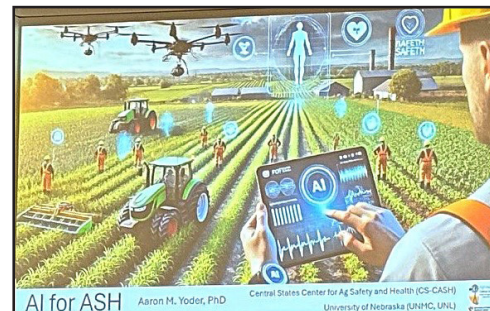


Messaging Matters – 2024 MRASH

by Gayle Olson, MS, CHES, I-CASH Assistant to the Director

Once again, the combined efforts of many people made for a great Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health (MRASH) Conference! In addition to the GPCAH pre-conference Journalist Workshop (see page 6), the conference included a variety of formats to share a vast amount of information. It is always the people who make or break a conference experience, and we were fortunate to have some great ones! Visit the [conference website](#) for handouts and presentations that have been made available.

Keynote speaker Kris Baldwin, Educational Technology Resources Specialist for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach (ISUEO) kicked the conference off with a very interactive presentation covering many ways artificial intelligence (AI) can be used to streamline communications. Aaron Yoder, Associate Professor at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) and Research Director for Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (CS-CASH), and Erica Summerfield, Assistant Professor of Ag Communication from South Dakota State University (SDSU), added their expertise in agricultural safety and health to continue the discussion on the pros and cons of using AI. All of those who completed the evaluation agreed that “The keynote presentation Messaging Matters: Amplify Communications with Generative AI gave me insights on how to effectively use generative AI to enhance communication.”



Aaron Yoder moderated a panel discussion on the use of AI at the MRASH Conference in Ames, IA.

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Conference attendees participated in four 15-minute “Messaging in Minutes” small group workshops; 93% of respondents indicated that they learned techniques to improve communication after participating in the following topics:

- *Creating Effective Ag Safety and Health Resources for Special Populations* (Ellen Duysen, UNMC)
- *Creating a Social Media Strategy* (Kelsey Irvine, UNMC)
- *Visual Accessibility* (Marsha Cheyney, GPCAH)
- *Nudging Safety* (Jakob Hanschu, National Farm Medicine Center)
- *Clearing Up Controversy* (Holly Schmitt, Iowa State University (ISU))
- *Infographics for Smarties: Making all that Data Look Great for Everyone!* (Erica Summerfield, SDSU)
- *Dashboard Development: Telling a Narrative Story* (Sihan Li, University of Illinois)

Continued on page 3

Director's Message

by Renée Anthony PhD, CIH, CSP

How are we at the end of another year already? 2024 was another crazy busy year, and I am looking forward to a little down time at the end of the month. In addition to the Center's research activities, the outreach team has developed many new resources and trained partners on how to use them to make a difference on your farm or at your organization.

Many of our resources centered on personal protective equipment this year. To make the information easier to find, our team re-organized the materials on a single web page. Visit our [PPE page](#) to learn about selection, use, and care of the many types of equipment available to protect from health hazards on the farm, organized from head to toe.

The outreach team also finalized our [Flat Farmer](#) tool, which is useful to demonstrate what clothing and protective equipment is recommended for various farming tasks. We gathered additional feedback from educators at farm and trade shows, who shared great ideas about how they planned on using the kits in their classroom. Downloadable kits, including a user guide and the printable graphics to use with the tool, are freely available. If you have given it a try, we would love to know how it helped you engage students in these safety discussions. If you share your contact information on this web page, you will receive updates when new PPE items and new classroom scenarios are added.

The GPCAH also knows that finding someone to conduct respirator fit testing continues to be a problem throughout our region. We worked with the Ag Health & Safety Alliance (AgHSA) to finalize our new [Respirator Fit Test Guide](#), a tool that was developed to train those who want to conduct respirator fit testing, specifically for agricultural operations. Because previous surveys let us know that many farmers would prefer to get fit tested at their local extension offices, we partnered with AgHSA and ISU Extension and Outreach to host training for extension agents. Seven completed the training and folks in Cerro Gordo, Dubuque, Franklin, Hardin, Palo Alto, and Warren counties have received a fit testing kit to plan how to conduct respirator fit tests for their farmers who are interested. Let us know if you have interest in being trained in 2025.

