



## Director's Report

**Dan Jones**, Board Chairman

Crystal Valley's Annual Meeting was held on February 4, 2016 at the Verizon Wireless Center. Tom Trahms was re-elected for another term, and Dean Sonnabend was elected to a three-year term as a new director to replace retiring Dean Duffey. Duffey served on the board for 18 years and was honored with a plaque of appreciation for his time and dedication on both the Crystal Cooperative and Crystal Valley Boards of Directors. Thank

you Dean for your years of service!

After the Annual Meeting, your Board of Directors elected officers for the upcoming year. Dan Jones was elected chairman, Mark Christenson was elected vice-chairman and Tim Lewer was elected secretary. Previous board chairman, Tom Trahms now serves as past-chair on the executive committee.

As your newly elected chairman, please allow me to update you on my family and farming operation. My wife Pat and I are from Lake Crystal. We are extremely blessed to have three children and seven grandchildren all living very close to us. I farm in a partnership with my brother Dave, my son Aaron and my nephew Adam. We raise corn, soybeans and custom finish hogs. I have previously served as secretary, vice-chairman and chairman during my 23 years on the board.

With spring just around the corner, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you a safe and prosperous planting season. Let's hope for better results than all of the experts are predicting.



## CONGRATULATIONS ROGER!

### Cooperative History

1990-91	Land O' Lakes Cooperative Management Trainee, Crystal Cooperative, Lake Crystal, MN
1991-94	General Manager, Farmers Coop Ag Service, Greenbush, MN
1994-99	General Manager, Ada Coop Oil Association, Ada, MN
2000-02	General Manager, Crystal Cooperative, Lake Crystal, MN
2003-Present	General Manager, Crystal Valley Cooperative, Lake Crystal, MN

Gene Traxler, Business Development Services Regional Director with Land O' Lakes, honored Roger Kienholz as part of LOL's 25-Year CEO/GM Recognition program. At our 2016 annual meeting, Gene presented Roger with a watch for his 25 years of management and service to the cooperative system.



## **Agronomy Report**

**Dale Botten**, *Agronomy Division Manager*

### **Spring Agronomy Outlook**

With the warmest winter on record, it looks like it will be an early spring. Crop nutrient barges on the river are projected to arrive two weeks earlier than normal. People in crop nutrient trade are wondering if that will be soon enough for the projected early planting season. The barges have become somewhat tight for spring arrival. This is due in part to the fact retail dealers held off on ordering product, uncertainty on product price direction, spring demand by customers and focus to have empty crop nutrient bins/storage tanks after the application season.

With the delayed demand for spring crop nutrients, limited supply of barges on the river and concern on timely rail shipments the price of crop nutrients is starting to increase as we get closer to the upcoming application season.

As growers try to adjust to lower commodity prices, our agronomists have been working hard this winter recommending the best product and service solutions. We appreciate all customers that met with our agronomists this winter to plan their product and service needs for the spring planting and summer growing season. Pre-planning and pre-paying certainly secures a better price and helps your Crystal Valley agronomy team have product available when you need it. As we near spring, I would encourage you to finalize your product and service needs with us. Don't forget about the benefits of summer soil sampling and our Crystal Vue® soil sampling service to get a jump on locking in the correct fertilizer application rate this fall.

Our Operations Department has been busy preparing for the upcoming application season. I would like to thank our operations team for their commitment to get all custom application equipment and facilities maintained and ready for spring.

Our Information Technology Department has been focused on the final development of our agronomy planning, order entry, load ticket and invoicing software. Our programmers have done a wonderful job of developing this software internally. This has allowed them to work closely with our operations and sales department to guarantee we have the best software solutions possible for you.

To help maximize our grower's yield profitably, we have a full-time in-house Precision Ag Department that continues to grow its product and service offerings. With high rent and land prices, we want to maximize profit-per-acre by having the best precision ag data and products available. This will allow you to make the best-informed decisions on your farm.

I would like to thank our dedicated administrative staff who is available to answer questions you have on your account. Throughout the year, they are committed to keeping your prepaids, invoices and statements accurate and timely. They work closely with our sales and operations staff to give you the best customer service experience possible.

We strive to give our customer's their highest yield-per-acre. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to partner with you to meet this goal. We look forward to working with you this year to help optimize your bushels harvested this fall.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR BUSINESS!**



## **Agronomy Update**

**Matt Schoper**, *Agronomy Sales Manager*

### **Checklist Before Heading to the Field**

Every year our customers go through a checklist to make sure they are ready to hit the fields when conditions are fit. You may want to add a couple of items to your 2016 list we would like to help you with.

