



OLD IRON, *new memories*

PAGE 6

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24



contents

SUMMER 2026

VOL. 11 NO. 3

6



FEATURES

6

Old Iron, New Memories

When Ty La Row set out to restore his great-grandfather's Farmall 560 LP, he discovered the project was about much more than nuts, bolts and fresh paint.

12



16



12

A Long Road Back for Lubricants

16

Maximize Your Margin by Minimizing Fixed Machinery Costs

Learn how to track the
'DIRT 5'

IN EVERY ISSUE

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 4 Leadership Letter | 24 Giving Back |
| 5 Spotlight | 26 Delegate Profile |
| 18 From the Board | 28 Market Commentary |
| 20 The Big Picture | 29 News Briefs |
| 22 Ag Educators Series | |



Cover photo by
Adam Buckallew.



Actual Intelligence

My wife, Becky, and I recently celebrated our daughter's graduation from high school. During the baccalaureate program, one of the teachers spoke about the future and artificial intelligence. Now, I'm not one to make strong predictions, but I'm going to bet that a high percentage of graduation speakers this year mentioned AI in their comments.

We find ourselves in an interesting moment in the AI discussion. We're seeing significant expansion by the hyperscalers like Alphabet (Google), Meta (Facebook) and Amazon in enterprise data center development across the country, including in Missouri, where development is mostly around the Kansas City and St. Louis areas. Two recent major projects have been announced in the Montgomery City, Mo., area with Google building a \$15 billion facility and Amazon Web Services building its own \$35 billion campus. I assume similar projects are popping up in the surrounding states where MFA Oil does business.

In the business world, we've been told that AI will make companies faster and cheaper to run. But as one AI executive admitted, "in a lot of cases, the cost of AI computing can actually be greater than the cost of human employees." In one prominent example, Uber exhausted its annual AI budget in just four months and responded by putting monthly spending caps on its employees' AI usage. Recently, Meta and Microsoft have begun implementing guardrails for employee AI use as well. Researchers have suggested that while

AI is cost-effective in a small share of jobs, in most cases, people may remain the better investment.

I believe that AI and quantum computing may have a place in agriculture and the energy supply chain. AI-powered tools can help with forecasting, smarter routing and more efficient operations. But the same concerns that tech companies are grappling with regarding high computing costs, expensive infrastructure and uncertain return on investment will go a long way in determining how widely adopted these tools become with farmers and businesses in the energy industry.

The good news is that the strongest results come from using AI to support people, not replace them. That aligns naturally with the cooperative model, where long-term value and member service come first.

MFA Oil is moving 97 years of data into a database so we can use large language models like Copilot for analysis. As we continue to study AI capabilities, our employees will use these tools to analyze operations and ensure we're optimizing our people, time and assets for greater efficiency. For example, AI could predict when one of our farmer-members will need fuel by looking at seasonality, weather patterns, and farm or equipment size. Or it could forecast how much breakfast food needs to be prepared at a Break Time store based on sales trends.

For MFA Oil, the path forward is steady and grounded: Explore AI where it strengthens our workforce, improves service and enhances reliability. We won't be adopting it because it's trendy. It must add real value.

One thing is clear: The future of AI, especially in industries as practical and essential as farming, energy or retail, is still being written. Technology will continue to evolve and new tools will emerge. But success will still depend on people making good decisions and serving others well. That's why I'm reminding my daughter that AI also stands for "actual intelligence."

Jon Ihler,
President and CEO



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A Clearer View of Safety

New camera technology is helping MFA Oil protect drivers, reduce costs and strengthen its commitment to safety.

A few months ago, MFA Oil received a complaint that one of its drivers had run another motorist off the road and left the scene. The allegation was serious enough that law enforcement contacted the co-op searching for the driver and vehicle involved.

In the past, situations like this often came down to one person's word against another's. But this time, MFA Oil could rely on something more concrete.

Video footage from the truck's onboard camera system showed exactly what happened. Both vehicles remained in their lanes, passed each other safely and continued down the road without incident. The MFA Oil driver had done nothing wrong. In fact, he even gave a neighborly wave to the other driver as they passed.

The recording provided an objective account of the encounter, protecting both the driver and the cooperative from the consequences of a claim that simply wasn't true.

The incident underscores the value of having video evidence. Thanks to MFA Oil's newly installed Motive camera system, the company has an accurate record of its drivers' performance on the road, helping separate fact from speculation when accidents or claims occur.

"We're able to see what actually happened rather than relying on conflicting accounts," said Will Reniker, vice president of enterprise risk management. "The cameras give us the ability to protect our drivers and make decisions based on facts."

MFA Oil began installing the camera systems across its fleet last fall, completing the rollout earlier this year. The company's propane and service trucks are equipped with forward-facing, side and rear cameras, while refined fuel delivery trucks feature forward-facing dash cameras.

MFA Oil's decision to install the camera system was driven by a growing trend affecting commercial fleets across the country: rising litigation costs. When accidents occur, determining fault can be difficult without clear evidence, often leading to lengthy and expensive disputes.

Reniker says the cameras are helping eliminate much of that uncertainty.

Since September, the camera system has saved the co-op an estimated \$323,000 through reduced insurance costs and lower accident-related expenses. During that same period, MFA



Oil's auto liability insurance premiums declined by 8%, while anticipated losses dropped by 22%.

The cameras also help the company more accurately determine responsibility for vehicle damage. When another driver causes an accident involving an MFA Oil vehicle, video evidence allows the cooperative to pursue reimbursement for repair costs that might otherwise have been absorbed by the company.

Beyond the financial benefits, the system provides important protections for MFA Oil drivers.

Commercial drivers are often subject to post-accident drug testing requirements. In situations where video clearly shows an MFA Oil driver was not at fault, the company can often avoid unnecessary testing. That reduces costs while allowing drivers to remain on the job rather than waiting for testing and results.

The technology has also helped protect drivers from unjust citations and false claims. In several cases, video evidence has been used to demonstrate that MFA Oil employees followed proper procedures and operated their vehicles safely.

The cameras do more than record incidents after they occur. They also help prevent accidents before they happen.

