

## Allee Demonstration Farm 2000 Report

Lyle Rossiter, farm superintendent

It was a busy year at the Allee Farm. Educational tours were presented to 40 Japanese college students and 47 Newell-Fonda third-graders. They enjoyed viewing the pasture farrowing system, crops, garden projects, and cattle. The Allee Farm field day informed 76 people on the topics of calcium levels for market cattle, manure composting, organic crop production, and swine pasture farrowing. Grazing organic chickens in a movable vehicle called a "chicken tractor" drew an additional 25 visitors. The Newell Achievers 4-H Club created their "Secret Garden" this past summer. This project involved 23 4-H members who grew and maintained the garden. The Allee Farm hosted 57 pork producers for a swine artificial insemination class sponsored by Iowa State University Extension and Vision 2020. The Allee Farm hosted over 875 people providing hands-on educational opportunities to youth and adults. We extend an open invitation to all to stop in and visit the farm as well as the Allee Victorian mansion.

Sustainable farming practices have been emphasized by the Allee Farm's advisory committee for the last five years. Niche marketing and adding value at the farm gate is one of the primary goals that has led the farm into certified organic crops and broiler chicken production.

A mild 1999-2000 winter preceded an early warm, dry spring with low sub-soil moisture reserves. March dust storms occurred. Farmers did early fertilizer application and fieldwork. Many farmers planted oats during the first week of March. By the end of April, the majority of corn was planted at a two-inch depth to find soil moisture. A total of 2.5 in. of

rain fell in May. Many of the soybeans were planted in dry soil, and some farmers delayed planting waiting for moisture. A timely 1.5 in. of rain on June 13 improved conditions. July was the most stressful month for the crops with rainfall totaling 0.5 in. In August, a total of 3.3 in. of rain fell. Crop stress was apparent with barren stalks, smaller ears, and soybean pod abortion. September was also dry with .2 in. of rain. Total rainfall during the April through October 2000 crop season was 10.5 in. (Table 1).

An early harvest began in September with corn coming out of the field at 14-19% moisture. Some corn varieties were harvested before the soybeans because of corn stalk rot and lodging. Corn yields varied from 90 bushels for high oil to 135 bushels in strip-cropping. Soybeans were harvested at moistures of 9-13%. Conventional drilled and thirty-inch row beans yielded 38-43 bushels per acre.

Spring and fall pasture farrowing occurred on the alfalfa of the organic oat-alfalfa-corn-soybean crop rotation. Gilts are saved from the spring litters and bred with either Hampshire, York, or Duroc boars in a two-litter system. The May farrowing consisted of 62 gilts and 20 sows, and weaned 703 pigs or 8.57 pigs/litter. Piglets are weaned into three hoop structures and are finished in a Cargill unit. Fall farrowing in October was a challenge because of cold weather and freezing waterers. Forty-two second-parity sows weaned 333 pigs, or 7.92 pigs/litter. Ten purebred Berkshire gilts were purchased in February to access the Japanese niche market. Breeding the Berkshire gilts was a challenge in the hot July weather. This year 915 butchers were sold, and 74 gilts were retained for pasture farrowing in 2001.

Yearling steers (254 head) were fed for market. Seven pens were used for feeding trials. The 40' x 180' cattle confinement building is being

transformed into a manure storage and composting building. This composting site will enhance the farm's manure management plan and increase stable nitrogen sources for

the expanding organic acres. Cattle lot manure samples at the Allee Farm are being used to study nutrient runoff on concrete lots.

**Table 1. 2000 monthly rainfall at Storm Lake, IA.**

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<b><u>Month</u></b>	<b><u>Inches</u></b>
April	0.20
May	2.54
June	2.17
July	0.50
August	3.30
September	0.20
October	<u>1.65</u>
Total	10.56