### **Review Spring Plans**

It is important to sit down one last time with your Crystal Valley agronomist or Precision Ag specialist to be sure your spring plans are 100% documented and in place. This will help to ensure there will be no delays or miscommunications when everyone is in the heat of the season. A last review should include field-by-field discussions around fertility, chemical, seed and seed treatments.

### **Crystal Vue® & Grid Testing**

Update your list of fields that need to be grid-tested this spring or summer. While thinking about grid testing, it is best to have a discussion with your Crystal Valley agronomist on how our Crystal Vue® can enhance and make the best agronomic and financial decisions for your operation. Getting soil sampling done in the spring or summer helps you plan earlier in the fall as you don't have to wait for lab results to come back.

### **Precision Planting® Equipment**

We still have room to update the equipment on a couple more planters before spring planting starts. Also, we can repair some of those troublesome problems you didn't have a chance to correct from last spring. Our Crystal Valley agronomy locations will have E-Flow on hand. Please make sure to pick up the specialized graphite/talc to improve your plantability.

### **Get your Meters Tested**

It is very important that you test your planter meters every year to insure the planting accuracy is the best it can be on every row. Our Precision Planting® team is ready to help you out with this need. Call Ben Youngerberg at 507-420-9251 or talk with your Crystal Valley agronomist to arrange the pick-up or drop-off of your meters.

### **Seed Needs**

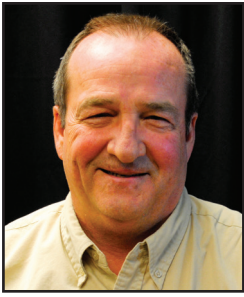
Make sure all of your seed needs are lined up for this spring. We have existing inventory and will have ample supply for your in-season needs as well. We have all different package sizes available.

### **Planting Prescriptions**

Jason Leary's (Precision Ag Specialist) schedule is filling up quickly for completing planter prescriptions. Please talk to your agronomist about setting up an appointment as soon as possible to complete this service.

### **Prepay**

It isn't too late to secure discounts if you haven't prepaid all your 2016 agronomy needs. This helps us forecast the quantities and products needed for your farm this coming season.



## Grain Report

Jeff Spence, *Grain Division Manager*

### What is Grain Looking Like This Spring?

After what I would call a mild winter, we are all hoping for an early spring. Most experts tell us the mild winter is from having an El Nino in control of our weather.

We keep hearing about the El Nino coming to an end sometime this year. Also predicted is a La Nina taking over our weather patterns sometime this summer. What can that mean for us and our crops this year? It really depends on when the transition happens. Normally an El Nino summer for us is a little cooler and wetter than normal. A La Nina normally means a little hotter and drier than normal. This is why prognosticators predict we could have as high as 80% chance at a run-up in the grain prices due to a below normal crop in the United States this year. Of course nobody knows when we will change over from an El Nino to a La Nina for sure. Like a lot of things in farming, you have to take a chance on factors beyond your control.

For most farmers this year, it has been very difficult to make marketing decisions based on current prices not making it profitable. One of the biggest problems is the market in Chicago not caring if the farmers are making or losing money. The last few years have seen a run-up in prices at some point during the marketing year giving most farmers a chance to sell grain at a profit. I am afraid that if we don't have some kind of a crop problem in the U.S. this spring or summer this may not be the case. However, we all know there is

plenty of time for problems between now and harvest to surface.

We feel there are many grain bins full in southern Minnesota from the big harvest we had last fall. This is worrisome if this grain needs to move before harvest. It could put even more pressure on the Futures Markets while widening the basis out as well. Right now about 99% of the people I talk to in the grain business think both corn and bean basis will tank this summer. I have found that sometimes when everybody thinks the markets can only go one way, they find a way to do something different.

We started picking up the corn pile in Hope and have put a good size dent in emptying the bean and corn sheds in Madelia. At this point we feel we have plenty of trains on the books to handle the spring and summer movements. As always we will do our best to handle all the grain needing to be emptied out of our customers' grain bins. We do have free delayed-pricing for anybody that wants to get grain moving now but does not want to set their price yet.

