

Friday Feedback for Friday, April 24, 2020

Contacting the Regional Office – Update – Hurlbut

As an update to last week's Friday Feedback, the Regional Office Main Line (800-453-7501 or 517-324-5300) will go to voicemail for the foreseeable future. If you leave a voicemail message on the main line, someone will return your call within a few hours. If you need to speak to someone immediately, you are encouraged to dial the individual directly. As a reminder, the [Staff Listing](#) containing the email addresses and direct phone extensions of the Regional Office staff can be found on the GLR Home Page under "Other Info".

ARMS III Wrapping Up – Erickson

Today (4/24) is the last day to submit any ARMS III records into the iPad, be they are completes, refusals, or inaccessible. All records must be submitted and accounted for.

I would like to thank everyone again for their hard work and efforts in keeping at it with ARMS III for the last month. For those who may have been discouraged with the way things went with ARMS this year, I think our results are going to be as good as can be given the circumstances. It's clear to me that many enumerators have really tried to do as much as possible on the phone, which is extremely difficult for ARMS III.

MDARD Labor Survey – Johnson

Our office just received word that the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) is developing a survey of Michigan farms which focuses on farm labor, H2A workers, and use/availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) for its workers. This study, spearheaded by State Veterinarian Dr. James Averill, is expected to target a number of the same operations that we are currently contacting for the April Labor Survey. It is possible when you contact one of the operators for our Quarterly Labor survey that a respondent may say that they just got it in the mail, confusing it with the MDARD Labor Survey. Be sure to probe carefully to make sure that the operator knows which survey you're referring to in order to minimize potential confusion. At this time, NASS will not be doing any follow-up enumeration with the MDARD Labor.

Sharing our Stories – Miyares

During this time of social distancing, self-quarantining, and toilet paper hunting/hoarding, it can be very easy to get caught up in the negative, but everywhere, there are also heartwarming stories that don't get a lot of attention. Over the last few weeks, I have invited NASDA enumerators to share their stories that can show the good in people that can come about during a crisis. We didn't receive any stories this week, but we're sure they are still out there! Please send any stories you would like to share to John.Miyares@usda.gov before 4:00 p.m. on Thursday 4/30 to be certain it can be included in the May 1 edition of the Friday Feedback.

Friday Feedback for Friday, April 17, 2020

Contacting the Regional Office by Phone – Hurlbut

With limited staff currently available to answer the main telephone line at the Regional Office in East Lansing, it is possible that some calls may end up getting missed at the busiest times of the day. As a reminder, the [Staff Listing](#) containing the email addresses and direct phone extensions of the Regional Office staff can be found on the GLR Home Page under “Other Info”.

ARMS III Winding Down – Erickson

I want to thank everyone for their hard work and efforts as we’ve been making the final push for ARMS III. I understand it hasn’t been easy, but we have had some successes in completing the surveys by phone.

As a reminder, completed ARMS forms should not be shipped to NPC, however, people have been successfully entering forms using both the [AgCounts](#) website and the newly released CAPI tool. With enumerators having the ability to submit all records one way or another electronically, the last day to submit any forms into AgCounts or CAPI will now be April 24. This includes all assigned forms that would be complete with data, refusals, or inaccessible. If you have any forms that were sent to you for follow-up enumeration by your NASDA Coordinator, those must also be updated in AgCounts (not CAPI) before April 24. Please contact your supervisor or NASDA Coordinator if you have any specific questions or concerns.

Supply Requests – Miyares

Field kits with May Ag Yield survey supplies are scheduled to be shipped on Thursday April 23. If you have other items that you need sent to you from the Regional Field Office that can be sent in the same UPS package, please submit your requests through the [NASDA Order Form](#) on the GLR Home Page by Tuesday April 21.

Avoiding iPad Issues – Lawson/Laird

We realize it can be difficult to tell what fixes what, when to try to fix something yourself and when to call for help with the iPad. The thing to remember is to NEVER try more than 2 failed attempts to unlock the iPad!