Using artificial intelligence, the cameras can identify behaviors such as distracted driving, following too closely, seatbelt violations, hard braking, stop-sign violations and unsafe parking. The information creates coaching opportunities that help drivers improve safe driving habits and reduce risk on the road.

Looking ahead, MFA Oil plans to expand its use of the Motive platform beyond cameras. The system can help track vehicle maintenance schedules, automate portions of DOT compliance reporting, measure vehicle utilization and recognize employees who demonstrate strong safety performance.

For Reniker, the technology's greatest value is simple.

"At the end of the day, our goal is to protect the people who represent MFA Oil every day on the road," Reniker said. "The cameras help us verify the facts, recognize safe driving and stand behind our employees when they've done the right thing."

By providing a clearer picture of what happens on the road, MFA Oil is strengthening its safety culture, supporting its employees and helping safeguard the cooperative's resources for the benefit of its member-owners. **M**

OLD IRON, *new memories*

BY ADAM BUCKALLEW





ABOVE: Ty La Row of Topeka, Kan., realized a childhood dream of restoring his great-grandfather's Farmall 560 LP tractor with the help and guidance of his grandfather, Roger Dehn. *Photo by Adam Buckallew.* LEFT: La Row finished the restoration in time to drive it for Alternate Transportation Day at Seaman High School. *Photo courtesy of Ty La Row.*

When Ty La Row set out to restore his great-grandfather's Farmall 560 LP, he discovered the project was about much more than nuts, bolts and fresh paint.

Many of the high school seniors pulling into the parking lot for Alternate Transportation Day at Seaman High School in Topeka, Kan., were behind the wheel of pickup trucks, classic cars and convertibles. Riding high on a freshly restored 1963 Farmall 560 LP tractor with gleaming red paint, Ty La Row stood out among his classmates.

For the soon-to-be graduate, driving the tractor to school was more than just an unconventional trip. It was the culmination of a lifelong dream, countless hours of work and an unforgettable

opportunity to work side-by-side with his grandfather.

For as long as he can remember, Ty has been drawn to the old 560 that once belonged to his great-grandfather, Henry Dehn. He has fond childhood memories of tractor rides with his family. He recalls climbing into the driver's seat with his cousin, pretending to steer through imaginary fields.

For decades, it sat idle in a barn, but Ty never stopped thinking about it. Though the prospect of restoring it was daunting, the challenge only fueled his interest.



The Farmall 560 (without some of its paneling) before the restoration project began. Ty La Row had long held a fond appreciation for the old tractor that had sat in a family barn for decades collecting dust. When it came time to pick his supervised agricultural experience (SAE) for FFA, Ty decided the time was right to accept the challenge of reviving the antique tractor. The SAE project took months of work and wrapped up mere days before Ty's high school graduation. *Photo courtesy of Ty La Row.*

As he entered his senior year of high school and began looking for a meaningful supervised agricultural experience (SAE) project for FFA, Ty realized it was a perfect opportunity to restore the tractor that had been part of his family for over 50 years.

GETTING TO WORK

The first step was hauling the tractor from a farm near Ottawa, Kan., to his grandfather's shop in Topeka. Next, Ty needed to answer the question that had long been on his mind: Would it still run?

While most modern tractors run on diesel fuel, the Farmall 560 LP was factory-built to run on propane. Unfortunately, parts for the propane fuel system are notoriously hard to find these days. If

the engine wouldn't start, Ty knew his restoration dream could stall before it ever really began.

He connected a small propane cylinder to the fuel system and turned the key. To his surprise and relief, the old tractor sputtered to life.

"It wasn't running great," Ty recalled, "but it ran well enough that I knew I could move forward with the project."

From there, the real work began. First, Ty removed the side panels and began washing away decades of grease, dirt and dust. Then, he started disassembling the tractor piece by piece. He carefully organized and documented parts. Large items, such as tires, came off first

before he moved on to smaller parts and assemblies.

Throughout the process, he leaned heavily on the guidance and assistance of his grandfather, Roger Dehn, an experienced tractor restorer who had rejuvenated several antique machines.

"He was like a guiding light through the whole process," Ty said.

A LONG WINTER

As Ty worked to strip the tractor down to its frame, the excitement of hearing the engine fire for the first time gave way to the reality of a full-scale restoration. By winter, tractor parts were scattered across Roger's shop in hundreds of pieces. Progress slowed as Ty hit a



TOP LEFT: The Farmall 560 is loaded onto a trailer from a farm near Ottawa, Kan., to be transported to Topeka, Kan. TOP RIGHT: The tractor's original paneling is laid out. Many of the panels had rust, chipped paint and other imperfections that Ty La Row dealt with during the restoration process. MIDDLE LEFT: The Farmall 560 LP was factory-built to run on propane. Ty refilled the tractor's propane cylinder to test if the engine would still run after decades of disuse. MIDDLE RIGHT: Ty spent months working in the shop of his grandfather, Roger Dehn. He compared the process of disassembling and rebuilding the tractor to "a big Lego project." BOTTOM LEFT: Applying International Harvester's signature red paint marked a turning point in the project, providing Ty with renewed determination to finish what he had started. BOTTOM RIGHT: Coursework in electrical systems Ty completed through his school's vo-tech program gave him invaluable knowledge and skills needed to complete the restoration. *All photos courtesy of Ty La Row.*



TOP: While restoring the Farmall 560, Ty sought LP-specific emblems, which have become notoriously hard to find. With the help of his grandfather, he was able to track down a set from a collector. BOTTOM LEFT: Ty holds up a check for \$500 from MFA Oil. He received the check as part of an SAE grant that was awarded at the Kansas FFA State Convention. BOTTOM RIGHT: Ty has displayed the restored Farmall 560 at antique tractor shows and said he may eventually restore a three-bottom plow that originally accompanied the tractor. *All photos courtesy of Ty La Row.*

“weird spot,” realizing just how much work still lay ahead.

“There was definitely a point where I wondered what I had gotten myself into,” he said.

But he kept moving forward. He scraped off grime that had withstood pressure washing. He used paint thinner and plenty of elbow grease to remove stubborn imperfections.