**Have a safe spring planting season.**



## Grain Marketing

Jim Johnson, *Grain Marketer*

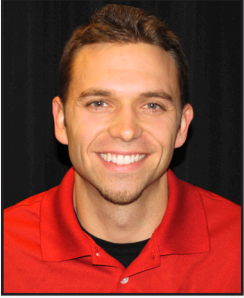
### Grain Marketing This Winter

Winter is going to be leaving us very soon. The markets did not give us much to talk about this winter. With futures falling post-harvest, it has left most producers without moving or marketing much grain after harvest. There has been a lid on prices with an abundant amount of domestic grain and South American crops coming in near trade expectations.

The funds have built a pretty sizable short position in corn and beans and we need some reason for the funds to want to get out of that short. This will likely be our best chance to see a near-term rally. Looking forward, most will be focused on the March 31st planting intentions as a guide to what it looks like the farmer will plant. Most early guesses are we will see corn acres up this year and similar bean acres as last year.

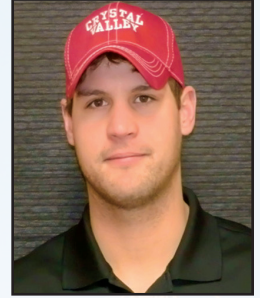
So what to do with your old crop corn? I think we are going to need to see some sort of production problem in the world to really get the market moving. Seasonally, the markets tend to trend higher going into spring / summer time. Barring no production problems, take advantage of the rallies the market may give us. The old saying, "I shall not hold grain past July" comes to mind. If one wants to leave their upside open, options

*Grain Marketing continued.*



**Ryan Brandts,**  
Grain Marketer

are always available. There are different strategies you can employ with options to keep the cost down while leaving a window to the upside. Marketing new crop can be easy to forget about while you have full bins of old crop at home. If we see a 20-30 cent rally, don't forget December 16 corn futures are trading around 3.80. Currently, a 20-cent move puts December 16 back with a 4 in front of it. That might not be a bad place to start looking at new crop sales. Optimistically, we are putting in seasonal lows. With better weather around the corner, hopefully there are better markets. We wish everyone a great and safe planting season.



**Joe Williams,**  
Grain Marketer

***Please contact any of our grain marketers to help you with your marketing needs.***

Jim Johnson 507-676-6676, Ryan Brandts 507-380-9959 , Joe Williams 507-676-0041



## **Dean Duffey**



### **When did you start?**

I started with the coop board in 1998. Ron Held was general manager of Crystal Cooperative.

Crystal Valley coop a financially-strong cooperative and watching all the growth throughout the past 18 years!

### **What did you enjoy most about your job?**

I enjoyed meeting so many wonderful people and making life-long friendships!

### **What do you plan to do with your retirement?**

My retirement is still a work in progress. However, spending my winters in Arizona is going to be enjoyed!

### **What was the state of the cooperative when you started?**

Crystal Cooperative was a financially strong, smaller, well managed coop.

### **Fondest Memory?**

I will miss many things about being on the board. Some of my fondest memories were working with other directors and the general managers, making

### **Is there anything else you would like to add?**

I would like to thank everyone for their support and confidence in me. Thanks to all the current and past board members, employees and patrons that helped make this coop what it is today. I will miss being on the board and would like to encourage anyone who has interest to consider a position on the board. It's a wonderful opportunity to learn the day-to-day operations of YOUR cooperative!



## Energy Report

**Nathan Monroe**, *Refined Fuels/Lubes Department Manager*

### Upgrades & Additions from Your Energy Department

It's that time again. The B-10 Mandate from the state starts April 1st and goes through September 30th. By May of 2018, the mandate will be 20% (B-20) for the same time period with all other months staying at the B-5 level.

### More News from Your Fuel Department

Crystal Valley is proud to have a new F-550 crane /service truck in place to help meet the energy needs of our customers more efficiently and effectively. The truck was a combined effort of our Fuel and Energy Sales Departments. In addition, with the growth of our fuel department, we are also adding a new 2016 4,500-gallon fuel truck. A new driver will also be joining our team. All of the additions above will give us the capacity to take care of our western, central and eastern trade areas.



This is one of two new additions in our department. It is a 2009 F-550 with a flat bed for setting fuel and L.P. tanks. Our Energy team designed this truck for our needs to serve our customers better and more efficiently.