Our other outreach efforts continue to move forward. Free continuing education is available for our Ag Health programs, including the new [Ag Health Academy](#) kicking off in April of 2025. Our [FarmSafe Podcast](#) has started a new season, with bundled episodes dropping in January 2025. We are also working on a *FarmSafe in the Classroom* project to develop classroom activities and interactive assignments to correspond to several of the *FarmSafe Podcast* episodes.

Look for these and other new materials coming out in 2025. Remember that our GPCAH resources are reviewed by subject matter experts and agricultural professionals before we send them out into the community. They are free to the public, so let us know if there is anything we are working on that can help meet your needs to protect the farmers, and their families, that you serve. As always, reach out to us at cph-greatplainscenter@uiowa.edu.

Dr. Renée Anthony directs the GPCAH, housed in the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health of the College of Public Health. She can be reached at 319/335-4429 (renee-anthony@uiowa.edu).



Renée Anthony PhD,
CIH, CSP

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kay-mohling@uiowa.edu

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GREAT PLAINS
Center for Agricultural Health

Josie Rudolphi, Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois, and Rich Gassman, Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (I-CASH) Director, moderated a panel of farmers who shared their ag safety and health concerns and ideas for engaging with farmers. Panel members included Greg Alber from the Iowa Corn Promotion Board; Maddy Stevenson, an ISU student and horticulture farmer; Ryan Wolf, also an ISU student and dairy farmer; and Ryan Klataske, co-founder Ancient Ocean Beef Co.

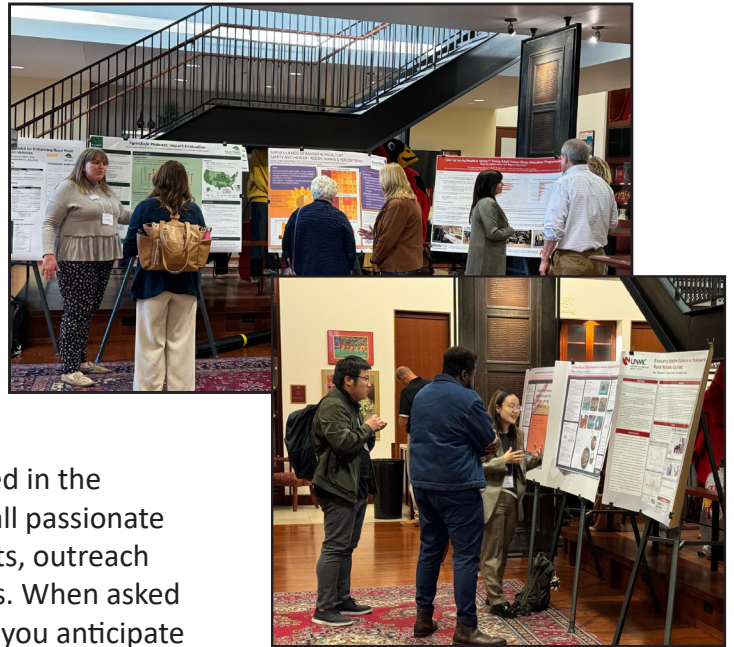
More than 40 people submitted abstracts for posters and breakout sessions, sharing research and program evaluation on emerging projects and topics ranging from asthma to zoonotics. Thursday evening was one of the strongest poster sessions MRASH has ever hosted. The reception provided a great opportunity to browse multi-disciplinary subject matter and network with colleagues while enjoying delicious food sourced from local farmers and listening to the music of Ames band "Melon Farmer." Friday morning's breakout sessions forced attendees to make hard choices about which speakers to hear.

Eighty-seven people from 10 states and Canada participated in the conference, representing a broad swath of rural America, all passionate about ag safety and health. Attendees represented students, outreach personnel, public health, healthcare, media, and producers. When asked to "Describe one thing you learned at this conference that you anticipate will change how you function in your agricultural and rural health roles," feedback indicated that many plan to incorporate AI into their ag health and safety communications to assist in gathering and organizing information, preparing lit reviews, generating graphic ideas, and creating educational tools. Additional comments highlighted the use of storytelling to create impactful messages and build trust; implementing social media tips, including how to better communicate with those with impairments and in other languages; developing new connections and learning more about organizations working in ag safety and health; and available resources and grants.

