

Energy efficiency on farms among seminar topics

By Megan Parker

Assistant Editor

When Scott Wetor of Orion Energy Systems in Manitowoc performs farm energy audits, one of his first recommendations is usually changing the lights.

"It's the simplest and easiest way to get the fastest return on their investment," said Wetor, an agricultural business development sales representative.

An Orion Energy Systems representative will discuss reducing costs and improving productivity with green technology at 1 p.m. Thursday, April 1, at the WPS Farm Show in Oshkosh. All of the farm show seminars will be in Hangar A.

Lighting is 24 percent of a farm's energy use, Wetor said.

Orion Energy Systems' agricultural division has been in business since 1998. The energy consulting company offers audits, makes and sells light fixtures and milk chillers and assists with securing rebates and grants, he said.

Orion Energy makes the Apollo Solar Light Pipe. The light is installed in a 22-inch hole in a building's roof and brings in natural sunlight, so producers can turn off their lights at the peak time of 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Wetor said.

Orion's chiller system is 30 to 50 percent more efficient than most others, he said.

"But I don't recommend changing anything with a chiller system unless it's pretty much at the end of its life or they're looking at a new construction project," Wetor said.

During audits, Wetor also may recommend solar or wind energy projects.

"Some of this wouldn't be right away but it might be down the road where they might want to look into some of these other alternatives," he said.

The company recommends 80-foot wind towers

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so farmers can create only enough energy for their own use.

"We feel that's going to be a better payback for them," he said.

Orion only sells fixtures but doesn't install them, he said.

"We do not do turnkey install projects. I personally work hand in hand with a lot of contractors explaining what we can do for them and answer any questions they might have," he said.

Orion works with Wisconsin Focus on Energy and goes after U.S. Department of Agriculture grants on behalf of farmers, he said.

"There is a lot of free money that's out there. It's just a matter of going after it and doing the paperwork. That's another key thing that we bring to the farmers that I don't think anyone else really does either," Wetor said.

Cutting edge

Jenny Brinker, an energy adviser at Wisconsin Focus on Energy, said that in her seminar she will discuss technologies that are commercially available but not widely used yet.

She will discuss ozone towel laundering, UV pasteurization of calf milk, induction lighting for free-stalls and yard lights, instantaneous, tankless water heaters and off-peak milk cooling.

"We want to promote some up-and-coming technologies for dairy farms," she said.

In ozone towel laundering, oxygen molecules pick up dirt, bacteria and pathogens and lift them away, Brinker said. The process uses little water and needs no hot

water. It also can be used to clean pipelines.

Induction lighting is a new way to use an old technology, Brinker said.

"It's the same as the old mercury vapor technology; it's just using a new gas and a new setup for the lights. It's a new spin on an old technology," she said.

With tankless water heaters, water flows through an S-shaped tube where it's heated very rapidly, she said.

"We typically recommend natural gas or LP gas systems for that," she said. "It saves energy because you're not constantly heating a tank of water. You only heat water as it's needed."

WPS Farm Show seminars

The seminar room is in Hangar A.

Tuesday, March 30

- 10 a.m., "Keep Your Farm on the Cutting Edge of Efficiency with Focus on Energy," by Jenny Brinker of Wisconsin Focus on Energy.
- 1 p.m., "Handling Sand-Laden Manure and Options for Sand Separation," by Shaun Verbout of Tiry Engineering.

Wednesday, March 31

- 10 a.m., "Hot Topics in Dairy Ventilation," by Terry Lyons of J&D Manufacturing.
- 1 p.m., "Providing Alternative Energy with Building Integrated PhotoVoltaic (BIPV)," by Robert Kulp of Kulp's of Stratford.

Thursday, April 1

- 10 a.m., "Healthy Hearts for Heartland Farmers," by Amanda Boehm of UW-Oshkosh Nursing.
- 1 p.m., "Reducing Costs and Improving Productivity with GREEN Technology," by Orion Energy Systems.

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