

# Lovas Farms

NEWSLETTER | FEBRUARY 2014

## WINTER UPDATE

This winter has been pretty busy with snow removal and the challenge of extremely cold temperatures. Most January days were spent moving snow in anticipation of hauling grain to the elevator. Unfortunately, more often than not the high temperature for the one day during the week without a snowstorm was something like -20° F. Running diesel trucks becomes challenging in sub-zero temperatures. This provided a chance to do planning and make operational changes in 2014.

For 2014, we plan to raise corn and soybeans on more than 80% of the acres. We will also raise wheat on approximately 20% of the acres – the first time in more than six years that Lovas Farms will raise wheat.

This change in crop rotation is necessary due to changes in markets and the price of some of the necessary inputs, mainly propane. Last year the

average sale price for a bushel of corn was around \$6.00, and we are forecasting that 2014 will bring about half of that price. In addition, the price and availability of propane has become a real challenge. Wheat and corn look to have similar profit potentials in 2014, and therefore one way to mitigate risk and attempt economic sustainability for the farm is to plant wheat.

Sarah is now farming full time with Jason and Pete. She completed her master's degree in soil science in September and spent the fall in the combine during harvest. She will focus on the agronomics of Lovas Farms.

At this writing, we are three days into February and have not had a storm this month, and it has been above zero all three days. We're hoping this means that the rest of the winter will be better for hauling corn!



## SHOP SEASON

A 1999 half-ton Dodge pickup will be turned into a soil testing and scouting pickup. Removing all of the seats from the pickup, except for the driver's seat, and cutting a hole in the floor of the cab will make room for mounting a soil probe inside the cab and loading a four-wheeler in the pickup box. The soil probe will be able to sample soil at three different depths in order to determine how much nitrogen, phosphate, potassium, and other nutrients are available from the soil for plant growth. The soil nutrient information will help create more precise fertilizer recommendations. The pickup will also be used for crop scouting and a four-wheeler will be used in the fields to diagnose weeds, insects, and diseases in order to determine which pesticides, if any, should be used and when they should be applied.



Lovas Farms has also purchased a new Edwards 75-ton JAWS Ironworker. The ironworker will bend, cut, and punch metal, enabling Jason and Pete to be more creative when designing, building, and improving equipment. The first project planned for the ironworker is to make Pete a new grill guard for his pickup.



**Check out our  
new web site!**

[WWW.LOVASFARMS.COM](http://WWW.LOVASFARMS.COM)

## HARVEST

We finished harvest on November 11, 2013, and we completed corn drying on November 22. The 2013 growing season was quite challenging with more than half the farm affected by at least one hail storm and some fields receiving two rounds of hail.

The hail delayed crop maturity and reduced yields. Additionally, we had to juggle soybean and corn harvest, stopping in the middle of each crop to switch, then switch back again.

### SOYBEANS

Harvest began with the soybeans that escaped the hail. These soybeans ended up having excellent yields. In fact, these soybeans yielded 45-48 bushels per acre, some of the highest yields we've seen!

The soybeans that got hail were a different story. Because of damage to the plant during the growing season, maturity was delayed and yields suffered: 6-32 bushels per acre, depending on the severity of the hail. We also had to take a break from soybean harvest to let these plants finish maturing. So we started corn.

### CORN

After harvesting half the corn, the national propane shortage caught up with us. We weren't able to get propane from our supplier and therefore had to shut down the grain dryer, and the entire harvest, until we could get more propane.

Corn moisture was about normal for harvest—20%. Because it was normal moisture, the entire 2013 corn crop was dried in the grain dryer—the last time this happened was in 2010.

In 2012 and 2011, the corn crop was much dryer than normal and the crop did not have to be dried in the grain dryer at all. Corn harvested with moisture below 20% tends to suffer greater loss due to shattering during combining.

In contrast, the 2008 and 2009 corn crops were extremely wet and extremely late. These crops had grain moistures ranging from 25 to 30%. This resulted in inefficient drying because the grain dryer used a lot more propane to dry the corn. Further, corn of this moisture is often immature and grain handling causes broken and damaged kernels, which usually results in a

discount at the time of sale.

Although the yields were down slightly due to hail damage, we had a good 2013 corn crop.



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SHOP LOCATION: 448 HIGHWAY 81 SE (1/2 MILE SOUTH OF ALTON GRAIN TERMINAL)

## WINTER FUN!

Jason, Sarah, and Pete have all had a chance to have a little fun this winter.

In February, Pete plans to take a trip with his wife, Twila, to Florida to get out of the North Dakota cold for a bit.



In January, Jason and Sarah celebrated their 10-year wedding anniversary by taking a trip to the Dominican Republic, where the beach was amazing and the temperatures were warm.



In December, Jason went elk and mountain lion hunting in Colorado, where he was able to shoot his first mountain lion and elk.



Jeannine came home for Christmas with her family. During that time, we made gingerbread houses and both Jason and Pete's engineering skills were required to make the houses stay together for 2½-year-old Kate to decorate.