

# THE BUZZ



News about the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs – University of Guelph Partnership

March 25, 2009

Vol. 11, No. 6

## NEWS

**Emergency preparedness at the Animal Health Lab.** New equipment and computer programs at the Animal Health Lab (AHL) will ensure better traceability, increased testing capacity and a decrease in errors should there be an avian influenza (AI) outbreak in Ontario. Suspicion of AI in a poultry flock is serious because it can lead to quarantine, movement control, closed borders, and huge economic losses. To provide surge capacity for disease detection and for rapid recovery, the Animal Health Lab is working closely with OMAFRA and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to develop efficient and accurate testing for AI viruses. The project is almost complete. In place are a high capacity robot for sample preparation, a high volume thermocycler for PCR testing, automated sample scanning, and computer interfacing. Dr. Grant Maxie, Director of AHL says, "This integrated system of field sampling right through to interfaced reporting will provide unprecedented rapidity and accuracy in emergency responsiveness."

## RESEARCH STATIONS

**New combine improves research capacity.** The Elora Crop Science Research Station recently took possession of a new research plot combine to support ongoing research in grains and oil seeds, including plant breeding. Smaller in size than a typical farm scale combine harvester, the plot combine allows for precision harvesting of research trial plots with on-board precision scales as well as sampling and data collection equipment. Istvan Rajcan from the Department of Plant Agriculture is one of the researchers who will be using the new equipment. He says this kind of infrastructure has been a key component in the success of many field-based research programs at the University of Guelph, including plant breeding programs. "To continue to benefit the research supported by the OMAFRA/UofG contract and the Ontario economy, it is essential that equipment be replaced and upgraded on a timely basis," he says. This \$270,000 investment was made possible through funding from the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario, and a contribution from faculty who will be using the combine.

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

**Enviropig™ selected for World's Best Technology Showcase.** The Enviropig™, a new breed of animal specifically designed to tackle phosphorus loading - one of society's most challenging environmental problems - will be presented March 24-25 at the [World's Best Technology Showcase](#). This event is the biggest forum anywhere for pre-screened, undiscovered companies and technologies, such as the Enviropig™. This animal is capable of digesting phosphorus from plants, far more efficiently than conventional pigs. That greatly reduces the animals' output of phosphorus, a burdensome pollutant in lakes and streams. The Enviropig™ can also reduce feed costs for farmers by eliminating or reducing phosphorus supplements. Enviropig™ is an example of technology developed through public-private funding from both OMAFRA and Ontario Pork. Currently, the Enviropig™ is being evaluated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for regulatory approval in the United States. See <http://www.uoguelph.ca/enviropig> for more information.

## IN THE NEWS

**Seeing white should raise a red flag.** An animal's temperament can influence the entire production line, from farm safety right down to the product's taste, says graduate student Sarah Core of the Department of Animal and Poultry Science at the UofG. She conducted a study linking beef cattle's temperament to the percentage of visible white of their eyes. Under the supervision of Prof. Stephen Miller, also from the Department of Animal and Poultry Science, Core's research showed that a greater percentage of visible white means a more agitated animal. For farmers, using this method means they can observe and evaluate the temperament of their animals at a glance, helping to make life on the farm safer, and improving meat quality. "The more attention paid to an animal's disposition, the greater the benefits for the beef industry," says Core. Read more in SPARK student Natalie Osborne's Guelph Mercury article [here](#).

**Partnership research highlighted at London conference.** As reported by Hank Daniszewski in the [London Free Press](#), University of Guelph researchers are part of a movement discovering new technologies that could turn Canada into the "Saudi Arabia of biomass energy." The third annual 'Growing the Margins' convention which took place March 10 – 13, 2009 in London, showcased these technologies, including the research of Prof. Naresh Trevathan. He's working on a system to plant rows of fast-growing willow and poplar trees between rows of crops, to produce wood pellets that could be burned to heat buildings. Trevathan says it's an ideal solution for marginal land along Lake Erie where tobacco was once grown. Willows grow so quickly that cuttings can be harvested every three years, and the trees will continue to grow for 20 years. Read the full article [here](#).

## STAFF AND STUDENT NEWS

**Partnership in action.** Dr. Tom Wright - Dairy Cattle Nutritionist, and Christoph Wand - Beef Cattle and Sheep Nutritionist, both from OMAFRA, are heading to the Department of Animal and Poultry Science at the U of G to work among their university colleagues. Wright and Wand will be using their technical backgrounds and relationships among academics and industry to help bridge the link between farmers and faculty, as well as strengthening the technology transfer process.

**Northern exposure.** Mary-Jo Gordon, Research and Innovation Branch, has accepted a secondment to the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, Northern Growth Plan Unit in Sudbury where she will be a Senior Growth Plan Advisor, responsible for developing a Northern Growth Plan this spring. Mary-Jo joined the Research and Innovation Branch as Acting Senior Research Advisor in May 2008 to manage the Research Priority Setting Expert Panels. Since December 2008, she has worked as a Research Analyst in the new Innovation and Knowledge Management Unit, helping develop a plan for Knowledge Translation and Transfer.

---

## COMING EVENTS

**5<sup>th</sup> annual conference on organic dairying and dairy research.** Université de Guelph-Campus d'Alfred is hosting its 5th Annual Conference on organic dairying and dairy research April 2nd and 3rd 2009. For more information and the registration form click [here](#).

**Research Program Director speaking at seminar series.** Dr. Alejandro Marangoni, Canada Research Chair in Food and Soft Materials Science, and Research Program Director for the Product Development research theme in the OMAFRA/UofG Agreement will be speaking at the Guelph Food Seminar Series about "Food, nutrition and health: The fat story." The event takes place Wednesday, April 8, 2009; 10 – 11 a.m. in Conference Room 3 in the 1 Stone Road Building, Guelph.

---

## ***About The Buzz***

*The Buzz* is the electronic community news vehicle for the OMAFRA/University of Guelph partnership.

Editor: Liz Snyder, OMAFRA/UofG programs, 519-826-3376, [lsnyder@uoguelph.ca](mailto:lsnyder@uoguelph.ca). To contribute, contact Liz or contributing editors Robyn Meerveld, (519-826-4191, [robyn.meerveld@ontario.ca](mailto:robyn.meerveld@ontario.ca)) or Owen Roberts (519-826-5207, [owen@uoguelph.ca](mailto:owen@uoguelph.ca)).

Contributors to this issue: Natalie Carter, Steve De Brandabere, Stacy Favrin, Elin Gwyn, Grant Maxie, Robyn Meerveld, Hayley Millard, Rich Moccia, Davor Ojkic, Natalie Osborne, Remo Pallottini, Istvan Rajcan, Owen Roberts, Michelle Schurter, Liz Snyder, Mary Visser Kerr.

Find out more about the OMAFRA/University of Guelph Partnership at:

[www.uoguelph.ca/research/omafra/index.shtml](http://www.uoguelph.ca/research/omafra/index.shtml)

[www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/about/uofg/](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/about/uofg/)

***Please forward this newsletter to anyone who may be interested.***