



# 40th Annual Farm and Garden

## Trooper Tracy: A Message of Safety This Planting Season

**By Tracy Lillard**  
Folks, planting season is upon us. We must use extreme caution with the farm equipment on the roadways.

I'd like to take a second and introduce myself. My name is Trooper Tracy Lillard and I have been a state trooper with the Illinois State Police for 18 years. I want to advise motorists of driving safety tips during planting season while sharing the road with farm equipment. The farming industry is near and dear to my heart. My father, brother, uncle, and cousin all are farmers. I was born and raised on a farm. Farm safety is in my blood.

Farmers will be hitting the roads with their planting equipment, headed for the fields.

The typical planting season for corn in Illinois is April 14th to June 5th and for soybeans it is May 2nd to June 24th. Crashes involving farm equipment are not uncommon in a state where the majority of over-all land is farmland. Champaign and

Vermilion Counties are two of the seven counties statewide with the highest farm equipment crashes. Motorists and operators of farm equipment and other special motorized apparatuses must share the roadway. Awareness and patience by everyone traveling on rural routes and in rural communities are imperative and will contribute to highway safety.

The Illinois State Police would like to remind motorists to use caution, slow down and share the road responsibly. Studies show that left-turn, rear-end and passing collisions are the most common types of accidents involving motorists and farm machinery. IDOT, ISP, and the Illinois Department of Agriculture suggest the following tips to keep motorists safe when encountering farm vehicles:

**Tips for Motorists:**  
•Pay attention and do not drive distracted.  
•Slow down when encountering slow moving vehicles. Flashing amber lights mean

"CAUTION".

- Pass with extreme caution.
- Allow extra room when following farm equipment.
- It is illegal to pass in a no passing lane or within 100 feet of an intersection, railroad crossing, or bridge.
- Be patient. A farmer cannot always move over to let motorists pass.
- If you cannot see the driver, the driver cannot see you. Farm machinery operators may not be able to see you because the large equipment or a load can block part of their rear view.

**Tips for Farmers:**  
•Plan travel to avoid rush hours, bad weather, the busiest roads, and the time before daylight and after dark.  
•Be obvious to motorists by proper use of reflective Slow Moving Vehicle emblems on any implement of husbandry operated on public roadways. It's the law!

- Use reflective marking tape and reflectors at the extremities of equipment.
- Turn on hazard lights mounted on farm equipment

and turn off field work lights for all roadway travel.

- Install mirrors that are wide enough for you to see what is following you.
- Always use turn signals to indicate plans to turn into fields or driveways.
- Be aware of traffic – oncoming, in front of you, and behind you.
- If the road and shoulder conditions are safe, pull over temporarily to allow traffic to pass.
- Slow down on turns and curves. Check traffic behind you.
- Minimize the width of equipment as much as possible. You may not interfere with traffic in an adjoining lane.
- When practical, truck larger equipment to the next location.

**Below is a letter I wrote on the Illinois State Police social media platform last fall during harvest and the same holds true for planting season:**

Dear Farmers,  
We see you on our road-

ways. We know you need to move your machinery from field to field. We know you move slowly. We know you want us to be patient while traveling with you on the roads. We want to help you facilitate traveling safely with the motoring public. We know you use hazard lights, slow moving vehicle emblems, and drive with caution avoiding mailboxes, guardrails, trees, and whatever else, all while straddling onto the gravel shoulder to not impose oncoming traffic.

Today I saw two of you on Route 36 between Garrett and Tuscola. I knew you needed to move your combine pulling a corn head and your tractor pulling a grain wagon to a field ahead a few miles. I drove patiently behind you, at approximately 15 miles per hour, watching oncoming vehicles moving over to give you additional room. I smiled knowing you both were probably excited to finally be in the fields picking corn. I waited until you turned onto your road, never once attempting

to pass you. I knew there were too many intersections up ahead, and it would be too risky. It just wasn't worth a crash. I watched you drive to the south, and then saw the few cars behind my squad, each also waiting patiently. It didn't add much time onto my drive, maybe just a minute or two.

I wish I could drive my squad car behind each and every farmer as you move your farm machinery from field to field, but I know it's not possible. I want to continue to inform the people sharing the roads with you how important it is that they slow down and have patience behind you. I want to remind them they can't pass farm implements at intersections and at no passing zones because it's illegal and can be deadly. I want to stress what a slow moving vehicle emblem means.

I hope each and every one of you have a safe harvest.  
Sincerely,  
Mama Bear (A farmer's daughter)

## 100 Years of Farm Bureau in Douglas County

**Tyler Harvey, FBCM (Farm Bureau Certified Manager) Douglas County Farm Bureau**

1919 was a year of many changes. Edsel Ford took over Ford Motor Company. The Treaty of Versailles is signed in June and officially ended World War I. Closer to home, the beginnings of the Douglas County Farm Bureau were taking shape. It was during an August meeting the organization known as the Douglas County Farmers' Federation became

the Douglas County Farm Bureau and it was decided to affiliate with the Illinois Agricultural Association. The first annual meeting of the Douglas County Farm Bureau was held on February 27th, 1920.