None of this would be possible without the generous support of conference sponsors and exhibitors. In addition to I-CASH, the following organizations displayed information about their ag safety and health programming and contributed financially to the conference: GPCAH (Silver Level Sponsor); CS-CASH (Bronze Level Sponsor); Ag Health and Safety Alliance; Agri-Safe Network; Canadian Center for Rural and Agricultural Health; Iowa Farm Service Agency; National Farm Medicine Center/National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety (NFMCC/NCCRAH); North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center (NCFRSAC); The Ohio State University Ag Safety and Health Programs; and University of Missouri Extension (UME). Please join me in thanking these sponsors!

Another group who deserves our thanks is the planning committee. This group works all year, contributing ideas, expertise, passion, and whatever is needed to make the conference a success! Marsha Cheyney and Kim McMichael from GPCAH, Jana Davidson from Progressive Ag Foundation, Ellen Duysen from CS-CASH, Karen Funkenbusch from UME, Charlotte Halverson from AgriSafe, Jakob Hanschu from NFMCC, Tabitha Kuehn from I-CASH, Josie Rudolphi from the NCFRSAC, Holly Schmitt from ISU and Iowa FFA, and Megan Schossow from the Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center.

Early next year we will begin working on MRASH 2025, tentatively scheduled to be held in east central Iowa during the week of November 10, 2025. If you have ideas or would like to serve on the planning team, contact Gayle Olson (gayle-olson@uiowa.edu).



The MRASH poster reception provided an opportunity to learn about emerging research and network with colleagues.

2024 I-CASH Outstanding Agricultural Youth Grant Award

by Tabitha Kuehn, BS, I-CASH Outreach Coordinator

I-CASH's Agricultural Youth Grant Program funds innovative projects designed by youth to raise awareness about farm safety. Every year, I-CASH awards one grant recipient with the Outstanding Youth Grant Award, an honor that highlights a project that stood out in its youth involvement and impact. At this year's MRASH award luncheon, I-CASH announced MMCRU FFA as the winner of the 2024 Outstanding Youth Grant Award and presented MMCRU FFA members Autumn Sanow and Olivia Spenner, and MMCRU FFA Advisor Sarah Brady, with a \$500 check!

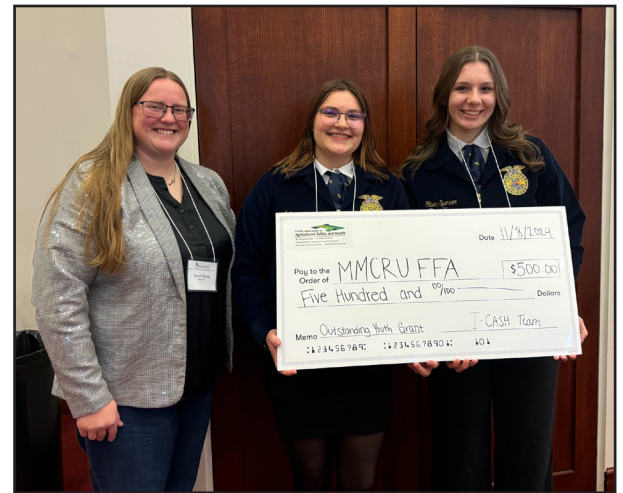
For their project, MMCRU FFA students organized a comprehensive farm safety day for elementary school students, which included multiple stations that addressed key farm safety topics. The FFA members were fully involved in the planning, scheduling, and presenting of each station. Throughout this project the high school students not only learned and researched farm safety lessons for themselves, but were also able to be role models to younger students in their area.

One of the activities that was elevated by utilizing I-CASH grant funds was a station focused on safety around large farm equipment. Elementary students were given the opportunity to walk around and sit inside a tractor, experiencing firsthand how difficult it can be for operators to see other people, especially children, due to the large size and blind spots of the machinery. This hands-on experience helped the young students better understand why it is critical to stay safe around equipment.



MMCRU FFA students provided elementary school students with high-visibility vests as part of their farm safety day.

the lessons learned during the farm safety day but also gave them a constant reminder of how to stay safe on the farm. Since the event, Sarah Brady, MMCRU FFA Advisor, has noticed that many of the students have been wearing their vests while out on farms and even at school, demonstrating how the safety lessons have stuck with them. Congratulations to MMCRU FFA for being recognized as the Outstanding 2024 Youth Grant winner!