***We have the equipment, the man power and the know-how to meet all of your energy needs. Contact us today!***



## Energy Report

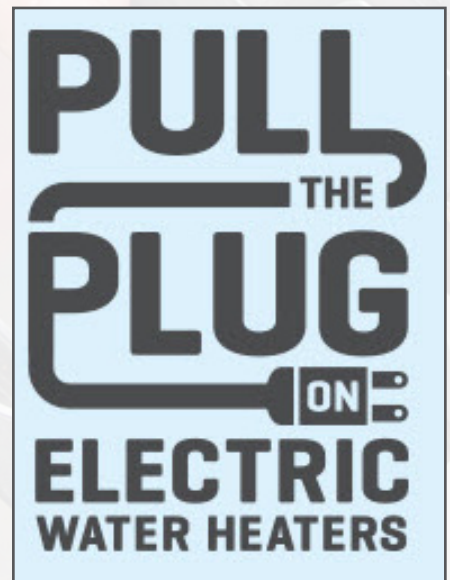
**Jim Jung**, *Propane Department Manager*

### Importance of Maintaining Your Appliances

Have you thought about your water heater lately? Your water heater is the second largest energy consumer in your home. Most of us take our water heater for granted. We turn on the faucet and the water gets hot...until it's not. If your water heater is over 10 years old, it may be time to start thinking about replacement before it leaks or breaks - leaving you with a cold shower. The Minnesota Propane Association has rebates of up to \$650.00 for water heater replacement.

Have you replaced any of the gas appliances in your home? If so we would like to hear from you. After an appliance replacement a total system leak check should be performed to insure all fittings and lines are leak free. Crystal Valley performs these leak checks for free.

For details on rebates, leak checks or any of your energy service needs, call 507-726-6455 and ask for the LP service department.



# Crystal Valley Happenings



Crystal Valley represented the Agri-Business sector at South Central College's Letter of Intent Signing program. February 18 was the National Technical Letter of Intent Signing Day. SCC is the first technical school in Minnesota to participate in the program that was streamed nationally.

*Would you like to receive your Crystal Valley newsletter electronically?*

If so, go to our homepage ([www.crystalvalley.coop](http://www.crystalvalley.coop)), click on the ABOUT tab, then click on **CUSTOMER CONTACT**.

## DON'T WAIT... BE READY!

The NEW Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) for medically important feed-grade antibiotics and prescription rule for water-based antibiotics

**TAKE EFFECT ON JAN. 1, 2017.**



Visit [pork.org/antibiotics](http://pork.org/antibiotics) for more information.



Crystal Valley was named the 2015 Top New Precision Planting Dealership in our territory. We sold the largest amount of product for a new dealer. Our territory is south-eastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin. Thank you, Ben Youngerberg and Crystal Valley Agronomy for all of your hard work!



## Feed Report

**Bob Raue**, *Feed Division Manager*

### Preparing Your Hog Barn for Seasonal Change

Winter is now behind us, and I believe we can all agree we have had a mild winter compared to most. Spring is a great time of year with more sunshine and warmer temps. It won't be long until farmers will be hitting the fields in preparation for another planting season. With the change of season, there are always preparations to be made. It is time to look at your driveways and roadways leading into and around your swine facilities. You may need to add more rock to ensure the feed trucks and livestock haulers have adequate roadways for making their deliveries and pick-ups. It's also that time of year when you need to be thinking about adjusting controller settings in your barns and doing the spring time duties to get your barns ready for the summer months. Some of you manufacture your own feed on the farm. Remember, we would be happy to manufacture your feed during this busy time. Give us a call and we can discuss how in more detail.

It was mentioned in our last newsletter that the Crystal Valley Feed Division would host a meeting in conjunction with the National Pork Producer Council and the University of Minnesota Extension. We would like to thank all of you who were able to attend the meeting held on January 12. Dr. Liz Wagstrom, Chief Veterinarian with the NPPC, did an excellent job of sharing important information about the future of antibiotics in the swine industry. Dr. Wagstrom discussed at great length the new VFD requirements and rules that will need to be followed to use antibiotics in your swine feed after January 1, 2017. Sarah Schieck with the University of Minnesota Extension gave a great presentation on the topic of common swine audits, giving requirements and examples. If you have questions concerning any of these topics or any other feed-related concerns, please contact your local feed sales person.

### Update on Capital Improvements to Our Feed Mills

The automated Mark IV Batching System with 18-bin micro ingredient system and nine finishing augers has been completed and is in operation at our La Salle feed mill. Arvin Dahl and Dave Fast (Mill Operators) are adjusting and like the new automated system. We thank you for your understanding with our few days of upgrading time. We also want to thank our other feed mills for helping us out with your feed needs during this time. The capital projects for the Janesville feed mill are adding an overhead feed corn holding bin and extending the corn leg. We will also be adding a 40 ft. by 40 ft. building to the loading/receiving building. These projects are expected to be completed in March.

