

The FFA Update

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Gene Technology in Modern Agriculture By Brooke Solomon

Throughout the past couple of decades, research in genetic engineering has generated numerous agricultural applications across the globe. Genetically modified foods and crops are created to withstand disease, contain vaccines, and increase nutrition value.

The first field trials of genetically modified plants occurred in 1986. France and the United States collaborated to produce tobacco resistant to virus and pests. After the success of these crops, corporations began creating new generations of resistant plants. However, after a couple years in the marketplace, consumers became aware of unmarked genetically altered foods on shelves. Consumers and protesters argued that products containing genetically modified crops must be marked in case of the small chance someone may have a possible food allergy to a GM product. This continues to be an unresolved issue and one that is constantly debated by both sides.

One of the major topics in the late 1980's and early 1990's that received a lot of media coverage was the use of BT corn by farmers in the Midwestern United States. The GM corn contained a gene to kill caterpillars that were destroying farmers crops across the region. Soon corn yields increased, less pesticides were used and more acres were planted. The issue that arose was that the corn fields were also home to the milkweed that Monarch Butterflies feed on. Pollen from the BT corn drifted onto the weeds and killed many Monarch butterflies.

Many applications of genetically modified crops exist in agriculture. Not only do GM crops resist pests and weeds, but they are also healthier and larger than normal crops. Farmers are able to increase their harvests and profits, and developing countries are able to reduce starvation. Genetically modified yams have been introduced in parts of Africa, supplying villages and families with much needed

sustenance.

While the use of genetically altered crops is controversial, there are many benefits that have the potential to greatly improve agriculture. The ongoing debate on GM foods continues to rage, and there are many compromises that need to be reached before genetically altered foods become accepted by all consumers. Only time can tell what this interesting innovation in food production will bring.

Inside this issue:

Project Linus	2
MFE/ALA Conference	2
Calendar of Events	3
Ag Facts & Funnies	3
A Note From Mr. Costanzo	4
Meet a Member	4

Special points of interest:

- FFA Leadership Conference
- Blanket making





Project Linus By Janelle Kehoe

This past January the Tomales FFA held its 2nd Annual Project Linus blanket activity. The chapter asked the students at Tomales High School and the community for donations of polar fleece to make blankets for children in So-

noma and Marin Counties. The blankets provide love and a sense of security, warmth and comfort to children who are seriously ill, traumatized, or are otherwise in need. The officer team and some student volunteers from Mr. Costanzo's Floral

and Welding classes helped cut and tie the fleece blankets. The students who chose to participate in this activity donated all of the fleece that was used to make the blankets this year. It was a great project and it helped children in our community.



MFE/ALA Conferences By Jessica & Ashley Arndt

Nine FFA members attend MFE/ALA leadership conference in Sacramento.

The Made for Excellence Conference for tenth grade FFA members was an amazing experience that Brennan Potts, Terra Hargens, Ty Renati and Jessica Arndt will never forget. They participated in numerous teambuilding activities and met new people from other FFA chapters in the state. As the conference began they all had high expectations of what they would get out of the experience. They participated in a variety of activities such as: "Follow the Leader" with a group who was blind folded.

Once they got comfortable with their groups they learned each other's strengths and weaknesses. At the end of the first day they all had the opportunity to go to a dance and have some fun with their new friends. The second day of MFE was filled with lots of activities that involved each group's strengths. They put their abilities to the test and earned points that they used to win prizes. When that activity was over they had to pick cards that best represented the group's strengths. In the end they brought home new skills that they could use in their chapter's activities.

breakers that allowed them to meet other FFA members. They learned leadership skills, team building, promoting the agriculture community, and the steps that it takes to educate people about agriculture. They were able to learn about their own strengths and gain new strengths as the conference continued. During the last day of the conference, the girls put their new strengths to the test, as they debated about agricultural differences in the state.

ALA was a great experience for eleventh grade students Sydnie Parr, Brianna Vasquez, Kathleen Alves, Cynthia Pantoja, and Ashley Arndt. They were involved in numerous ice-

Everyone who attended the two conferences had a great time and they look forward to attending the next leadership conference. The members that attend MFE/ALA would like to thank the Tomales Friends of Agriculture for sponsoring them to attend the leadership conference again this year.



