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Children's book author recalls 1950s farm life.

4B



Family's butcher shop helps them make ends 'meat.'

1D

News: Five Alice in Dairyland candidates to vie for 64th crown.

4B

State's cheese share lower, sales up

By Jim Massey
Editor

MADISON — Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board Chief Executive Officer James Robson said he sometimes has to calm the fears of those who worry that Wisconsin is losing market share in the cheese industry. Robson told WMMB directors March 24 that it's true Wisconsin's share of the cheese market has

declined significantly over the last 40 years, but during that same period the state's cheese sales nearly tripled. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Wisconsin's 481 cheese plants sold 947.5 million pounds of cheese in 1970, which was 43 percent of the cheese sold in the U.S. By 2009, Wisconsin had only 126 cheese plants, but they sold 2.6 billion pounds of cheese, which was 26

percent of the nation's cheese. "The market is much bigger," Robson said. "Do you want 43 percent of a four-inch pizza or 26 percent of an 18-inch pizza? I'll take 26 percent of the bigger pizza." The nation's 963 cheese plants produced 2.2 billion pounds of cheese in 1970, according to the USDA. By 2009, the number of plants had declined to 494, but

those plants were producing 10.1 billion pounds of cheese. While Wisconsin lost market share, California and Idaho were the big winners. The number of dairy plants in California increased from 17 in 1970 to 57 in 2009, and those plants increased production from 17.4 million pounds to 2 billion pounds. California now has 20.4 percent of the market share. The number of Idaho

dairy plants declined from 16 in 1970 to 12 in 2009, but those plants increased production from 58 million to 831 million pounds. Robson said the progression into the cheese industry was a natural for California dairy farmers because they were producing more milk than they could sell in bottles. See CHEESE, Page 2A ▶

'Not for the weak of heart'

Grape production is growing in popularity, but it's not an easy venture

By Jim Massey
Editor

PRAIRIE DU SAC — The number of grape growers in Wisconsin is increasing rapidly, but industry officials say there's still room for more people to give it a try. About 120 people from Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa attended the Wisconsin Grape Growers Association's Spring Vineyard School March 24 at Wollersheim Winery in Prairie du Sac. Grape growers and people considering getting into the business talked about grape quality, vineyard soil management and protecting plants from predators. Rebecca Harbut, a UW-Madison fruit specialist, said she's seeing a huge interest in growing grapes, from people with and without agricultural backgrounds. "It makes it fun to work with the growers

because the group of people is so diverse," she said. "But it also makes it a challenge, because we've got people starting in agriculture who have not had any agricultural background. A lot of it is getting people up to speed on the life of a farmer."



Harbut

Harbut said she has seen many new grape growers who have retired from another profession. See GRAPES, Page 2A ▶



Photo by Sara Bredesen

All shined up for the show

Randy Clark, owner of RCI Engineering in Mayville, polished off the last of the road grime on a 96A pick-up head for a John Deere harvester in preparation for the Wisconsin Public Service Farm Show in Oshkosh. The show runs through Thursday, March 31, at the Experimental Aircraft Association grounds. Hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday.

Board approves buying CWD-infected deer farm

By Sara Bredesen
Regional Editor

The state Natural Resources Board voted unanimously at its March 23 meeting to buy an 80-acre game farm in Portage County to prevent the possible spread of chronic wasting disease. In 2002, whitetail deer on the farm operated by Stan Hall were found to be infected with CWD. Subsequent testing by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources found more than 80 animals infected with the fatal brain disease. The farm was depopulated in 2006, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture ordered that the perimeter fences be maintained to keep wild deer out through May 24, 2011. According to the DNR, the property will be purchased from owner Patricia Casey using \$465,000 from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund. NRB member John Welter of Eau Claire said board members found themselves faced with a dilemma when the USDA wouldn't extend its order to keep the farm perimeter fence in place long enough to keep wild deer away from infected soil on the farm. While research isn't clear on how long infective prions can remain in the soil, it's beyond the time when the USDA order ends, Welter said. It was the worst infected deer farm in the history of North America, he said. "Apparently, Mr. Hall or the owners of the farm said that the day that the Department of Agriculture order expired, which was this coming May, the fences would come down, and we were between a rock and a hard place," Welter said. See DEER, Page 2A ▶

and members boarded a bus March 24 in Lafayette County and rode to the Badgerland Financial annual meeting in Baraboo to express their displeasure with the decision. They said the amount of business in the Darlington office warrants keeping it open. "The show of more than 20 people from the county that would like to retain the office was a great testament to how much value the people who borrow from that particular office believe it adds to the association," said David Kuhle, a retired dairy farmer and Badgerland Financial borrower. "The point I made was even though the banks have consolidated and have a lot of branches, they still like to keep a branch open where they have a lot of business. And there is plenty of volume in Lafayette County." See OFFICE, Page 2A ▶

Borrowers unhappy with closing of Darlington FCS office

By Jim Massey
Editor

Badgerland Financial is planning to close its Darlington office at the end of 2011, and some of the financial cooperative's members aren't happy about it. About 25 borrowers

For more information about Badgerland Financial, visit www.badgerlandfinancial.com or call 800-236-3376.

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