The capital projects for Vernon Center feed mill are adding a micro-ingredient scale, six additional split-micro bins and six finishing-bin augers that are all tied into the WEM automated batching system. These improvements are expected to be completed in April.

As always, your Crystal Valley Feed Division team would like to sincerely THANK all of you for giving us the opportunity to serve you. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have.

# SAVE THE DATES

## FOR WORLD PORK EXPO 2016

# June 8-10, 2016



## DES MOINES, IA



# Environmental Essentials

## HOW TO KEEP PIGS COMFORTABLE THROUGH WEANING

A pig's environment can be a deciding factor in long-term productivity. By providing quality water, nutrition and air, weaned pigs have a greater potential to transition smoothly through weaning and reach the finish line.

Dan McManus, DVM, swine specialist for Purina Animal Nutrition, serves as a resource for nursery and wean-to-finish managers across the country. The first thing he does when visiting a farm is evaluate the environment.

*"The environment is something that people often overlook. However, it plays a significant role in the pig production cycle. If pigs are comfortable, they are more likely to go to the feeder," he says. "Checking the environment should be one of the first things you do day after day when you are looking at pigs."*

Three areas to focus on are: water availability, air quality and feed space.

### Water Availability

The first essential component of a proper wean-to-finish environment is water.

Unfortunately, an estimated 49 percent of newly weaned pigs do not consume water in the first 25 hours post-weaning. This delay in hydration may be caused by the stress of transport or the transition from the farrowing facility to nursery.

*"If pigs are dehydrated, they're much less likely to transition onto dry feed," McManus says. "Make sure the facility has enough drinkers and adequate flow rates. Provide electrolytes through a water medicator and gel on mats to help promote hydration during this critical phase."*

By the numbers:

- » Provide at least one water drinker for 10 pigs with a flow rate of 250 to 500 milliliters per minute for pigs in the grow-to-finish phase.
- » Add electrolytes through a water medicator for 5 to 7 days post-weaning.
- » Mat-feed gel for at least 2 days pre-weaning, for the first 5 days post-weaning, and one day before and one day after vaccination.

### Air Quality

The air pigs breathe can also impact their long-term performance.

When evaluating the pig's environment concentrate on the humidity, odor levels and moisture. All of these air quality factors are controlled by the minimum ventilation settings on the facility's control system.

McManus recommends the environment temperature for the wean-to-finish barn or nursery to be approximately 80 degrees Fahrenheit. When it comes to humidity, this factor does not negatively impact swine performance. However, combined with high temperatures, high humidity can have negative effects on pig performance.

*"When looking at ammonia levels, use equipment or your eyes," McManus says. "If the ammonia levels are high, your eyes will start to water."*

Modifying ventilation systems and managing manure can lower ammonia levels. Strategies for reducing ammonia levels include: increasing airflow rate, controlling air distribution, removing manure frequently and treating pit manure.

### Feeder Space

The ultimate goal of the weaning transition is to create eaters. To help pigs start eating quickly, provide highly-palatable starter feed, like UltraCare® 100, 200 or 240, and adequate feeder space.

Like water, it is important for the pigs to have enough feeder space. McManus says 1-inch of feeder space per pig is needed for pigs ranging from 40 to 50 pounds. As the pigs grow larger than 50 pounds, the recommended feeder space increases to 2-inches per pig.

The amount of feed in the feeder can then help increase consumption.

*"We recommend a 50 percent pan coverage when looking at feeders," McManus says. "It is very important for each feeder to hold about 24 hours' worth of fresh feed. This allows pigs to return to the feeder often as their consumption levels increase."*

To ensure freshness, dispense no more than 24 hours' worth of early feed at a time and clean out feed refusals each day.

**To learn more about young pig nutrition and management, visit [www.purinamills.com](http://www.purinamills.com) or contact Dan McManus at (712) 898-2162 or [DMMcManus@landolakes.com](mailto:DMMcManus@landolakes.com).**



## Credit Report

Gary Hulke, *Credit Manager*

### Credit Reminders

#### Are you ready for spring?

Our farm patrons are diligently planning for spring planting to line up seed, fertilizer, and herbicides. It appears that the margin between revenues and expenses for those crops is going to be very tight this year. That tight margin prompts an important question. Do you have adequate financing in place to keep your account current with Crystal Valley? AgQuest® Financial Services, with Ryan Feist as our business relationship manager in our Lake Crystal office, may have financing available to help fit your needs. Financing plays a key role in managing your Crystal Valley account.