If you are having problems logging into CAPI, here are some steps that may help:

- Check the CAPI Dashboard & the alerts area at the top of the Purdue website for tips or known issues
- Tap on “Clear Preferences” at the CAPI Login screen, then immediately try to login again. Often times this is a quick fix.
- Try turning off WiFi: With more people relying heavily on WiFi to work and go to school from home, your own WiFi might be running really slowly, causing CAPI to time out before your listings can load
- Go into settings- Safari – Clear History and Website Data, then do a hard reboot by holding in the power and home buttons until you see the Apple.
- If none of the above work call for assistance. As a reminder, your first point of contact should always be your supervisor or your NASDA Coordinator. If they can’t help you, they will direct you to someone who can help you. Please do not call Linda or Mike until after you have tried resolving your issue with your NASDA Coordinator.

Here are some other items which you can check NOW to avoid iPad issues in the future:

- Touch on the gray settings icon and double check the following:
 - General – software update – Automatic Updates is “OFF”
 - Privacy – location services is “ON” and the MobileIron listed below is set to “ALWAYS”
 - Safari – Block pop-ups is “OFF” (This is needed for iSolved timesheets)

If the iPad screen goes dark and requires a passcode in less than 15 minutes also check these settings:

- Display & Brightness – Auto Lock is set to “15 minutes”
- Touch ID & Passcode – Enter passcode to unlock iPad, change Require Passcode to “After 15 min.”

Sharing our Stories

Over the last few weeks, we have invited NASDA enumerators to share their stories that can show how the good in people can come out during a crisis. Our first contribution this week comes from Northeast Indiana:

“Tanja Buford, field enumerator in South Whitley Indiana has been busy making masks. When she gets a batch made she post them on facebook to alert her community that she will leave masks outside on a table and anyone who needs one can come by and pick them up.”

Our next words of encouragement come from Rita Kanniainen from Michigan’s Upper Peninsula:

“To Everyone HUGE Warm HUGS and BIG Shiny SMILES ☺!!!! from me to you All. Bright Sunny Days are Coming!!

During this time of social distancing, self-quarantining, and toilet paper hunting/hoarding, it can be very easy to get caught up in the negative, but everywhere, there are also heartwarming stories that don’t get a lot of attention. Please send any stories you would like to share to John.Miyares@usda.gov before 4:00 p.m. on Thursday 4/23 to be certain it can be included in the April 24 edition of the Friday Feedback. Please note that stories may need to be edited to fit the page and not all stories may be able to be included in a given week.

Friday Feedback for Friday, April 10, 2020

Corona Questions and Answers – Johnson/Hurlbut

As we address the challenges and ongoing uncertainty around the coronavirus pandemic, our top priority at NASS and NASDA continues to be the health and safety of our employees. We are learning a lot as we adjust to “social distancing” and the disruptions in conducting our normal data collection and survey activities. Echoing the words of Charlie Ingram, we greatly appreciate everyone’s understanding, willingness, and dedication in continuing to perform our valuable services to the agricultural community. You are our greatest asset and we can’t emphasize enough how important it is for all of us to keep each other healthy and safe. We understand that many of you have questions about how you are going to be able to do your job in this current environment. Until we can get back to business as usual, please remember that we’re continuing to look at all available resources and avenues to support you. Together, we will get through this. Regarding some of the common questions we’ve received here:

Is the office in East Lansing still open? YES, the regional office is still open. Most staff are teleworking and available to answer your emails and calls. Additionally, someone is in the office to receive and process mail and UPS packages that arrive. You should continue to send things to the Regional office as you need to. You should experience no difference in the quality of service you have come to expect from the office.

How does the closing of the call centers affect us? Survey assignments normally routed through Data Collection Centers (DCCs) will continue to be decentralized and shifted to field enumerators for local phoning as appropriate. All April survey work (Milk, Colony Loss, Labor, Census of Horticulture) has already been diverted to the field. Plans regarding the Cash Rents Survey are forthcoming.

Where does a survey go when a farmer returns it in the mail? Generally, when a farmer mails a survey to NASS it is returned to NASS’s National Operations Center (NOC) in St. Louis, Missouri. Although the call center located at the NOC is currently closed, the mail room at the NOC is still open and is still processing mail. The mail that they do receive, however, may be delayed because of USPS delays due to their staff being ill.

