TOP Ag trucking department has been hard at work readying for this harvest. We have been hauling grain to terminals and our railhead to make room in our bins to hold this harvest. We have added a new tractor to our fleet in hopes of better serving your needs. As in the past, we will be available during harvest to haul your grain from the field or bin during harvest. Because of the limited number of trucks and trailers, I would suggest that you try to forecast trucking needs and communicate them to me. Those who are able to forecast their needs and communicate them will as always end up with the best service.



The storm took down a grain leg, cross drag conveyors, dump pit buildings, and caused severe roof damage on several grain bins at both locations. The Okawville plant was a new facility that was only used for one fall harvest. The Pierron facility, on the other hand, was built in 1976. After a few sleepless nights, Top Ag and the insurance company put a plan together to get things cleaned up and started the rebuilding process. As of now, the Okawville facility is temporarily back in operation. Fortunately, we will be able to fill the grain bins this fall during harvest. After harvest, all the cross leg conveyors will have to come back down so the roof repair can be done. After all the roof repairs are finished, the conveyors can go back up. As you can imagine, this is very time consuming!

At the Pierron plant, we are still in the process of rebuilding. Since this facility is older, Top Ag is trying to make some upgrade improvements. We took down the old dump pit and building to make a new lower to the ground level pit that should hold approximately 700 bushels. The leg has been upgraded to 10,000 bushels per hour. These improvements should help customers get in and out at quicker speeds. Top Ag is hoping to have the Pierron facility in operation by early to mid-September. Top Ag invites you to stop by and view these facilities or any of the Top Ag facilities. Thanks for your patience and have a safe and prosperous harvest.



Pierron location

## Operational Updates

**Wayne Albers**  
Operations Manager

In February 2011, Top Ag suffered a significant amount of tornado damage at both the Okawville and Pierron plants. This occurred on a Sunday evening right after midnight. Luckily, no one was there and nobody was injured. Ironically, the two storms hit the plants within minutes apart. It shows you that Mother Nature is still in charge, as we have seen other weather issues this spring and summer.



## Financial Details

### **Linus Wilke**

Controller

I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank all the individuals and businesses who have been members of this cooperative in the past or who took advantage of our membership drive this past year and joined this cooperative organization. We had over 100 new members join with us in this current business venture known as TOP Ag Cooperative, Inc.

When I was asked to write this article I wasn't sure what to write about, but then I thought I would write about what a cooperative actually is. I'm sure most members know that it's a corporation operating for the mutual benefits of its members in which net income of the business is allocated back to the members based on transactions transacted by its members in specific product categories (i.e. grain, feed, fertilizer, seed, chemicals, lumber products, etc.). This allocation back to the members is what is called patronage refund and will come in the form of cash or stock (patronage stock).

I could go into much more detail about how cooperatives got started with the Capper-Volstead Act back in February 1922 and how it gave "associations" of persons producing agricultural products certain exemptions from antitrust laws, but I won't. That would be too boring for most people so instead I will focus on something that most people might not know much about cooperatives, and that is the principles of cooperatives.

There are seven principles for cooperatives and they are the guidelines by which cooperatives put their values into practice. These principles date back to 1844 and we still hold these principles up to the highest regards as guidelines to follow in our daily business practices. These principles are as follows:

- 1) Voluntary and Open Membership
- 2) Democratic Member Control
- 3) Member Economic Participation
- 4) Autonomy and Independence
- 5) Education, Training and Information
- 6) Cooperation among Cooperatives
- 7) Concern for Community

Hopefully with future articles I will be able to get into more detail on what each of these principles stand for, but for now I will just give you the basics of what these principles are leave it at that. And just remember this; whenever you do business with TOP Ag you are doing business with yourself. Also, for those customers who aren't members yet you are always welcome to join our membership, thanks!

### **Lloyd Strubhart**

Credit Manager

It is that time to start thinking about financing your 2012 crops.

The past couple of years have been challenging as the prices of fertilizer keep fluctuating. Would you like to secure pricing for all your fertilizer and chemical needs in 2012, but feel you just can't afford to? Top Ag can help with your financial needs, through CFA Financing. The process is quick and painless and we would be happy to meet with you at your farm or here at the office. You can start the process as soon as possible with just one phone call.

Feel free to contact me, Lloyd Strubhart, at 243-5293 ext. 360 or on my cell phone at (618) 314-5873 to get started or to answer any questions or concerns you may have.



**CONGRATULATIONS TO  
ALL OUR EMERALD  
EXTRAS PAK WINNERS!!!**

If you would like more information to get involved in the Emerald Extras program, contact Ashley, your salesman or stop in today!



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## From the Lumberyard....