The Douglas County Farm Bureau has just recently celebrated another significant milestone as on Saturday, March 23rd, the Douglas County Farm Bureau hosted its 99th annual meeting and centennial celebration. Over 160 members and guests attended

this special celebration at Yoder's Kitchen in Arthur. The Douglas County Farm Bureau was fortunate enough to have Richard Guebert Jr., President of the Illinois Farm Bureau as the keynote speaker for the evening. Members and guests alike were treated to a delicious meal while listening to the Atwood based band, Mackville. They were also treated to a special 36-page centennial booklet that showcased many events, programs, and the history of the Douglas County

Farm Bureau over the last 100 years. In other business, three directors were elected during the annual meeting. Jon McGee was elected to serve District 1 which covers Murdock, Newman, and Sargent Townships, Mickey Williams was elected to serve District 2 which covers Camargo, Bowdre, and Arcola Townships. Justin Green was elected to serve District 3 which covers Garrett, Bourbon, and Arcola Townships.

Agriculture has been the

foundation of Douglas County since its inception in 1859 and I envision this to continue. I look at what the Douglas County Farm Bureau has accomplished in its 100 years and it makes me very humbled to be your manager. It is hard to sum up and properly thank all the people that have made the Douglas County Farm Bureau successful. In short, I would like to thank all the directors, volunteers, businesses, and others who have helped make our organization a great one.

The countless hours you all have spent for the betterment of the organization cannot be measured in words. I look forward to what the next 100 years will hold. There will be many challenges and changes along the way, but agriculture has adapted to challenges and changes throughout its history. I am honored to be your County Farm Bureau manager and look forward to the future of agriculture in Douglas County.

## Numbers and Douglas County Agriculture

**By Larry W. Dallas, President, Douglas Farm Bureau**

I write a monthly column for local papers talking about Douglas County Agriculture. I try to explain agriculture to the non-farmer. I am told that a column with a lot of numbers leaves most readers cold but I think some numbers about Douglas County Agriculture are important to consider.

In 2018, Douglas County led the state with a corn yield of 246 bushels per acre and was third in the state in soybeans with 80 bushels per acre. The statewide average corn yield was 213 and for beans, it was 65. We would like to take credit for all of that but good soils and good weather get most of the credit for those production milestones. In 2018 Douglas County alone produced nearly 27 million bushels of corn and over 9 million bushels of soybeans. At conservative prices, this grain is worth about 1.7 billion dollars. This value is multiplied as those commodities are exported overseas or processed in this country into the

products you use every day.

What all of this means is that agriculture is incredibly important to Douglas County, in tax dollars, in jobs, and in economic activity. The 2012 Census of Agriculture shows that there were 735 farms in the county. That doesn't seem like a lot of people and, indeed, it points out the incredible productivity of American agriculture. But add to that all of the people that help us to produce these crops and move them into storage. Your neighbor that works for the nearby fertilizer outlet, turns wrenches at an implement dealer, or drives a truck to move our grain to the processors in Decatur all figure into the equation.

Douglas County Farm Bureau is 100 years old this year so some comparison to 1919 would be interesting. In 1920 it was estimated there were 1,630 farms in the county, averaging 157 acres. The average size of the 735 farms in 2012 was 356 acres and most are much larger. Agriculture in 1919 was still a mostly manual labor activity.

Only a few things were being done without the use of the muscle power of either man or animal. A two-row planter behind a team of horses was the standard machine to put in a corn crop. It was planted in rows forty inches apart because that was the approximate width of a horse. That was important because the next few trips over the field were with a cultivator to plow out weeds in those years before herbicides. The average corn yield was 37 bushels to the acre.

The county devoted about half of its tillable acres in 2018 to soybeans, a crop that wasn't even planted in 1919. It was in the late 1930s that the University of Illinois began to promote soybeans as a protein crop we could grow in this area. Corn acres were about the same in 1919 as today. The rest of the acres were taken up by wheat and oats, and for the livestock that everyone raised, pasture. There were over 12,000 horses in Douglas County in 1919. These weren't for riding. They furnished the main power on nearly every

farm since tractors were just beginning to be developed. Mechanization on the early 20th-century farm was probably limited to a one-cylinder gas engine to replace the wind or hand labor needed to pump water, saw firewood and grind feed.

The importance of livestock in the 1920's farm is shown by the relative numbers compared to today. There were 168,000 chickens on Douglas County farms in 1920 but only about 19,000 at present. There are only about 1,700 milk cows on Douglas County farms today, and probably less because dairy farms have taken a hit with overproduction and low prices. Animals were an important source of food and income to the men that started the Douglas County Farm Bureau.

The increases we have made in yields were initially due to the use of fertilizer and the understanding of how plants respond to nutrients. In 1920 it was estimated Douglas County farms used \$17,000 of fertilizer. This was probably mostly for lime because the

concept of counteracting soil acidity by applying a source of calcium was understood early on. Crop rotation and animal waste provided the other nutrients crops needed in the early 20th century. In 2012 the cost of fertilizer we applied was estimated at \$23,000,000. The big crops we grow remove a lot of nutrients from the ground and these have to be replaced to keep the soil productive. What we call precision agriculture is leading to the present strides in crop yields. We are coupling seeds chosen for high productivity and often modified for insect and herbicide tolerance with careful and precise fertilization and seed placement.

The farmer of 1919 riding his two-row planter behind a team of horses could not have imagined the machines we use today. We pull 24-row planters dropping the seed corn kernels precisely one at a time 6 inches apart with 200 horsepower tractors steered by global positioning. That farmer in 1919 probably harvested his corn by hand and scooped it off into the crib manually to be shelled later. I am told the goal was to shuck 2 wagonloads of 40 bushels a day. Today we harvest 2000

bushels of shelled corn an hour.

I have thrown a lot of numbers at you, but there are two more I want to give you. In 1960, not that long ago for many of us, a farmer fed 26 people. The estimate for this year by the American Farm Bureau Federation is 165. That is a huge jump in productivity, brought to you by the farmers of Douglas County and of the United States.



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