
The Internet and Agriculture

Quick Notes...

The Internet can be a management tool for production agriculture:

- communication
- research findings
- markets
- services
- information
- discussion groups
- etc.

Introduction

The "Internet" is A MULTITUDE OF WAYS TO COMMUNICATE, other than by conventional mail or telephone service. Many facets of the Internet include computer mail, data transfers, file loading, discussion groups, reference materials, etc.

The Internet was originally developed by the U.S. Military to aid communications in case of an attack on the United States. The intent was to find a way to maintain communication if the existing phone system was partially destroyed. Since its inception the military and educational establishments have used it to facilitate communication and quickly share data across long distances. The Internet allows researchers across the country to collaborate with colleagues without having

to be in the same physical location. In the past few years the Internet has blossomed into commercial formats with services ranging from reference materials to interactive discussion groups to on-line purchasing.

Potentially almost all portions of the economy can benefit from Internet services, including production agriculture. The opportunities to communicate, share research findings, offer services, allow customers to purchase products, and educate the world about production agriculture is limited only by our imaginations.

Imagine the possibilities if you could communicate and use the on-line services offered by the top producers, major animal pharmaceutical companies, sale rings, state veterinarians, feed suppliers, extension offices, research facilities, Chicago markets, overseas markets, animal specialists, crop specialists, chemical manufacturers, product brokers, etc. The list goes on. We can begin to advance our research and marketing efforts further and further from our home base with a relatively low investment in our time and money.

One of the most basic and common uses of the Internet is E-mail. As an individual you can use E-mail as a medium of communication provided you and the receiver have a computer and E-mail address. As more people and

businesses get an E-mail address you will find it a more effective way to communicate than phone tag and faster than the regular U.S. mail. Today, many companies have Internet communication available for bank and other cash transactions. This tool will have more business applications as they are developed by private companies. E-mail addresses are available through private Internet providers.

Another application of the Internet, and perhaps the most talked about, is called the World Wide Web (WWW). Many individuals, companies, institutions, universities, and governmental agencies have web sites. These sites, also called home pages, have multitudes of information regarding agriculture. A recent search completed by Colorado State University located over 890 worldwide sites related to agriculture. Over 85 sites relate to agricultural marketing alone. These sites allow us faster access to marketing information than the daily or weekly trade journals.

There are other portions of the Internet that you may find interesting. In particular you can join an on-line discussion or news group where members discuss certain topics. There are several existing discussion groups that relate to agriculture. You might be able to communicate with a group of veterinarians about herd health management, learn about the latest vaccines, easier ways to assist with birthing, etc. There might also be a discussion group of regional agriculture producers who want to discuss the latest legislation, and ways to become involved with their representatives. Discussion groups on the Internet can be about any topic, anywhere, anytime and with anyone.

The Internet should reduce some business disadvantages for rural areas and farm business. Its offerings considerably narrow the communication gap. For instance, a farmer rarely lives in an urban area or has instantaneous access to marketing

information. In fact, a farmer's knowledge of current marketing conditions usually comes from the noon radio report of the local livestock barn or a weekly trade publication. The lack of quick and current market information does not allow the commodity producer to take advantage of changing markets. Information on the Internet levels this playing field, to a degree, and can help us compete more effectively. Also, with the WWW and discussion/news groups we can broaden our circle of references to make better business decisions.

The Internet has become a well known and a well-used tool for production agriculture and rural areas, but its use continues to increase. The Internet advances our sources of information beyond neighbors, trade publications, and the local Extension office. It is a tool that we can use to become more effective and efficient agricultural producers.

Where Do I Go From Here?

Home Pages Related to Agriculture Online
<http://www.agriculture.com/index.html>

The Chicago Mercantile Exchange
<http://cme.com/>

The National Weather Service
<http://www.nws.noaa.gov>

The Bureau of the Census
<http://www.census.gov>

Cornell Law School
<http://www.law.cornell.edu>

U.S. Department of Agriculture
<http://www.usda.gov>

Virginia-Maryland Regional College of
Veterinary Medicine
<http://www.vetmed.vt.edu>

Agriculture and Business Management,
Colorado State University
<http://www.coopext.colostate.edu/ABM/>

Cooperative Extension Service Publications
from OSU
<http://www.ansi.okstate.edu>

Livestock Virtual Library
http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/an_sci/extension

Poultry Sciences Department, Texas A&M
<http://gallus.tamu.edu/>

Electronic Zoo, Net Vet Veterinary Resources
<http://netvet.wustl.edu>

Sites for Agricultural Marketing. A home
page of market information provided by the
USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.
Market information is provided on products
ranging from peanuts to livestock slaughter
<http://www.ams.usda.gov/>

Agricultural Market information on-line.
Information from the Chicago Mercantile
Exchange courtesy of Successful Farmer.
<http://www.agriculture.com/ag/markets/>

A great place to get weather information
provided by the Successful Farmer.
<http://www.agriculture.com/ag/weather/>

The Agriculture Futures Updates: wheat, corn,
oats, soybean page.
<http://www.statpub.com/stat/futures.html>

The Cash Market Updates page.
<http://www.statpub.com/stat/cash-mkt.html>

Colorado State University Home Page
<http://www.colostate.edu>

Notes... Network (For More Information) Contact: **Rod Sharp, Ag. & Business Management Economist, CSU Extension, (970)-245-9149, Rod.Sharp@colostate.edu**
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