MMCRU FFA Advisor Sarah Brady and FFA members Autumn Sanow and Olivia Spenner (left to right) accept the 2024 Outstanding Agricultural Youth Grant Award.

To further emphasize the importance of visibility, the FFA students provided all participants with high-visibility (hi-vis) vests. After trying on the vests, the students were able to see how much more visible they and their classmates became in the presence of large equipment.

An aspect that made this project stand out was that students didn't just learn about farm safety, they were able to take something tangible home with them that is appropriate for a young child's activities on the farm. Each student was given a hi-vis vest to keep, which not only reinforced

Applications for the 2025 Youth Grants will be available in January, visit www.i-cash.org for details.

Ag Health Academy Now Accepting Applications

by Kay Mohling MA, Agricultural Safety and Health Course Coordinator

As outlined in previous issues of this newsletter, the Agricultural Safety and Health Core Course has been reformatted into a multi-tiered series of educational resources professionally relevant to those working with farmers and farmworkers. With time and cost recognized as barriers for health care providers to attend training courses, the new format fits the needs and learning preferences of today's health and safety practitioners by providing a convenient self-paced curriculum at no cost.



Earlier this year [Ag Health 101](#) (an introductory audio program) and [Intermediate Ag Health](#) (a web-based program including the online modules used with the 40-hour course) were introduced. Applications are now being accepted for the [Ag Health Academy](#), an advanced training series providing practical information and discussions on emerging issues relevant to health and safety on the farm. The monthly virtual meetings will extend the agricultural safety and health education beyond the two asynchronous modes to build expertise across the region. The Academy's 90-minute sessions will allow participants to hear current updates on best practices from top experts around the country.

We invite applications from those who have completed any of the 40-hour Core Courses (offered by the GPCAH or by a partner site). In addition, anyone completing the Ag Health 101 program, and all eleven modules of the Intermediate Ag Health program is eligible to enroll in the Academy. The following topics are scheduled for the upcoming year, and were suggested by alumni of the Core Course: Children's Safety on the Farm; Driving on Rural Roads: Updates on Interventions; Emergency Response Programs: Novel Programs to Motivate Farmers; Equipment Safety; First Aid on the Farm: Preparation; Health and Safety Concerns for Agricultural Tourism Farms; Managing Safety on the Farm; Mental Health: Farmer Risk Factors and Resources; Personal Fall Arrest Systems and Extrication Methods; Pesticide Hazards: Updates; Sleep and Fatigue: Impacts on Health and Safety on the Farm; Updates on Ergonomics; and Zoonoses.

The final component of the Agricultural Safety and Health Course is the annual hands-on [Solutions Workshops](#) offered in conjunction with the MRASH Conference. Visit the [GPCAH website](#) for educational materials, course offerings, and outreach topics for promoting agricultural health and safety.

Think Safety with ATVs

by Mandy Archer, BA, GPCAH Outreach Specialist

Are you planning to purchase an All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) for someone in your family this year? Remember that children under the age of six should not be on an ATV. If you are purchasing an ATV for an older child or teenager, buying the correct-sized vehicle is essential. Children and teenage riders are a vulnerable population; one in three ATV crashes involve those under 16 years of age, and 95% of child deaths on ATVs occur due to the child riding the wrong sized vehicle. Parents may want to save money and buy an ATV the child can "grow into," but this is unwise and certainly not worth the risk.

Wearing a helmet and protective gear is critical, as is the ability to use active riding techniques (shifting body weight with turns on the road). Extra riders should never be allowed on an ATV, and traveling on public roadways should be avoided. Adolescents are prohibited on public roadways if they are under 18, another impactful preventative measure since 60% of ATV deaths have occurred on public roads.

Always purchase the appropriately sized ATV, helmet, and protective gear, and have conversations within your community about the decision to buy a smaller ATV. For more information, and a chart to help determine ATV size, visit the [Stead Family Children's Hospital ATV Safety Basics website](#).