Over several months, Ty sourced replacement parts. LP-specific emblems were especially difficult to find. Ty and Roger eventually tracked down a set through a collector, which Ty hand-painted to match the tractor’s original appearance. A local muffler shop fabricated a custom exhaust pipe when he couldn’t find an original replacement.

The project became a lesson in patience and problem-solving. Ty rewired the entire tractor from front to back, relying on photographs he had taken during disassembly and a wiring schematic he tracked down. Fortunately, coursework in electrical systems through his school’s vo-tech program gave him the skills needed to tackle the job.

Support from his family, FFA advisor Madison Koenen and MFA Oil kept the project moving. Ty received a \$500 MFA Oil SAE Grant at the Kansas FFA Convention in Manhattan. The funding helped cover the cost of paint, tires and other restoration supplies.

“The MFA Oil grant helped make the project possible and gave me confidence to take on a project of this size and see it through to the end,” he said.

BACK TO LIFE

As winter turned to spring, the pieces slowly began coming back together. Ty compared the rebuilding process to “a big Lego project,” only without a step-by-step instruction manual.

Preparing the tractor for painting required meticulous prep work. He carefully taped, primed and sanded parts. After months of labor, Ty was ready to spray the tractor with its iconic International Harvester-red paint. He painted smaller pieces individually, while he sprayed the frame in a makeshift paint booth set up in Roger’s shop.

Driving it to school was exciting, and it felt great to succeed with such a big project and see it through to the end.” —Ty La Row

“That’s when it really started coming together,” Ty said. “Seeing the red paint on it gave me renewed motivation because I could finally see all the work paying off.”

From that point forward, progress accelerated.

The final push came during the closing weeks of Ty’s senior year. He spent many evenings working late into the night, with some sessions stretching until 2 a.m., as he raced to finish the project before graduation and Alternate Transportation Day. The final sprint paid off, and he finished the project with three days to spare.

When he rolled into the school parking lot the next day, Ty savored his achievement.

“It was the last day of school, so there were a lot of feelings,” Ty said. “Driving it to school was exciting, and it felt great to succeed with such a big project and see it through to the end.”

Roger shared Ty’s excitement. While he was proud of the finished tractor, he valued the opportunity to spend quality time with his grandson even more.

“We spent a lot of time together in the shop, and it was fun,” Roger said.

MEMORIES MADE

Since completing the restoration, Ty has exhibited the tractor at several Kansas tractor shows, including events in Meriden, Ottawa and Garnett. He plans to continue showing the 560 and may eventually restore the three-bottom plow that originally accompanied it.

Reflecting on the project, Ty says the tractor isn’t what he’ll remember most.

“What I’ll look back on with the most joy is working on it with my grandpa,” he said. “Not everyone gets to spend a lot of time with their grandparents, and I try not to take that for granted.” **M**





A LONG ROAD BACK FOR LUBRICANTS

BY ADAM BUCKALLEW

The road to recovery for lubricant markets has taken another turn. Renewed fighting between the United States and Iran has reignited uncertainty across global energy markets, raising fresh concerns that higher lubricant prices and tight supplies could persist well into the future.

The Independent Lubricant Manufacturers Association (ILMA) says months of refinery disruptions, shipping delays and instability in the Persian Gulf have snarled the supply of key ingredients used to make modern motor oil, transmission fluid, gear oil and other lubricants. Renewed military action has once again disrupted one of the world's most important energy corridors.

At the center of the shortage is Group III base oil.

Most people aren't familiar with Group III base oil, and that's understandable. It's an essential ingredient used to make today's synthetic lubricants. Most full-synthetic engine oils rely on it, including common passenger vehicle grades like 0W-20, 5W-30, 0W-16 and 0W-8. It's also used in heavy-duty diesel engine oils such as full-synthetic 5W-40 and 10W-30, along with many synthetic transmission fluids, gear oils and hydraulic lubricants. Even MFA Oil's Work Horse X-TRA

GUARD® universal tractor fluid contains Group III base oil.

A significant portion of the world's Group III base oil supply comes from Middle Eastern producers in Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. According to ILMA, those countries account for 44% of U.S. Group III supplies. An additional 30% is produced in South Korea, where many refiners rely on crude oil sourced from the Middle East.

Industry analyst Thomas Glen, president of Petroleum Trends International and editor of JobbersWorld, called the disruption "one of the most significant Group III supply disruptions the lubricant industry has experienced. Prices have risen sharply. Allocation programs have emerged. Spot market availability has tightened dramatically and concerns about future availability have spread throughout the lubricant supply chain."

Glen says the road to recovery is unlikely to be immediate. In a June 15 analysis published by JobbersWorld, he noted that many suppliers are still working through higher-cost inventories, and some manufacturers have placed customers on allocation—limiting how much product they can purchase to stretch available supplies. Tight supplies of Group III base oil continue to constrain production

Those supply chain constraints have already led to higher prices and could continue to result in fewer product choices and periodic shortages of certain lubricants.



somkane sawatdinak / Shutterstock.com

of synthetic lubricants. As a result, lubricant prices may remain elevated even if crude oil prices moderate.

The conflict has also underscored how dependent the North American lubricant market remains on overseas supplies of Group III base oil. With about three-fourths of U.S. supplies tied to the Middle East—either through direct imports or crude sourced from the region—further disruptions could tighten supplies. Meanwhile, ExxonMobil is expanding Group III production at its Baytown, Texas, refinery, but that additional capacity isn't expected until 2028.

Those supply chain constraints have already led to higher prices and could continue to result in fewer product choices and periodic shortages of certain lubricants.

Zach Studer, director of warehousing and quality control for MFA Oil, says most lubricant suppliers have already been hit with three waves of substantial price increases since March. Customers who haven't purchased engine oil recently may experience sticker shock from the rising prices.

"Our costs have more than doubled," Studer says. "In a normal year, we may see two or three price increases around 10 to 25

cents per gallon. The increases we've seen this year have been much steeper. The latest round increased our costs by about \$3 per gallon on synthetics and up to \$2.50 per gallon on non-synthetic products. We understand no one is excited about paying more, and neither are we. We're doing everything we can to manage the situation for our members and customers."

