

Southwest Michigan Field Crops Updates Novel Coronavirus Update - mid-March 2020

Hi folks,

I want to update you on what is happening with MSU Extension in the midst of the various travel and meeting restrictions due to the novel coronavirus situation. In accordance with recommendations from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), [World Health Organization](#) and the [Michigan Department of Health & Human Services](#), modifying or cancelling events is the most responsible course of action to mitigate any potential risks to all involved and the friends and family with whom these individuals will come in contact.

As you may have heard, MSU has ended all face-to-face student instruction for the semester. Professors have been working to transform all instruction and testing to an online format to allow students to finish the semester, but commencement has been postponed. The University continues to operate, but travel and meeting restrictions have been put in place to minimize the risk of obtaining and spreading the disease as governments and other organizations have done.

These same precautions have been extended to Extension staff and activities. Below I am including specifics to let you know what is changing temporarily and what is not changing. For up-to-date information on MSU's handling of the coronavirus situation, you can visit the [Remote Learning and Resources online space](#).

Extension Support Remains Strong

All of the counties in our district have chosen to close their buildings until further notice out of an abundance of caution. However, Extension continues to provide support from home, checking voicemails, responding to emails, etc. So, if you have any questions for Extension staff, don't hesitate to reach out...we'll just be using our Norton Antivirus to combat the coronavirus. ;)

As of the writing of this update, all face-to-face meetings in March have been cancelled, and we are being encouraged to modify outreach efforts to include more online opportunities (see below for examples). At this point, we are still able to make farm visits with individual farmers when necessary, taking all sensible precautions regarding social distancing, hygiene, etc. As the novel coronavirus situation continues to change, future plans are necessarily fluid, and updates will be available as we move forward.

Pesticide Certification Testing/Training

The MDARD-led pesticide certification testing events that were scheduled throughout the state for March have been cancelled. I contacted MDARD regarding April testing dates, and for now we are in a holding pattern. Below are the dates scheduled for SW MI for this spring - those in bold also have a core training session offered by Extension prior to the testing.

April 6 in St. Joseph

April 7 in Branch

April 9 and May 7 in Calhoun

April 1, 16, May 5 in Kalamazoo

April 14, May 14 in Berrien

April 29 in Van Buren

Continue to check [MDARD's pesticide exam website](#) for updates about cancellations (select "Enter as Guest"). For those who need to test in order to begin purchasing and applying RUP's this spring, you may want to take advantage of the online testing option that MDARD offers through a third party, Metro Institute. More information, including additional costs and different registration procedures, [can be found here](#). Their closest testing facility is located at Kalamazoo Valley Community College (6767 O Avenue, Kalamazoo).

Obtaining recertification (a.k.a. RUP) credits in the short term may prove to be challenging, so keep that in mind when making your plans for recertification in 2020. You can check [MDARD's list of approved seminars](#) to find offerings for specified months.

Webinar on Wildlife Management and Depredation Permit Requirements on March 30

As crop damage due to whitetail deer, sandhill crane and other species continues to impact farmers in Michigan - particularly in the southwest where seed corn and vegetable contracts can be jeopardized by feeding damage - it is important for farmers to understand the species involved and how to best manage them.

MSU Extension will host a free webinar on March 30, 2020, at 1 p.m. EDT to inform crop producers about wildlife species that can impact field crop production and options for control. Tim Wilson, a district supervisor/wildlife biologist with Michigan's USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services will discuss sandhill crane behavior and methods of management. Ashley Autenrieth, a deer program biologist with Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), will discuss management tactics for deer and other game species under state jurisdiction.

To register for this free webinar, [visit the registration page](#). The link to the webinar will then be sent to you. Participants will be able to ask questions of presenters via a chat function. We will also be recording the presentations and making them available shortly afterwards on the [MSU Extension Field Crops Team website](#).

Specialty Crop Irrigation Recordings Available Soon

Lyndon Kelley and the MSU Extension irrigation team had planned an in-person meeting in Benton Harbor on March 17 focused on [irrigation topics in specialty crops](#). Topics included:

- **Overview of Irrigation Practices and Regulations** -- Lyndon Kelley, MSU and Purdue Extension irrigation educator
- **Designing a Drip Irrigation System** -- Phil Ausra, President, Trickl-Eez Irrigation, Inc.
- **Improvement of Irrigation Water Use Efficiency Using Soil Moisture Sensors** -- Younsuk Dong, Post-doc researcher, MSU Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering

That meeting was cancelled in order to exercise caution, but the speakers met and gave their presentations to a few Extension colleagues. We recorded the presentations and are in the process of editing those. When they are available - hopefully early next week - they will be posted for viewing on the [MSU Extension Field Crops Team website](#) and the [MSU Extension Irrigation website](#).

Soil, Plant and Pest Labs Still Open

For those needing to submit soil samples this spring, the MSU Soil and Plant Nutrient Lab released the following message:

The Soil and Plant Nutrient lab continues to operate as normal during this time and results are going out within 10 days of receipt. Customers unable to secure soil test boxes from their county Extension offices due to closures related to COVID-19, can mail their samples in ziplock bags direct to the lab. Print off the information sheet from the website to accompany the samples along with a check made out to MSU for the correct amount from the fee schedule.

I have also received word that A&L Great Lakes Labs are also open and continue to process samples.

For those needing to send samples in to MSU's Plant and Pest Diagnostics lab, they have released the following message:

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, effective March 16, 2020 MSU Plant & Pest Diagnostics is no longer accepting walk-in consultations. However, we are still open for business for all dropped-off or shipped samples. If you plan to bring or send us plant or pest samples, please email us at pestid@msu.edu.

Gabe Brown Keynote Presentation on Regenerative Agriculture Available

For those who were not able to attend the Van Buren Conservation District's annual Farming for the Future conference, they recorded Gabe Brown's inspiring keynote address on regenerative agriculture, soil health, and cover crops. Feel free to view the recording and pass along the link to a friend.

<https://vanburencd.org/gabe-brown/>

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