Journalist Workshop

by Renée Anthony, PhD, CIH, CSP, GPCAH Director

Before the kickoff of the 2024 MRASH conference, the GPCAH sponsored a skills development workshop to help ag safety and health professionals better engage with journalists. Thirty-two MRASH colleagues attended the two-hour session that consisted of a panel of journalists who report on agriculture and the environment, with the objective to help researchers and safety advocates understand how to establish relationships and work with the media to help share messages of health and safety.



Panel members (left to right) Rachel Cramer, Zoe Martin, Cheryl Tevis, Lyle Muller, and Jared Strong.

The panel conversation was hosted by Cheryl Tevis, formerly with Successful Farming, including serving as the Senior Risk Management Editor. Four additional members of the media participated on the panel:

- Rachel Cramer, Reporter with Iowa Public Radio and Harvest Public Media
- Zoe Martin, Managing Editor at Iowa Farmer Today
- Lyle Muller, Professional Advisor at Grinnell College, with a long history of investigative reporting with many Iowa printed press
- Jared Strong, Investigative Reporter at the Cedar Rapids Gazette

After everyone gave introductions and perspectives about how they approach stories, Cheryl asked questions and guided the conversation to help the audience understand how stories develop, how to approach interviews, and to understand how old methods (press releases and press conference) and new methods (webinars) are used by the press.

Attendees identified that one of the most important tips they took away was to build relationships with journalists. For example, a press release is more likely to be

read if the journalist knows you. Since some journalists reported receiving over 60 press releases a day, see our graphic above that highlights additional best practices for press releases.

In summer 2025, the GPCAH will hold another workshop on working with the media. This next round, however, is intended for journalists to be the audience to learn about agricultural safety and health and identify resources and terminology that will help them develop effective stories that, by providing more cues to safe behaviors, can improve the health and safety of our region's farmers and their families.

Are Press Releases Read?

- Inundated with many (60/day)
- May not pick it up given news cycle, may hold for another time of the year (when the topic may be more relevant)

Best Practices on Sending Press Release:

- Cultivate relationships with journalists to improve chances of it being read
- Make the subject line good: **hook should be NEWS + relatable info**
- Include story in the email body of text
- Include short bullet points, where located, relevant audience
- Include personal note and callback information
- Include a farmer source to reach out to if possible
- Identify the most relevant staff person to send it to

Refrain from:

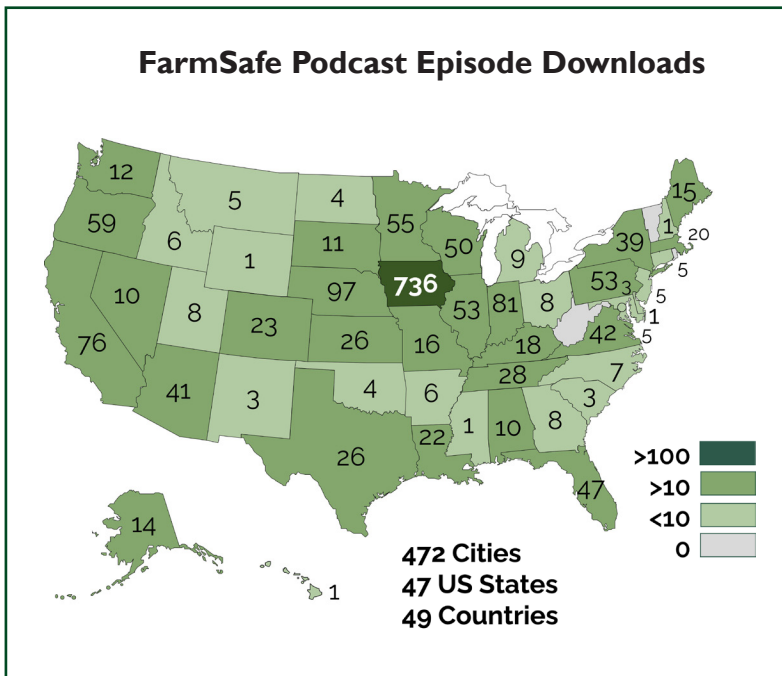
- Attaching PDF to an email
- Dumping a press release at 3 PM on Friday (no time to clarify the content)