Studer noted MFA Oil maintained its existing pricing for as long as possible before passing those costs on to its members and customers, even honoring a planned sale in March and April. However, the magnitude of the increases ultimately forced retailers across the industry to adjust pricing.

MFA Oil continues to monitor lubricant markets and work with suppliers to maintain reliable availability. Some products may still see price increases or longer lead times as conditions normalize. To maintain supply for existing customers, MFA Oil is managing its inventory closely and pausing new lubricant customer growth until conditions improve.

MFA Oil members and customers can help by planning routine maintenance ahead of time and giving their local office advance notice for specialty or large-volume orders. That extra lead time helps ensure products are available when needed. **M**

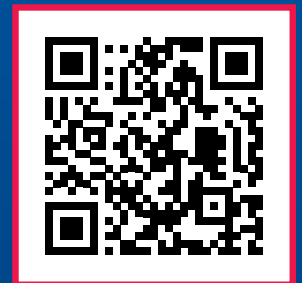


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FROM UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION

Major equipment purchases involve more ongoing costs than many realize. Whether you're making a cash purchase or opting for financing, the ownership costs of machinery continue after the check is cashed or the final payment is made.

Fuel, maintenance and labor too often are used as a proxy for total machinery cost when planning for the breakeven price of the crop being grown. While these costs are easily measurable, they may represent less than 60% of total expenses over the useful life of a machine. The "DIRTI 5"—depreciation, interest, repair, taxes and insurance—are harder to identify and allocate to each machine on a per-acre or per-year basis.

MU Extension senior agribusiness research analyst Drew Kientzy led the development of a new publication, "Managing Farm Equipment Ownership Costs," which is available for free download at <https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/g435>. The publication highlights how to calculate the DIRTI 5 components, how they interact with one another and strategies for minimizing these costs.

"The two universal factors in the per-acre, per-bale, per-bushel or any other unit cost of machinery are the value of your equipment and how much it is used," Kientzy said. He notes that there are two surefire ways to bring fixed machinery costs down: "Minimizing the total value of machinery without having a significant impact on productivity and sizing your equipment to fully utilize its capabilities throughout the working season."

Another consideration is whether to own, lease or hire out machine work. There is usually no single correct answer for all machines on the farm. For instance, a farm may want to own trucks, tillage tools, planting equipment and harvest equipment. Trucks and tillage equipment don't get regular technological advancements, and major repairs can be made either on the farm or in an independent shop.

From a technology or repair mitigation standpoint, planters and harvest equipment may need to be updated more often, but owning these assets gives farms the flexibility to modify the machines to their preferences and conditions and ensures that the machine will be dedicated to a timely planting and harvest on their farm.

Tractors and sprayers are more frequently leased since they get used for a large portion of the year, and leasing offers a cost-effective way to stay up to date with the latest technology. Some of the most common custom hire jobs include fertilizer application and spraying. Both require significant investment in support equipment, and the products applied can be harsh on machinery. Because of this, farms tend to take one of two approaches: Some choose to own the equipment and make the most of it by offering custom services to nearby farms, helping spread out the cost by utilizing their machinery to its full capacity. Others prefer to hire these services instead, paying a set fee per acre to avoid the expense of owning underutilized equipment.

Rates for custom farm services are an easy way to find estimates to benchmark the machine costs on your operation. MU Extension's "Custom Rates for Farm Services in Missouri" is available for free download at <https://muext.us/CustomRates>. 

Q&A with Jim Stuever of the MFA Oil Board of Directors



Q How would you describe yourself and your farming operation?

A I have been dedicated to farming in one fashion or another nearly my entire life and have enjoyed every step. I am currently involved in row-crop production in Stoddard County, including cotton, corn, wheat and soybeans.

Q Why did you decide to serve on the MFA Oil Board of Directors?

A An unexpected opening occurred with the sudden passing of former board member Doyle Oehl. I have served on many different and wide-ranging community and service boards. The local MFA Oil employees approached me to apply for the position. Their encouragement prompted my decision, and the delegates backed that up. MFA Oil has been a valued partner for my operation's success, and I am excited to be a part of the board.

Q What do you view as the most crucial issue MFA Oil is facing?

A MFA Oil has many important aspects to its business thanks to the strong diversification it has developed over the last nearly 100 years to ensure the success of the cooperative. Service to the members remains at the top, just as it was when the cooperative was founded. Confronting change and making good,



solid, consistent decisions to ensure quality products and service are just as crucial today as they were then.

Q MFA Oil has served the needs of its members for nearly 100 years. Why do you believe the cooperative remains an essential service for its farmer-owners?

A There are still many challenges in agriculture, and they have changed over the past 100 years. MFA Oil has adapted over time to provide solutions and services, and I expect the cooperative will find ways to improve service while continuing to provide quality fuels and lubricants in the future.

Q You have had the opportunity to serve on the board of directors for many farming organizations. What did you learn from those experiences that you've been able to apply to your role on the MFA Oil Board of Directors?

A It takes everyone. That's why they call it a board. The many thoughts, experiences, achievements, failures are all put in a room at the same time. Sometimes it seems like chaos, but from

that chaos, consensus always seems to flow. We have all heard the axiom "two heads are better than one." I have found it takes a lot more than that. For instance, a certain proposal can be something that most people agree on at the start but then it turns out that no one wants it. That also works the other way, too. The important part is the good, solid, consistent decisions that evolve to guide the organization or company. **M**

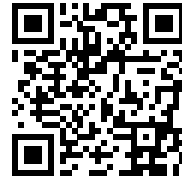
Jim Stuever is a lifelong resident of Stoddard County, Mo., and has farmed near Dexter and Bernie since 1974. He and his wife, Pam, live near Dexter and have five children and six grandchildren. Stuever has been an active supporter of church, agriculture and community organizations throughout his life. He has served in leadership roles on the Bernie School Board, Stoddard County Soil and Water Conservation District, Missouri Corn Growers Association, Missouri Corn Merchandising Council, U.S. Grains Council Board of Directors, Elk Township Road District (treasurer), Knights of Columbus, and Parish Council, and he has been a delegate for MFA Oil for several years. He was elected to the MFA Oil Board of Directors in August 2025.