### Dave Wilke & Carol Lohman

Top Ag's Lumberyard provides a full line of quality lumber, building supplies and services at very competitive prices.

Some of what our lumberyard has to offer includes:

Standard lumber	Treated Lumber
Plywood	Ox board
Drywall	Siding
Shingles	Soffiting
Entry doors	Garage doors
Windows	Cabinets
Countertops	Hardware
Tools	Paint & Caulk
Lake & Pond Chemicals	Lacrosse Boots
Boom Truck Service	Screen & Window Repair

Come in or give us a call for all your home or building needs and we will work up an estimate for you!

The Lumberyard is located on 12<sup>th</sup> Street in Okawville next to the chemical building.

Hours: Mon-Fri 7am-5pm  
Saturday 8am – noon

Phone: (618) 243-6137

## Always Think Safety!

### Joe Rowell

EH & S Manager

I like cake. I'll bet most people do. With the right ingredients, combined as directed, baked at the right temperature and iced or topped as recommended, the results can be awesome. Pie is the same. Except there are only two kinds I like...hot and cold. Just like cake, combined properly, the ingredients produce the desired

result. A good safety process is much the same. There's a recipe that, if followed, yield the desired result: the ability to go home at the end of every day, safe, whole and well.

The first ingredient of a good safety program is commitment. In order to be committed to something, one has to believe that it is the right thing to do. Doing the right thing is the basis of safe behavior.

The second ingredient is proper resources. Providing the resources needed to do the right thing, so individuals can perform their jobs safely is the responsibility of your employer. This responsibility is both a moral and legal obligation. Fortunately for us, Top Ag is committed to making sure that every employee has all the resources needed to be able to yield the desired result described above. Some of the resources to work safely include information, training, tools and equipment.

Over the last few months, many of you have received more information and training about safe processes and work practices than ever before. And more is coming. My commitment to you is to not give up on my efforts to supply the tools you need to be safe at work and at home. With your commitment to help make it work, this recipe will continue to add the ingredients to be successful in accomplishing the intended goal.

Believe me when I say this: Top Ag is committed to making sure every employee is given the resources needed to keep themselves safe so they can go home every day, safe, whole and well.

As I contemplated writing this article, my inspiration came from a recipe. A friend made an awesome dessert that I would like to share with you. My hope is that when you try it, it will give reason to think about the ingredients combined to make something good, which is how I hope you will come to view our safety process.

Include safety in the thought process for everything you do. If you can't do something safely...it isn't worth doing.

Stay safe!



## GRAIN & FEED ASSOCIATION *Of Illinois*

During harvest several years ago, there was a fatal accident near the dump pit at a country elevator in Illinois. The accident involved a straight truck pulling a gravity wagon. The employee of the elevator finished dumping the truck and before he could get clear of the vehicle, the driver drove away, forgetting about the wagon he was pulling. As a result, the elevator employee was killed when he was struck by the gravity wagon.

Tragic accidents and near-miss accidents can happen in and around grain elevator dump pits if proper safety precautions are not observed. Over the years, various injuries including sprained wrists, shoulder problems, broken noses, and loss of teeth have occurred to grain elevator employees during the harvest seasons.

By following the four simple rules listed below, we will all be able to reduce the likelihood of a fatality or injury in or around the grain elevator dump pits this harvest season.

### Dump Pit Safety Rules

Please follow these simple steps and procedures and we can all have a safe and productive harvest:

- 1. Shift your vehicle into neutral and set the parking brake.**
- 2. Do not begin hoisting dump bed vehicles until instructed to do so.**
- 3. If you have any problems with the mechanism that allows grain to flow out of your vehicle, inform the dump pit operator of the best method to operate this problem equipment.**
- 4. DO NOT PROCEED BACK TO THE SCALE UNTIL THE DUMP OPERATOR SIGNALS TO YOU THAT IT IS OK TO MOVE!**



**OFFICE HOURS**

Addieville, Okawville, Pierron, St. Libory, Trenton

Monday – Friday 8 am – 4:30 pm

Mascoutah

Monday – Friday 6:30 am - 3:00 pm

Lumberyard

Monday – Friday 7 am – 5 pm

Saturday 8 am – noon

**HARVEST HOURS**

Vary upon location. Please call your local elevator for these hours.