FarmSafe Podcast Impact Assessment

by Mandy Archer, BA, GPCAH Outreach Specialist

While we prepare for our first Season 4 episode bundle drop in January, the GPCAH Outreach team examined listener trends and shared them at MRASH. Our 59 episodes total just under 15 hours of conversations with experts around the region. The library includes talks covering a broad range of hazards and prevention suggestions relevant to Midwest farming. Our podcasts have been downloaded 2,760 times, and the most popular episode in the recent Season 3 was Safe Operation and Maintenance of Tractors (S3 Episode 3). Over all 3 seasons, the most popular episodes are:

- Cold Weather Training Tips (S1 Episode 12)
- Sleep (S1 Episode 6)
- Back Pain and Whole-Body Vibration (WBV) (S1 Episode 7)



The WBV episode had a big increase in listeners this year. People are finding helpful episodes in our library, so go back and listen if you missed them. Around 27% of our listeners are from our home state of Iowa, and 41% are in our 9-state GPCAH region. The figure at left shows that we have listeners in all but 3 states. Our mission in Season 4 is to get at least one listener from Rhode Island, West Virginia, and Vermont. About 25% of the audience is outside the US, with most from Germany and Canada, so our impact is, indeed, global.

In Season 3, we coordinated podcast episodes to align with national campaigns. We dropped a 4-part series on grain bin safety across January-February to align with Grain Bin Safety Month in February. To coordinate with National Poison Control Week in March, we

dropped 2 episodes on poisons on the farm, first talking about exposures, then prevention. We promoted our library of relevant episodes that corresponded with topics for National Farm Safety and Health Week in September. We identified that September, November, and February have the most listens.

Taking what we learned about when and how listeners interact with the podcast, in the upcoming Season 4 we are dropping episode bundles. Our assessment identified that listeners were not waiting for new episodes to drop, so we are scheduling episodes in bundles throughout the year. We are also timing the promotion of older episodes across the year, since the information is still relevant for agricultural injury and illness prevention lessons.

Our host from Season 3 is returning for Season 4, so catch up on the library of past episodes before we drop the new stories in January. (And, please reach out to your friends in RI, WV, and VT to get them to an episode so we can claim to have listeners in all 50 states!)

NEWS AND UPDATES

I-CASH 2025 Farm Safety Calendars are available at ISU Extension and Outreach, and FSA county offices. The calendars feature safety and health recommendations and showcase Iowa's beautiful farm landscapes.



2025 I-CASH Agricultural Youth Grants

Applications for the 2025 I-CASH Agricultural Youth Grants will be available on the [I-CASH website](#) in January. Each year I-CASH provides funds for community grants to youth groups aimed at the prevention of farm-related injury. In addition, I-CASH awards an Outstanding Youth Grant (read about the 2024 award on page 4) and the winners are invited to present their project at the annual MRASH Conference. Past projects have included distributing safety supplies such as ear plugs and sunscreen, building farm safety hazard displays, and developing ag safety and health presentations. Grants are only available for youth groups and organizations in Iowa.

Save the Date - 2025 ISASH Conference, June 23-26, 2025

The 2025 International Society for Agricultural Safety and Health (ISASH) Conference will take place in Portland, ME, June 23-26, 2025. The theme for the conference is *On Land and at Sea: Safety and Health for Farmers, Fishermen, and Forestry Workers*. Check the [ISASH website](#) for details.

FarmSafe Podcast - Season 4

To start the new year off right, season 4 of the [FarmSafe Podcast](#) will feature a bundle of new episodes that will drop in January of 2025. We will be diving into exciting topics like the Accident vs. Incident initiative and the media's role in agricultural safety. We will also highlight some practical safety advice that farmers can begin implementing this winter, like fire safety. Make sure to tune in!



Upcoming Events

January 10-11

Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference
Des Moines, IA

January 22-23

Iowa Pork Congress
Des Moines, IA

January 28-30

Midwest Ag Safety Leadership Conference
Omaha, NE

February 4-6

Iowa Ag Expo
Des Moines, IA

February 11-12

Minnesota Pork Congress
Mankato, MN

February 15-22

National FFA Week

February 21-23

Western Farm Show
Kansas City, MO

March 24-27

AgrAbility National Training Workshop
Las Cruces, NM

March 24-28

Stand Up 4 Grain Safety Week

April 1-2

Public Health Conference of Iowa
Des Moines, IA

May 20-23

National Rural Health Association (NRHA) Annual Rural Health Conference
Atlanta, GA



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