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Missouri Activates New World Screwworm Response Plan

Missouri livestock producers are being urged to remain vigilant after federal officials confirmed the first U.S. case of New World screwworm (NWS) in more than six decades.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) confirmed on June 3 that a calf in Zavala County, Texas, was infected with the pest. The detection marked the first confirmed case in the United States since New World screwworm began moving northward through Central America and Mexico in recent years.

NWS is considered one of the most destructive livestock pests in the world. Unlike common maggots that feed on dead tissue, screwworm larvae burrow into the flesh of living animals, creating severe wounds that can lead to secondary infections, permanent injury and death if left untreated. The pest can affect cattle, sheep, goats, horses, swine, wildlife and pets.

Since the initial detection, the USDA has reported 31 confirmed cases in Texas and New Mexico. The affected animals include cattle, goats, sheep and a dog. The new detections were reported across multiple Texas counties, as well as neighboring New Mexico. The growing number of cases has heightened concerns among livestock producers and animal health officials working to prevent further spread.

In response to the Texas detection, Missouri has activated its New World Screwworm Response Plan. The plan was developed by a joint working group led by Missouri State Veterinarian Steve Strubberg and includes representatives from USDA, the Missouri Department of Agriculture, University of Missouri Extension, the Missouri Department of Conservation and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

"The detection in Texas serves as an important reminder for livestock owners to monitor their animals closely and report any suspicious wounds or infestations immediately," a press release from the Missouri Department of Agriculture said.

While the pest has not been detected in Missouri, state officials have implemented movement requirements for animals entering the state from affected areas.

Domestic animals originating from a state that contains an infested zone but are not located within that zone may enter Missouri with a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI) certifying the animals are free of NWS infestation and have not traveled through an infested area.

Animals originating from within an infested zone face additional requirements, including an entry permit from the Missouri State Veterinarian's Office and a CVI confirming they have been inspected and found free of infestation.

Producers are encouraged to take preventive measures now. Recommended steps include maintaining aggressive fly and tick control programs, promptly cleaning and treating wounds, and covering open injuries whenever possible. Livestock owners may also want to postpone procedures such as castration, dehorning and branding if conditions allow, as these practices create openings that can attract egg-laying flies.

Regular animal inspections are also critical. Producers should watch for bloody drainage from wounds, rapidly enlarging lesions, cream-colored egg masses around injuries, maggots in wounds, foul odors, reduced appetite, fever, excessive head shaking and other signs of discomfort.

Anyone who suspects an infestation should contact a veterinarian immediately. Livestock and pet owners can also report suspected cases to the Missouri Department of Agriculture's Animal Health Division at (573) 751-3377.

Industry officials warn that a widespread outbreak could result in significant livestock losses and increased production costs if the pest becomes established in the United States. Federal and Texas state officials have launched surveillance, trapping and testing efforts while expanding the use of sterile flies, a proven technique that helped eradicate screwworm from the United States in the 1960s. USDA officials reported releasing millions of sterile flies as part of the response effort.

Despite concerns about livestock health and potential economic impacts, USDA officials emphasize that the detection does not affect food safety and that the U.S. food supply remains safe. **M**

BUILDING THE NEXT GENERATION OF TEACHERS

BY NEAL FANDEK

Avery Deevers just got back from Las Vegas.

Desert vacation with pool, golf and slots? Nope. He and his department chair were helping create new educational pathways for skilled trades workers. They were finalizing a deal for members of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America to earn a two-year associate's degree through North Central Missouri College and continue their education at the University of Central Missouri (UCM) in Warrensburg.

"Some of these guys never thought college was for them," Deevers said. "We're building classes directly tailored to them."

Deevers is the coordinator of undergraduate programs in UCM's Department of Career and Technical Education (CTE) and spent 10 years teaching agriculture at the middle and high school levels. While the new program serves skilled trades workers rather than future agriculture teachers, it reflects his broader approach to education: creating pathways that connect students with careers and industries that need them.

There are currently seven institutions in Missouri that offer agricultural education programs, but UCM is the only one that combines technical and agricultural education.

Deevers' focus on innovation extends beyond partnerships. In his office, a whiteboard is filled with notes about artificial intelligence (AI) and how future agriculture and technical education teachers can use emerging technology in the classroom.

"AI is the buzz right now," he says. "My students are using AI to craft lessons, but they also need to know how to fact-check information and use those tools responsibly. We're preparing them to teach in industries that are constantly changing."

"Avery demonstrates a visionary approach to educator preparation," says Dr. Michelle Conrad, department chair. "He consistently designs innovative, future-focused learning experiences that anticipate emerging educational and workforce trends while strategically scaffolding knowledge and skills needed for today's CTE programs."

The curriculum itself reflects that forward-looking approach. The path to a bachelor's degree includes classes one would expect, like agricultural mechanics, animal science, pest management, soil science and horticulture. The traditional ag classes are supplemented with courses in digital communication, journalism and economics to give students a more well-rounded experience.



Avery Deevers, coordinator of undergraduate programs for the University of Central Missouri's Department of Career and Technical Education, spent 10 years teaching agricultural education at the middle and high school levels. In his role as chair of the Missouri Agricultural Education Teacher Recruitment and Retention Committee, he helps pre-service teachers build professional networks, connect with grant opportunities, find mentors and access other resources.

Deevers also serves as chair of the Missouri Agricultural Education Teacher Recruitment and Retention Committee (he wears quite a few hats). In that role, he helps pre-service teachers build professional networks, connect with grant opportunities and corporate sponsors, connect with mentors, and access resources through FFA and other organizations.

His mission, he says, is "building that next generation of teachers."

He adds, "I want to focus on making sure that they're going to understand and survive those first couple of years of teaching but also equip them with the tools to succeed."

The work comes at a time when many schools continue to face challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified agricultural teachers.

The impact of Deevers' approach can already be seen in students like Bailey Cox, a 2026 UCM agricultural education graduate who recently accepted a teaching position in Drexel, Mo.