**Top Ag Cooperative, Inc.**

Okawville	(618) 243-5293
Trenton	(618) 224-7332
Pierron	(618) 654-9804
Addieville	(618) 424-7736
Mascoutah	(618) 566-8248
St. Libory	(618) 768-4348
Lumber Yard	(618) 243-6137

**Management**

Kevin Hartkemeyer	Interim General Manager
Willie Harriss	Agronomy Sales Manager
Scott Harre	Grain Department Manager
Lonny Schultz	Trucking Department Manager.
Shawn Meier	Feed Department Manager
Wayne Albers	Operations Manager
Dave Wilke	Lumber Yard Manager
Linus Wilke	Controller
Lloyd Strubhart	Credit Manager

**Sales Staff**

Bob Ottensmeier, Trenton	(618) 224-7332
Gary Cross, Trenton	(618) 224-7332
Justin Harre, Okawville	(618) 243-3354
Michael Stewart, Okawville	(618) 243-3353
Dennis Wernle, Pierron	(618) 654-9804

**Staff**

Marsha Bergmann, Accounting Clerk	(618) 243-3369
Jennifer Durr, Staff Accountant	(618) 243-3297
Seth Swoboda, Grain Merchandiser	(618) 243-5293
Beth Potthast, Grain Accountant	(618) 243-3350
Mike Fuhler, Grain Merchandiser	(618) 224-7332
Joe Rowell, Safety	(618) 243-3362
John Thomas, Billing	(618) 243-3359
Duane Kampwerth, Feed, Trenton	(618) 224-7332

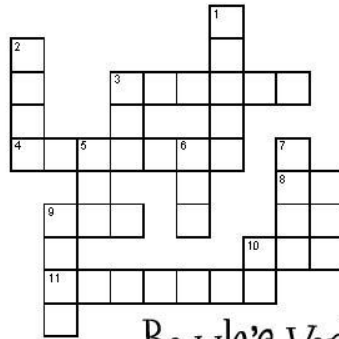


THANK YOU to all who attended the Answer Plot sessions this year! For questions or comments about the Answer Plot, contact your salesman. To receive invites or be removed from the mailing list, contact Ashley at (618) 243-3358.



## Fun for the kiddos

### Farm



Boggle's World

#### Across

3. What vegetable do rabbits like?
4. What green vegetable is in salads?
8. Farmers get up \_\_ five o'clock.
9. What animal guards the farmer's house?
10. What is two minus one?
11. What animal gives us eggs?

#### Down

1. What animal do we ride?
2. When do we harvest?
3. What animal catches mice?
5. What is two times one?
6. What animal gives us milk?
7. Where do we keep the animals?
9. What animal lives in the pond?
10. The pencil is \_\_ the book.



[www.bogglesworldesl.com](http://www.bogglesworldesl.com)

## Farm Facts

A duck's quack doesn't echo, and no one knows why

Twelve or more cows are known as a "flink".

The first bird domesticated by man was the goose.

Goat's eyes have rectangular pupils.

## Recipes

### Salisbury Steak

- 10 ¾ oz. can Beefy Mushroom condensed soup
- 1 ½ lbs. ground beef (thawed)
- ½ cup dry bread crumbs      ½ tsp. salt
- 1/8 tsp. pepper                      1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 egg, slightly beaten              1/3 cup water

In a medium bowl, combine ¼ of the soup with the beef, bread crumbs, salt, pepper, onion and egg. Shape into 6 or 7 patties and brown them in a large skillet. Drain off the fat. Add water and remaining soup and let simmer for 10 minutes.

### Aunt Sue's Coffee Cake

#### Cake Batter Ingredients:

- 3 cups flour                              1 ½ cups sugar
- 3 eggs                                      16 oz. sour cream
- 1 ½ tsp. baking powder              1 ½ tsp vanilla
- ¼ tsp salt
- ¾ cup margarine or butter, softened

#### Filling Ingredients:

- ½ cup brown sugar                      1 ½ tsp cinnamon
- ½ cup walnuts or pecans (optional)

Preheat the oven to 350°. Mix all batter ingredients well. In a separate bowl, mix filling ingredients. Pour 1/3 of the batter mixture into bottom of greased budnt pan. Sprinkle ½ of the filling mixture on top, and then add ½ of the remaining batter. Layer the rest of the filling and top off with the remaining batter.

Bake for 45 -60 minutes. Best served warm.



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### Top Ag Cooperative Inc.

702 South Elevator Street  
Okawville, IL 62271  
618-243-5293



## Miscellaneous News

### Concrete Addition...

In mid-August, we started a major project for the benefit of our customers and employees. At the Okawville location, there is now a concrete runway leading up to the scale. This should reduce the potholes and fly-up dust.

Next year, we plan to add concrete on the exit or south side of the scale.

## Contents

- ❖ Manager's Report – page 1
- ❖ Grain Insight – page 2
- ❖ Agronomy – page 3
- ❖ Trucking & Operations – page 4
- ❖ Financials – page 5
- ❖ Lumberyard – page 6
- ❖ Safety – Page 6 & 7