Mail delays from Farmers. What should I do? There have been reported delays in mail delivery in certain areas of our region because some USPS employees are ill. If you call a farmer who says they have already reported by mailing in a completed questionnaire, please thank the farmer and tell him you’ll call him back in a few days if we still have not received his questionnaire in the mail. If the farmer is willing (and most are very understanding given the current circumstances) explain to him that the mail is operating rather slowly in some areas and have him complete the questionnaire with you over the phone. Please do not record a survey as “complete or inaccessible” unless you have: a) obtained a complete report or b) the farmer is truly inaccessible and will remain so for the remainder of the survey period.

Mail delays in general. What should I do? There are some areas of our region that are only receiving mail every other day with further processing delays at large regional processing centers. This appears to only affect USPS at this time. UPS appears, at this time, to be less affected. Please try to work these delays into any mail/UPS you are using. We will try to mail surveys to the farmers a bit earlier to help account for these delays. If there are documents that you absolutely need to quickly get to one of your enumerators, NASDA coordinator, or the office, please use UPS.

Claiming Mileage on your Timesheet – Hurlbut

Where all face-to-face enumeration activity has been suspended until further notice, there should be no claims for mileage associated with data collection on enumerator time sheets. If enumerators need to drive to drop-off or pick-up any survey or work related materials and wish to claim mileage, they must seek prior approval from their supervisor and NASDA Coordinator before going anywhere. As a general rule, all enumerators should follow any state and/or local stay-at-home orders, including social distancing recommendations, and any advisories from their state and local government agencies, public health authorities, and medical professionals, in addition to any federal guidelines.

Data Collection Extensions – Miyares/Dothage/Courser

In recognition of the extra burden placed on field enumerator staff at this time, data collection for a few ongoing surveys has been extended to allow for increased response rates. The new last day to submit April Labor forms in CAPI has been extended to May 7 while the National Farmers Market Managers Survey has been extended until May 25. All records still need to be submitted in CAPI.

June Area Survey Update – Miyares

The June Area Survey, as we know it, has been suspended for the safety of all involved. There will be, however, calling activities for a sample of those included on the June Area Frame.

- The June Crops Acreage Production and Stocks (APS) Survey, also known as the “June List Survey” will be conducted by phone and will be modified to include questions that would normally have only been asked on the June Area questionnaire.
- Alternative plans are being developed for other follow-on surveys and data collection related to the June Area survey. Specific guidance for upcoming Objective Yield Surveys is being developed and will be provided to everyone at a later date.

Sharing our Stories

Last week, we invited NASDA enumerators to share their stories that can show how the good in people can come out during a crisis. Our first contribution comes from Northwest Ohio enumerator Curt Aldrich:

“While I’ll be the first to admit, gathering pertinent information from our operators is not as fun over the phone as opposed to a good face-to-face pleasant conversation. I can still find joy when I am successful. In speaking with an aviary operator I found that his upbeat demeanor provided a much needed boost to my confidence in the midst of this current crisis.

“Even though the operator had lost almost half of his hives, he still spoke positively about getting his bees back to work this Spring. He talked about how warmer weather and sunshine would ‘get the hives buzzing.’ He chose his words as if talking about his children. I’ve never heard anyone speak about these fascinating creatures with such passion.

“This single conversation brought me back out of a funk that I’ve been feeling for the last several weeks and allowed me to feel good about the work we are all doing with NASDA. Agriculture is the one hope for the future I feel I can count on.”

Our second story comes from Eastern Michigan enumerator Dawn Kunding:

“Sebewaing is a small town, but we have a big heart. When we heard masks were in short supply, a couple in the town decided something needed to be done. So connections were made with people who can sew and now we have 15 people working on the masks. Work is handled at one central location and then gets separated into various stations. Each person has a specific job to do. Donations of material, bias tape, elastic and thread have come in from all over to help with this cause. As of today we have made over 2300 masks! I am proud to be living here and helping with this project. And we are not done yet. The list grows every day!”

During this time of social distancing, self-quarantining, and toilet paper hunting/hoarding, it can be very easy to get caught up in the negative, but everywhere, there are also heartwarming stories that don’t get a lot of attention. Please send any stories you would like to share to John.Miyares@usda.gov before 4:00 p.m. on Thursday 4/16 to be certain it can be included in the April 17 edition of the Friday Feedback. Please note that stories may need to be edited to fit the page and not all stories may be able to be included in a given week.