Cox says her own experience with agricultural education wasn't particularly inspiring, but her experience at UCM was different.

"(Deevers) wanted me to be the best teacher I could be," Cox says. "He believed in me and told me to give it my all because that effort would not go unnoticed by the kids."

Now preparing to begin her own teaching career, Cox hopes to help students better understand agriculture's role in everyday life.

"Every part of our life is dependent on agriculture," she says. "My job is to help kids understand that." 

Agriculture teachers are vital to developing their students' understanding and appreciation for the agricultural industry. In recognition of their important role, MFA Oil is profiling the amazing work ag teachers do to prepare the next generation of leaders in agriculture.



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Covering the Needs of Local Seniors

BY ADAM BUCKALLEW

For more than four decades, the Monroe City Senior Nutrition Center has served as a gathering place, support network and source of nourishment for older adults in northeast Missouri.

Since opening its doors in January 1982, the center has provided far more than meals to seniors in Monroe, Marion and Ralls counties. It offers health and wellness programs, recreational activities, public benefits counseling, volunteer opportunities, and social connections that help aging adults remain healthy, independent and engaged.

"In the 44 years since we opened our doors, we have touched the lives of countless people," said Diana Hendrix, the center's administrator. "Yes, we provide them with a nutritious meal, but we also give them so much more: friendship, physical fitness opportunities, financial information and assistance, and, for some, a purpose that keeps them going daily."

Hendrix has been part of the center's story from the beginning. She joined the organization in November 1981 as a cook and spent nearly three years in that role before becoming administrator in 1984, a position she continues to hold today.

The center relies on support from many sources to sustain its operations, including federal, state, local, public and private grants, fundraising events, business donations, and individual contributions. Equally important are the more than 300 volunteers who contribute hundreds of hours each month.

"Our community and volunteers are the key to our success," Hendrix said. "We



The Monroe City Senior Nutrition Center was the first recipient of the MFA Oil Foundation's new Community Development Grant program. The center received help to pay for a new roof to protect the facility and the services it provides.

are so thankful for our many volunteers who bless our seniors with their love, time and support."

Volunteers assist with food preparation, clerical work, meal deliveries, fundraising activities and many other essential functions that help the center fulfill its mission.

Like any home, the facility requires ongoing maintenance and upgrades to continue serving the community. In recent years, the center has invested tens of thousands of dollars in improvements, including new heating and air-conditioning systems, kitchen ventilation upgrades, and the replacement of major kitchen equipment. While work crews were completing those projects, they discovered significant concerns with the building's roof.

To address the issue, the center launched its "Overhead Upgrade" project, a fundraising effort to secure a new roof to protect the facility and the community services it provides. The project will result in the center's third roof installation in its 44-year history.

The final piece of funding came through a significant grant from the MFA Oil Foundation. The award marked a milestone for the foundation as its

first Community Development Grant, a new funding category created to help organizations tackle larger-scale projects that deliver lasting benefits to their communities.

"This project is exactly the type of thing we had in mind when we created the Community Development Grant program," said James Greer, chairman of the MFA Oil Foundation. "We're proud to make a meaningful contribution to projects such as this that have a long-term impact and strengthen the community where our members and customers live."

The grant allowed the Monroe City Senior Nutrition Center to reach its fundraising goal and move forward with the roof replacement, helping preserve a safe and reliable resource for more than 800 seniors throughout the region.

"This investment does more than just repair a roof; it protects the independence and dignity of our seniors," Hendrix said about the grant.

By helping complete the Overhead Upgrade project, the MFA Oil Foundation's grant helps ensure the Monroe City Senior Nutrition Center can continue serving as a community hub and resource for years to come. **M**

52 Organizations Receive MFA Oil Foundation Grants

The MFA Oil Foundation provides cash to nonprofit organizations that are working to improve communities where MFA Oil has a significant concentration of members and employees. In March 2026, the foundation approved \$182,100 in grants to 52 organizations.

1. Avanza Arkansas — Little Rock, Ark.
2. Boys & Girls Clubs of Harrison-Crawford Counties — Corydon, Ind.
3. Braymer Food Pantry — Braymer, Mo.
4. Callaway County 4-H — Fulton, Mo.
5. Canton R-V Fire Protection District — Canton, Mo.
6. Christian County Cares — Nixa, Mo.
7. Citizens Center of Northwest Texas County — Roby, Mo.
8. City of Cardwell — Cardwell, Mo.
9. City of Chaffee Police Department — Chaffee, Mo.
10. City of Corydon — Corydon, Iowa
11. City of Crocker — Crocker, Mo.
12. City of Norborne — Norborne, Mo.
13. City of Stanberry — Stanberry, Mo.
14. City of Waverly — Waverly, Mo.
15. City of Yates Center — Yates Center, Kan.
16. Clever R-5 Schools — Clever, Mo.
17. County of Dade – Dade County Sheriff's Office — Greenfield, Mo.
18. Crane R-III School District FFA — Crane, Mo.
19. Eddyville Volunteer Fire — Eddyville, Iowa
20. Edgar Springs Police Department — Edgar Springs, Mo.
21. Eolia Community Fire Department, Inc. — Eolia, Mo.
22. Fair Development Association of Howard County — Fayette, Mo.
23. Franklin County Sheriff's Office Foundation — Ottawa, Kan.
24. Friends of the Big Springs Old Town Church — Marengo, Ind.
25. Friends of the NEMO Fair — Kirksville, Mo.
26. Hale Fire Protection District — Hale, Mo.
27. Higginsville Fire Protection District — Higginsville, Mo.
28. Iberia Rural Fire Protection District — Iberia, Mo.



Lake City Fire Department — Lake City, Ark.

