

Installing Big Savings

Trade ally put the customer at the center for energy efficiency

Casey VanEngen approaches the front door of yet another dairy farmer's business on his quest to help them save money while being more efficient and productive.

It's a trip that he and his colleagues make dozens of times in a given week as employees of Sikkema Equipment (SE), which sells as a consultant, general contractor and equipment specialist for the agricultural market.

"Our goal is to help make their farms the most efficient and productive they can be."

With SE being a Gold level AG Trade Ally of Consumers Energy, it helps VanEngen and his co-workers be armed

with the latest energy efficiency incentives and rebates for their customers.

"We put the customer at the center of everything that we do," said VanEngen, general manager of SE with locations across Michigan.

"When we are able to show our customers the hundreds or even thousands of dollars they will be saving, well that usually helps us close a deal on a project."

The SE team recently helped a local farmer earn nearly \$40,000 in Consumers Energy rebates on a \$200,000 ventilation project. In all, 20 exhaust fans and 16



A recently installed ventilation system is slated to save thousands of dollars each month.

Are You on the Right Plan?

Take time to make sure you are on the right energy plan that fits your personal and business needs.

ELECTRIC

If you are a small or medium business, you're likely taking service between 120 to 600 volts, and if you are a big business you are taking service at 2,400 volts or greater. Time of use rates may also be a better choice for you.

NATURAL GAS:

- GS-1** Best for annual use up to 1,000 Mcf
- GS-2** Best for annual use from 1,000 Mcf to 10,000 Mcf
- G2-3** Best for annual use greater than 10,000 Mcf

Choosing the right rate can lead to savings for your farm.



TIPS: Confirm you are on the correct residential or business rate by comparing the rate code on your bill with its rate description.

Learn more about electric and natural gas rates at ConsumersEnergy.com/ratesbiz.

If you're still not sure if you are on the best rate, contact our Business Center at 800-805-0490

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circulation fans were installed on the dairy farmer's property.

"We value the famers that we serve," said VanEngen. "Our goal is to help make their farms the most efficient and productive they can be.

And by helping them save money – they can invest that money right back into their farm whether it be purchasing another piece of much needed equipment or expanding their operations."

Since 2018, Sikkema has helped farmers save money on 96 agricultural-related projects and other accomplishments including:

- 3,511,104 kilowatt-hours of electricity saved annually.
- \$372,785 in customer rebates paid to participating dairy and livestock farmers.

These 96 EE projects save shared customers over \$450,000 in electricity costs each year. These

savings continue for the life of the installed energy efficient equipment, including recirculation/exhaust fans, LED lights, low/no energy livestock drinkers and fan thermostat controls.

Savings totals do not include over-the-counter Business Instant Discount Program savings that Sikkema Equipment started participating in this year.

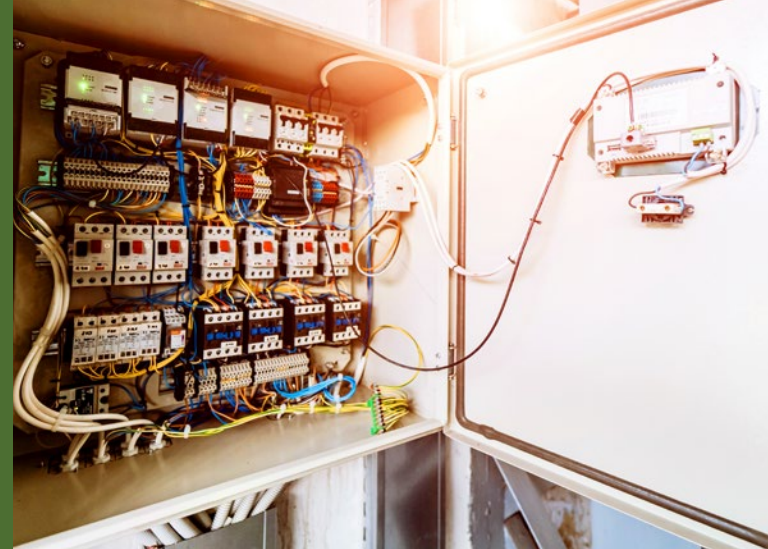
These electric savings currently equate to a greenhouse gas reduction of 2,743 tons of CO2 each year and continue to increase with each additional project.

"Assisting Consumers Energy in spreading the word about the energy efficiency incentives and rebates has been a win-win

situation," VanEngen said. "And one of the biggest benefactors from us working together is our agricultural community."



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Preventative Maintenance Key for Electrical Equipment

Jim Baisden, manager of agricultural services for Consumers Energy, answers questions to help farmers get their equipment ready for winter.

Can you explain what preventative maintenance is?