Friday Feedback for Friday, April 3, 2020

Important Notices for All NASDA Enumerators – Hurlbut

In the Alerts Section of the GLR Home Page, there are links posted with two important messages, one from Charlie Ingram and the other from Kif Hurlbut. All enumerators should have received these in their e-mail. If you missed them, you can read Charlie's email by clicking/tapping [HERE](#) and Kif's by clicking/tapping [HERE](#).

Survey Materials and Communication – Hurlbut

Effective immediately, all enumerators collecting data by phone are required to read the following introduction statement to respondents:

- *“This is (enumerator name) calling on behalf of USDA-NASS. In the interest of the health and safety of our Producers and partners, USDA has suspended all face-to-face data collection until further notice. We recently mailed you information about the (survey name), I am calling to collect information about your operation. While your participation is voluntary, your response is important to the accuracy of our data. The information you provide is kept confidential by law and is used for statistical purposes only.”*

NASS headquarters staff are working to update all active surveys to include this statement on the first page of each form. Additionally, the NASS Public Affairs Office is working to update the language used in all pre-survey letters/cover letters to change certain data collection follow-up strategies. Also, print mail centers are installing equipment to create pressure-sealed (i.e. spit-free) envelopes, allowing NASS to communicate with farmers while securely providing their 17-digit survey codes. Plans are to begin using these pressure-sealed envelopes on ARMS III non-respondents as well as the April Milk, Colony Loss, and Labor Surveys.

New CAPI Instrument – Lawson

HQ plans to push out a new CAPI instrument the night of April 8th. All enumerators need to be logged out of CAPI by 9:00 p.m. on the evening of April 8. Users should be able to log back in on Thursday morning, but may need to download and install the updated CAPI applications on the iPad from Apps@Work. Charge time to project code 380 to reinstall the apps if necessary. No need to update the URL or download again if using a home computer. See the [CAPI Dashboard](#) for specific details.

June Area Survey Update – Miyares

The June Area Survey, as we know it, will not be administered in 2020. The estimates that are derived from that survey, however, will still be published. To make up for the difference,

- There will be a standalone Land Values survey created that will be sampled from the 2019 June Area tracts. More information on this will be provided as it becomes available.
- The June Crops Acreage Production and Stocks (APS) questionnaire will be modified to include questions asking acres left to be planted and acres being double cropped that would normally have been asked in Section D of the June Area questionnaire.
- Follow-on surveys which usually have area records in their sample (i.e., POIDs that start with the number 1), such as December Hogs, January Cattle, January Sheep & Goats, and October Labor, will still have them, but those records will be carried forward from the 2019 June Area Frame.
- Samples for the Corn and Soybean Objective Yield surveys, normally drawn from fields marked on June Area photos, will be drawn from the June Crops APS survey (also known as the June Crops/Stocks Survey), which in June is a List-Only sample.

Farmers Market Manager Survey Update – Miyares/Dothage

Thanks to everyone with their efforts on the Farmers Market Manager Survey to date. Here are a few things that we have learned as we've gotten started.

- Screening question number 1 reads, "Is the entity identified below a farmers market?" What we've discovered based on the flow of the questions is that this question should read, "Was this entity EVER a farmer's market?" If the farmers market is now closed, or has been for years, there is information in Section 7 we need collected about why the market is no longer in business in lieu of completing an "out-of-business" form. If you answer "No" to screening question 1, those questions are skipped.
- We are definitely finding duplication within the lists. Be sure to take good notes on potential duplicates so that we can get our records up to date.
- Some of the contact information we have for these markets is out of date; however, many of these farmers markets have websites or Facebook pages that may be able to be used to find the name of a contact person or a phone number for the market.
- When selling the importance of the survey to the respondents, refer to information provided in your training materials and the pre-survey letter that was shared with you. Of course copies of these forms can be found on the GLR site.

CAPI Instrument for ARMS III Being Tested – Erickson

To minimize the shuffling of paper forms, a CAPI tool is currently being tested by NASS HQ for the full ARMS III Survey. While it may appear to be available on iPads now, it should not be used at this time. For now, completed ARMS reports should be entered through the AgCounts website (<http://www.agcounts.usda.gov>). We will alert supervisors when the CAPI tool is available for wide use.

Fruit Rotational Update – Saffell/Laird

A second mailing is being prepared for the medium to large operations in the Small Fruit and Hops Survey.

Sharing our Stories – Miyares

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