29. Immanuel Lutheran Church and School — Lockwood, Mo.
30. Johnson County 4-H Shooting Sports — Warrensburg, Mo.
31. Lake City Fire Department — Lake City, Ark.
32. Leon Fire and Rescue Department — Leon, Iowa
33. Lincoln County Fair Inc. — Troy, Mo.
34. Linn County Historical Society Museum — Brookfield, Mo.
35. Lowry City Fire Department Women's Auxiliary Inc. — Lowry City, Mo.
36. Macon County Samaritan Memorial Hospital — Macon, Mo.
37. Marion County Fire District 5 — Lincolnville, Kan.
38. Missouri Farmers Care Foundation — Jefferson City, Mo.
39. Missouri State Fair Foundation — Sedalia, Mo.
40. Monroe City Senior Nutrition Center — Monroe City, Mo.
41. Montrose R-14 School District — Montrose, Mo.
42. North Harrison R-3 Elementary School — Eagleville, Mo.
43. Osage County 4-H Shooting Sports — Scranton, Kan.
44. Our Lady of Snows Catholic School — Eugene, Mo.
45. Pontiac / Price Place Volunteer Fire Department — Pontiac, Mo.
46. Randolph County 4-H Shooting Sports — Huntsville, Mo.
47. Sleep in Heavenly Peace — Lebanon, Mo.
48. St. James Ambulance District — St. James, Mo.
49. St. John the Baptist School — Villa Ridge, Mo.
50. Strafford Fire Protection District — Strafford, Mo.
51. Sullivan County (Mo.) Historical Society — Milan, Mo.
52. Unionville Rec League — Unionville, Mo. 

The Huth Way

For more than 70 years, the Huth family has grown a respected Angus operation by investing in hard work, one another and the next generation.

BY ADAM BUCKALLEW

Across the Huth family's farm just south of Boonville, Mo., corn tells the story of one of the wettest springs Steve Huth can remember in nearly five decades of farming. Some cornfields are nearly tasseling; others are barely knee-high. One creek-bottom field flooded eight times before it was finally abandoned for the year.

Between the barrage of spring storms, the Huths hustled to hit narrow planting windows while trucking grain to sell, spraying fields, fixing fences and working cattle. No matter the weather, the work doesn't stop.

Ask Steve how it all gets done, and he's quick to point out it's a team effort.

He farms alongside his brother, Jeff; his son, Trever; Jeff's son, Chris; and farmhand, Ty Stinson. Together, they manage the family's diversified crop and cattle operation, with each person taking on responsibilities that keep the business running.

Just as important, Steve says, are the people behind the scenes. His wife, Diana, and Jeff's wife, Mary, have provided crucial support, allowing the family to build the operation over the years.

"If it wasn't for the solid backing of our wives, we wouldn't be where we are today," he says.

GETTING STARTED

Steve credits his parents, Kenneth and Helen, for giving him and his brother, Jeff, their start. Everything traces back to 1954, when Kenneth purchased the original

home farm. Steve and Jeff worked on their parents' farm until an opportunity to purchase a promising neighboring property became available. Kenneth and Helen remortgaged their farm to help their boys buy the land.

"They put us in a position to grow and gave a lot," Steve recalls. "We put our fair share of sweat equity into it, too."

The operation is built around both cattle and crops. About 2,000 acres of corn, soybeans and wheat support a large Angus cow herd. Corn and wheat become silage for the herd, while soybeans serve as a cash crop. Depending on the season, total cattle numbers can reach 2,700 head between the home farm and a south ranch near Bunceton, Mo.

The Huths have maintained a closed herd of primarily purebred Angus cattle for the past 35 years, carefully selecting genetics for performance, feedlot efficiency and docility. Those traits have helped build the herd's reputation among buyers, who know what to expect when Huth cattle come to market in central and north central Missouri. Calves are typically retained until 9 to 11 months of age before being sold as feeder cattle or breeding stock. Bulls are sold to buyers in Missouri and across the Midwest.

KEEPING THINGS RUNNING

Keeping an operation of this size running requires more than good genetics. For more than 70 years, the trucks and farm equipment on the Huths' farm have been powered by MFA Oil fuel.

As the operation has grown, so have its fuel and lubrication needs. Today, the farm relies on bulk fuel, bulk lubricants and dependable deliveries from MFA Oil to keep equipment running year-round, especially during winter when as many as a dozen machines may be operating daily to feed cattle.

Steve says a disciplined maintenance routine, coupled with quality lubricants from MFA Oil, has their tractors and trucks routinely exceeding 10,000 hours of service without any engine issues.

Steve has served as an MFA Oil delegate for close to 25 years, a role his father also



held. He says he values the service, the agricultural understanding and the farmer-owned structure.

"MFA Oil is just a top-notch company and one I'm proud to be part of," he says. "I like dealing with people who understand agriculture."

THE NEXT GENERATION

Just as Kenneth and Helen helped Steve and Jeff launch their farming careers, the brothers are working to position their sons for success.

"If you want to pass this thing on, you have to help your kids achieve those goals," Steve says.

The family farm now operates as an LLC, with Chris already a part owner and the opportunity for Trever to buy in when he is ready.

While Chris and Trever contribute to the family farm, they are also building their own niches in the cattle market. Chris is focused on show cattle, managing his own herd on a leased pasture. Trever has his own cattle comingled with the family herd and has built a direct-to-consumer beef business selling quarters, halves and whole-cow meats.

DOING THINGS RIGHT

Huth Farms has grown far beyond what Kenneth and Helen could have imagined in 1954. Yet Steve hopes that's not what people think of first when they think of his family.

"We are not showy people," he said. "We believe in hard work and doing things right."

For the Huth family, that's always been enough. **M**

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When fescue slows,
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By mid-summer, fescue doesn't perform like it did earlier in the grazing season. Heat slows regrowth, protein drops and intake follows. Add flies and humidity, and cattle burn energy just to maintain. That's how spring gains slip away.

Producers who keep weight on cattle don't leave summer to chance. They keep fly control consistent, stabilize nutrition and use creep feed or targeted supplements when pasture comes up short. Not to push cattle harder—but to protect what's already been built. More than ever, it pays to protect the gains. Visit about summer feeding strategies with your MFA livestock representative.



So Much for the Ceasefire

What's next for energy markets?

It briefly looked like we were headed for some certainty in the energy market. An interim peace agreement signed June 17 between the United States and Iran was set to ease one of the biggest supply disruptions in recent history. The agreement was to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, create a 60-day window for both countries to negotiate a lasting truce and help restore more than a billion barrels of oil to global markets.

