

**571—21.4 (456A) Lease to beginning farmers program.** The department shall annually lease agricultural land that it holds or manages as wildlife habitat in each county to beginning farmers seeking to participate in the program. The department is not required to lease agricultural land under the program that it would not otherwise lease for farming.

**21.4(1) *Establishing annual lease payments.*** The department shall establish annual lease payments for available agricultural land under the program by using the following criteria:

- a.* Market factors.
- b.* Prior leases for the same or comparable agricultural land.
- c.* The cost of the establishment or maintenance of water quality practices, soil conservation practices, wildlife habitat, vegetation management, or food plots, if applicable.

**21.4(2) *Eligibility to participate.*** A beginning farmer is eligible to participate in the program following certification as a beginning farmer by the authority based on the following criteria:

- a.* The beginning farmer is a resident of the state of Iowa.
- b.* The beginning farmer has sufficient education, training, or experience in the type of farming required under the lease agreement.
- c.* The agricultural land and agricultural improvements shall only be used for farming by the beginning farmer, the beginning farmer's spouse, or the beginning farmer's minor children.
- d.* Other criteria as the authority prescribes by rule.

**21.4(3) *Selection of beginning farmer.*** The department shall execute a lease with a beginning farmer selected to participate in the program after such person has been certified by the authority. If two or more beginning farmers seek to execute a lease under the program for the same agricultural land, the department shall select the beginning farmer by drawing lots. At the end of the lease term, a beginning farmer who leased agricultural land under the program is eligible to be selected again to lease the same agricultural land. However, the department shall provide preference to an available beginning farmer who has not previously participated in the program.

**21.4(4) *Terms of the lease.*** The department shall establish terms and conditions in the lease for beginning farmers participating in the program. The lease executed by the department under the program shall at least include all of the following:

- a.* The number of acres leased. The department shall not lease more than 240 acres of agricultural land to a beginning farmer for the production of crops. However, this restriction does not apply to agricultural land leased for grazing livestock or land leased by a beginning farmer under rule 571—21.5(456A).
- b.* The term of the lease. The term may be based on the use of the agricultural land. A lease shall not be for more than seven years. A beginning farmer shall not sublease the agricultural land.
- c.* The required and permitted uses of the agricultural land during the term of the lease. The department may require the establishment of a conservation system, crop rotation, or cover crop, if appropriate. The department may require that a beginning farmer adopt generally accepted farming or soil conservation practices, so long as such practices are compatible with the department's policies related to resource management and outdoor recreation.