### Managing Your Crystal Valley Account

Extending credit to our customers is a privilege we take seriously in order to serve all of our patrons' best interest. Crystal Valley extends credit to our valued customers on competitive terms with the expectation that the payment is received within the payment terms specified. When we receive your payment well in advance of the due date, you help your cooperative manage its cash flow so that we can pay our vendors on time who supply the products we sell. In return for prompt payment, you receive prompt and efficient service and avoid any finance charges. Enforcing the terms of payment may involve any number of issues. If there is an issue, Crystal Valley relies on you to communicate that issue to us in a prompt manner in order to remedy the situation while keeping your account current.

### Payment Timing

If payments come in late to Crystal Valley, we monitor your account more closely. By monitoring your account, we ascertain what adjustments we may need to make regarding your account. Your credit restrictions may be tightened by establishing a credit limit, lowering your current credit limit or no open credit allowed on your account. When relevant, a lien on assets may also be pursued. Our first choice is that patrons remit payment on or before the due dates so that your account is current and within its established parameters.

### Advantage of Good Accounts Receivable Management

When payments are received on time, accounts receivable management is in top form. With the cash we receive, we can pay our suppliers so that our suppliers will continue to provide the products you need. This cycle helps to keep Crystal Valley successful so we can continue to help you be successful in your business and personal lives. Thank you for your patronage and prompt payments.

THINK,  
WORK,  
LIVE

READY 4 MORE

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THE BAG

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# Cash is King

As we keep delving into the economic downturn of the agricultural economy, we are constantly looking for alternate ways to make our businesses successful. For some that means maintaining. For others, it is getting creative on new business tactics. I always preach the importance of working capital and how it may facilitate cash flow. The hardest part about managing a business is the unexpected. When the unexpected happens, such as needing to purchase a necessary piece of equipment, how can we keep working capital available? How do we make it accessible for operating and other emergencies when the need arises? At AgQuest® we have options. One being our “Lease Program”.

For some the “L” word can be scary. “Why rent when I can buy?” is a question we often ask ourselves. Think about this. Would you pay an employee three to five years of wages in advance? Of course not. You would expect your employee to “pay their own way” as they produce for you. Even if you knew the employee would remain being productive for the next three to five years, it would not necessarily be a good use of your cash. In my humble opinion, you would probably be better off deploying your cash in other areas of your business.

Paying cash for equipment is similar to paying wages upfront. Why put all your liquidity and cash into the equipment when it hasn’t produced for you yet? Make your equipment prove itself just as you would expect an employee to. An equipment lease doesn’t require large cash advances. Instead it allows you to preserve your cash for other opportunities such as cash discounts to expand or simply to improve liquidity.

Maybe your situation isn’t machinery failure. Perhaps it’s a collapsed shed roof or a blown out grain bin. Regardless of your need, we at AgQuest® have the ability to utilize both loans and lease options. Working with an experienced company who can tailor a solution to your specific goal is essential to the process. We can have a discussion on how to utilize a product that will help preserve your working capital. This will help give you the best outcome for you and your situation.

For more information contact Crystal Valley’s AgQuest® **Ryan Feist**, AgQuest® Financial Services.



**For all your Financial and Insurance needs.**

rfeist@agquest.net | 507-508-0206  
www.agquest.net

# Crystal Valley

would like to recognize the following employees for their years of *DEDICATED* service to our patrons.



**35 Years**

**Jeff Stauffer**  
Agronomist  
*Nicollet*



**5 Years**

**Ritchie Schaefer**  
Agronomist  
*Nicollet*



**5 Years**

**Brendon Caraway**  
Elevator Operator  
*Madelia*



**5 Years**

**Matt Schoper**  
Agronomy Sales Manager  
*Lake Crystal*



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www.crystalvalley.coop

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866-317-3136

**Hope**  
507-441-0036

**Janesville  
Agronomy**  
507-234-5155  
507-835-1720  
866-458-9886

**Grain/Feed/Petro**  
507-234-5610  
507-835-3646  
800-201-3646

**Lake Crystal  
Grain**  
507-726-2051  
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**Petro-Propane**  
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**Nicollet**  
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**Vernon Center  
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