

Allee Demonstration Farm Crop and Livestock Report

Lyle Rossiter, superintendent

The advisory committee for the Allee Demonstration Farm has emphasized demonstrating sustainable farm practices on a small farm. The Allee Farm operation consists of 35 certified organic acres, 229 conventional acres, 300 head of market beef cattle, a two-litter (spring and fall) pasture farrowing system with 60–80 sows, finishing swine in three hoop structures, and an organic free-range broiler chicken demonstration project.

Adding value to farm products before they are marketed is the primary goal of including a variety of niche marketing projects at the farm. Low-capital investment demonstrations added in 2001 were:

- Organic garden produce to organized farmer's markets.
- An organic apple orchard.
- Organic wheat/alfalfa/corn/soybean rotation.
- Custom grinding and marketing of organic chicken feed.
- Marketing of Berkshire swine.
- Adapting of Allee Farm's swine pasture/hoop production to an existing successful swine niche market (Niman Ranch).
- On-farm composting of dead livestock.

Record snowfall and cold temperatures at the beginning of 2001 helped correct moisture deficiencies of the year 2000. Mild April 2001 temperatures melted the snow early, which allowed fieldwork to start on April 16. On April 23, rain (2.25 inches) increased subsoil moisture levels; a higher-than-normal temperature (85° F) warmed the soil to aid corn germination.

May began with an 80+ mph windstorm that destroyed the farm's open-front cattle confinement building and rolled many of the pasture-farrowing huts. Rains of 2.37 inches from May 2–5 slowed planting. Most of the corn was planted by May 10. Cooler-than-normal temperatures during the last half of the month slowed corn growth and soybean emergence. Soybean beetles, corn cutworms, and corn rootworm beetles were present throughout the growing season.

June weather produced 2.72 inches of rain the first two weeks, followed by a 29-day dry period. Mild temperatures throughout this time allowed crops to grow with virtually no moisture stress in the corn. The highest temperature in June was 94° F and in July, 93° F. Moisture relief for crops came July 17–23, with rain totaling 3.15 inches. August precipitation totaled 3.96 inches, and September had 1.92 inches of rain. Total rainfall during the April through October 2001 crop season was 20.89 inches. (Table 1).

Soybeans were harvested the second week of September, with few rain delays. Local soybean yields were 40–50 bushels at 7–13% moisture. The majority of corn harvest was completed by October 17. Yields were less than expected—125–170 bushels/acre with an average of 145. Corn rootworm damage and susceptible corn varieties lodged in an August windstorm. Some local farmers harvested cornfields in one direction to maximize yields. Average yields on the Allee Farm were: conventional corn, 147 bushels/acre; organic corn, 129–154 bushels/acre; soybeans, 47 bushels/acre; and wheat, 51 bushels/acre.

Livestock sales consisted of 378 market cattle, 557 organic chickens, 600 market hogs, and 74 cull sows. Fifty-nine gilts were retained for pasture farrowing in June of 2002. A decision was made to sell the 10 purebred Berkshire

sows because of low conception rates and the loss from erysipelas of four sows in July.

For information not included in 2000–2001 reports, contact Lyle Rossiter at (712) 272-3512, or e-mail cross@nwia.com.

Table 1. 2001 rainfall at Storm Lake, IA.

<u>Month</u>	<u>Inches</u>
April	3.59
May	5.13
June	2.72
July	3.15
August	3.96
September	1.92
October	0.42
<u>Total</u>	<u>20.89</u>