FFA members at the Radisson Hotel in Sacramento

Monthly Events

March 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 <i>FFA Meeting</i>	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9 <i>Open House</i>	10 <i>Min Day</i>	11 <i>Min Day</i>	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 <i>Marin Ag Day</i>	25 <i>Regional Speaking Contest</i>	26 <i>Reg. Mtg/ State Degree Lunch</i>
27	28	29 <i>Petting Zoo</i>	30	31		

Ag Facts & Funnies

By Mariela Lozano

A jogger running down a country road is startled as a horse yells "Hey-come over here buddy". The jogger is stunned but runs over to the fence where the horse is standing and asks "Were you talking to me"? The horse replies, "Sure was. Man, I've got a problem. I won the Kentucky Derby a few years ago and this farmer bought me and now all I do is pull a plow and I'm sick of it. Why don't you run up to the house and offer him \$5000 to buy me? I'll make you some money cause I can still run." The jogger thought to himself, "Boy, a talking horse". Dollar

signs started appearing in his head. So he ran to the house, and where the old farmer was sitting on the porch. The jogger tells the farmer "I'll give you \$5000 for that old broken down nag you've got in the field". The farmer replied, "Son, you can't believe anything that horse says. He's never been to Kentucky."

Q: What do you call a chicken in a shell suit?

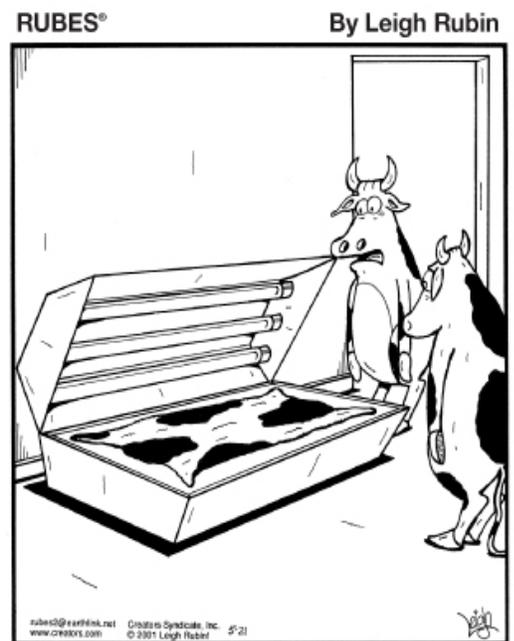
A: An Egg

Q: What do you call sheep that live together?

A: Pen Pals

Many farmers grow more

than just grains, vegetable and livestock. Some farmers grow trees. This is called a woodlot. A woodlot is not an original forest, because the timber has been cut down before. Sometimes the trees in a woodlot have been cut down four, five, or even six times. After the trees have been cut down, the farmer lets them grow up again, until they are big enough to be harvested once more.



"Oh dear. I think Harriet may have spent a bit too much time in the tanning booth."



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A Note From Mr. Costanzo.....

We had a great National FFA Week during February 21st-25th. This year the Chapter Officers decided to put on a variety of new events for the students at the high school during lunch each day. We also had another successful FFA Rally on Thursday of that week which included potato sack races and a greased pig contest. The tug of war was won by the senior class this year. Everyone did a great job and had a lot of fun.

Six of our Tomales FFA members competed at the Sonoma FFA Sectional Public Speaking Contest on February 25th. Amanda Moretti placed first and Jessica Arndt placed 5th in the Prepared Public Speaking Contest. Holly Soreng placed first in the FFA Creed contest beating eleven other freshman students. Amanda and Holly will be moving on to the North Coast Regional Contest at the end of March. This is the fourth year in a row that Tomales FFA has won the Sonoma Section Creed Contest and the third year in a row for winning the Prepared Public Speaking Contest. Way to go girls! Your hard work paid off.

If any FFA member is looking for a project animal, please contact me ASAP as I am placing orders with breeders for lambs and hogs by March 10th. Costs for animals will be a little higher this year due to increases in feed costs.

Part Two of the Organic vs. Conventional Farming article by Ali Azevedo, will be in the next edition of the newsletter.

Meet an FFA Member By Brianna Vasquez

Name: Marcos Gonzales
Grade: Junior
SAE Project: Game Birds

Why did you choose that project?

I chose this project because I liked the idea of raising game birds but what was great about this project was that I don't have to kill the birds at the end. Instead I sell them to ranchers to



I am planning to attend a Junior College because I would like to stay close to home and my family.

Career:

I plan to do something in Mechanics or Agriculture because it is something I am interested in and it's something that I have been around since I was a little kid.

hunt.

Hobbies:

Playing sports and just living life to the fullest.

What College are you planning to attend?