Unfortunately, the prospects for peace between the two countries appear headed in the wrong direction. In early July, the United States and Iran traded military strikes, escalating hostilities and effectively shutting down ship traffic in the region once again.

As of late June, the Strait of Hormuz had been closed roughly 115 days. The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates the conflict blocked up to 14 million barrels of daily crude production from world markets. Added together, we're talking over 1.3 billion barrels of oil supply losses.

When the June peace accord was announced, some market observers thought crude supplies in the Persian Gulf would clear out relatively quickly. That optimism always seemed too rosy for me, and the renewed conflict has scuttled those hopes. The United States has reinstated its blockade of the Strait of Hormuz as Iran has resumed attacking ships.

Even in the now seemingly unlikely scenario that the hostilities could end soon, there are longer-term issues at play that will impact energy markets.

Refineries, processing plants, export terminals and fuel storage sites were heavily targeted during the conflict. Many facilities were severely damaged. Timelines



to repair the damage done range from a few months up to several years. IEA has said aftereffects of the Iran crisis “will be significant and enduring.” That doesn’t sound like a quick-fix scenario.

Futures for West Texas Intermediate crude briefly traded as low as \$71 per barrel in the last week of June. By mid-July they were closer to \$85 per barrel. There has been some moderate relief at the fuel pump, but how long that will last is anyone’s guess.

The United States and Iran are supposedly still talking while exchanging missile strikes, but this whole situation remains highly unpredictable. The longer this drags out, the more risk will get priced into the market.

How China handles oil imports moving forward is another huge variable. According to OilPrice.com, China cut its seaborne crude oil imports dramatically during the Iran war, with overall seaborne arrivals falling to a ten-year low of approximately 6.4 million barrels per day. That was a reduction of over 40% compared to pre-war February levels of over 11 million barrels per day.

Market analysts believe China has been meeting demand by drawing on its national stockpiles, estimated at over a billion barrels in crude surplus. If those reserves begin to dwindle and China returns to the global market with purchases nearer pre-

war levels, oil prices could face renewed upward pressure.

One positive note is that Saudi Arabia, Iraq and the United American Emirates have found work-arounds to help move barrels by expanding existing pipelines and exploring new land-based routes. These new oil flows could be greatly beneficial in the longer term.

As we all know, things can change quickly. We are currently near a 45-year low in supplies of the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Not long after the June ceasefire was announced, I heard rumblings of a potential oil glut in 2027. That appears much less likely now, but it goes to show how quickly the tides can turn.

Despite the topsy-turvy nature of the market, I still expect we may see seasonal influences play a role in pricing this fall. Fuel prices typically trend lower as we approach the end of the year, creating a potential buying opportunity. If seasonal trends hold, opportunities to lock in fuel purchases may emerge later this year. Staying informed and planning ahead will put you in the best position to take advantage if prices soften. **M**



Tim Danze
is the hedging manager
for MFA Oil.

MFA Oil Raises \$100,000 for Feeding Missouri

MFA Oil donated \$100,000 to Feeding Missouri following its twelfth annual Charity Golf Scramble and Concert on June 1 in Columbia. The contribution brings MFA Oil's support of Feeding Missouri to \$400,000 over the past three years and increases the event's total charitable giving to more than \$1.7 million since it began.

More than 240 golfers participated in the fundraiser, which brought together vendors, business partners and supporters. The event concluded with a private concert by country music artist Dustin Lynch.

"Hunger affects communities in every corner of Missouri, including many of the rural areas we proudly serve," said MFA Oil President and CEO Jon Ihler. "Together, we're helping ensure more Missouri families have access to the food and resources they need."

Big O Tires Expands in Kansas City Market

MFA Petroleum Company, a subsidiary of MFA Oil Company, continues to grow its Big O Tires footprint in the Kansas City area with the opening of new Missouri stores in Raytown and Independence. The Raytown location opened in April, followed by the Independence store in June, bringing MFA Petroleum's total number of Big O Tires locations to 38 across Missouri, Kansas and Arkansas.

"We're excited to expand our presence in the Kansas City metro," said Charlie Alexander, vice president of Big O Tires operations. "These new stores allow us to better serve local drivers with the dependable tire and automotive services they've come to expect from Big O Tires."

The additions strengthen MFA Petroleum's presence in the Kansas City market, where the company now operates 15 Big O Tires locations.



FROM LEFT: Karen Whitt, Chief Financial Officer, MFA Oil; Jon Ihler, President and CEO, MFA Oil; Leigh Anne Haun, Executive Director, Feeding Missouri; and Amanda Cooper, Chief Human Resources Officer, MFA Oil. Photo by Jody Confer.

MFA Petroleum Named Top Franchisee at Big O Tires Convention

MFA Petroleum Company, a subsidiary of MFA Oil Company, was named Multi-Store Franchisee of the Year at the 2026 Big O Tires Convention & Trade Show held April 14-16 in Louisville, Ky. The award recognizes excellence across sales growth, tire volume, community involvement and peer feedback among franchisees nationwide.

While announcing the award, Gary Skidmore, Big O Tires chief operating officer for TBC Corp., which operates nearly 470 Big O Tires locations across the United States, said, "MFA Petroleum runs stores that don't just perform well individually, they elevate the Big O Tires brand collectively. They've built something special."

Charlie Alexander, vice president of Big O Tires operations, credited the company's performance to investments in employee training, call handling and customer service systems that have improved appointment conversion rates

across its stores. He also highlighted the importance of talent development, noting that two of his employees led breakout sessions at the national convention on training programs and customer service practices.

Break Time Offers DoorDash Orders at Select Stores

Break Time has partnered with Lula Commerce to offer delivery through DoorDash at select locations. Customers can now order snacks, beverages, fresh food and other convenience items for delivery from 11 participating stores, with additional locations planned for the future.

"We want to be able to serve our customers across every channel, and our customers are turning to digital, so we needed to do the same," said Jennifer Bach, vice president of Break Time operations.

The new service is part of Break Time's ongoing efforts to enhance convenience and expand digital options for customers. 

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