Basically, preventative maintenance is routine tasks you may do on equipment to help prolong its life and avoid unexpected breakdowns. Examples would be oil changes, lubrication, cleaning, etc. Types of equipment you want to make sure have proper maintenance include: waterers, circuit breaker panels, outlets and lighting.

How does it apply to electrical equipment?

Electrical equipment is also at risk for premature failure due to lack of maintenance. Dust, dirt, moisture and heat are major contributors to electrical equipment failures. Unfortunately, all these conditions exist in a farm environment.

What are some simple things an owner can do to help minimize electric equipment failures?

There are a few easy things that can be done.

- Protect your equipment from the elements. Keep covers on and closed.
- Visually inspect your equipment on a regular basis. Look for sign of wear, corrosion, overheating and physical damage.
- If you are installing new equipment, install equipment that is listed for the use and environment.
- Eliminate extension cords and other unprotected cords and cables if possible.
- Have a qualified person test and inspect your equipment on a regular basis. This is especially important prior to the heating season where you will be using heating equipment you haven't used in a few months.

Any other comments?

Yes, not maintaining your electrical equipment can also cause stray voltage issues on the farm. If you think you may have a stray voltage problem give us a call at 1-800-252-8658 to schedule a free inspection.

Free Stray Voltage Inspections Available

What is stray voltage?

Stray voltage is a term used to describe Neutral to Earth Voltage (NEV). NEV is a measurable level of voltage, which may occur between a metal object and the adjacent floor or earth. It is often called stray voltage when measured between two points that can be simultaneously contacted by livestock.

Simply stated, voltage is the pressure that pushes electrical current through wiring systems, lights and electrical equipment. When a person or animal feels a tingle or shock, the person or animal is actually feeling electrical current flowing through the body or portion of the body.

Sometimes a condition within the wiring on a farm, the wiring at a neighbor's property, or the power lines supplying a farm may cause the voltage between equipment and the adjacent earth or floor to increase to the point where it can be felt by an animal or person.

This stray voltage can range from a slight tingling or burning sensation at a cut to an uncomfortable jolt for animals. If a person feels an uncomfortable jolt, the problem is probably not NEV but a serious problem with the wiring system or equipment.

What can I do to help reduce my risk of having stray voltage on my farm?

The most important thing you, as an owner, can do is properly maintain your wiring system. Over time, your electrical equipment and wiring can become hazardous due to physical damage, corrosion and overloading, especially in a farm environment.

Having a qualified person who can inspect your equipment and wiring on a periodic basis is highly recommended. They can identify potential electrical problems that may be hazardous to your livestock and create future stray voltage issues.

What is Consumers Energy doing to protect my farm from stray voltage?

If you have a farm with livestock, chances are your electrical service has an isolated Neutral. This Neutral isolation is completed at the transformer that serves your farm. There are more than 12,000 farms throughout the state that have a separated Neutral service. Our Agricultural Services department conducts thousands of inspections per year to ensure the Neutral separations are maintained and working properly.

How can I have my farm tested for stray voltage?

Contact the Agricultural Services department at 800-252-8658 to schedule your free inspection.



Save energy and money. It's Simple.

The company's energy efficiency programs have helped customers save \$2.5 billion since they were created in 2009.

There are more than 40 agricultural-related incentives available through the program. There are more than 400 available for the entire program.

For more information

Call: 877-607-0737

Visit: ConsumersEnergy.com/business/energy-efficiency/special-programs/agriculture to learn more about our agricultural incentives.

Learn more about our Clean Energy Plan at MICLEanEnergy.com

To learn more about how energy efficiency programs can help your home, visit ConsumersEnergy.com/myhome





Farm Energy Saving Tips

A farm is like any other business – there are numerous ways to save money on energy costs. Here is a checklist of 12 ways by CornandSoyBeanDigest.com:

- Review your tax reports on energy use and a year's worth of energy bills. Create a free online account at ConsumersEnergy.com and view past energy use.
- Replace air and fuel filters on tractors and pickups.
- Check belt tensions and keep fan housings and blades clean. Consumers Energy offers rebates and incentives for installing variable speed drives on fans and pumps.
- Monitor tire inflation, tractor ballasting and wheel slippage.
- The big savings come from tillage decisions.
- Scrutinize pump electrical motors.
- Look for saving in any process where liquid or airflows are currently controlled with a valve or damper.
- Insulate pipes.
- Upgrade lighting systems. Consumers Energy offers rebates and incentives on LED lighting.
- For confinement buildings, confirm the set points that turn furnaces and fans on, so heaters and fans aren't fighting each other.
- Examine how electrical equipment is used.
- Consider tapping outside resources.

A Cleaner Natural Gas Future

Renewable natural gas, or RNG, is clean energy produced from Michigan agriculture.

At Consumers Energy, we're exploring how RNG can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect the planet. And we want to help our customers do the same.

If you'd like to know more about how your farm can help, please contact us at agservices@cmsenergy.com.

