Two Opportunities Remain to Participate in Agritourism Workshops

Helping local farmers create and profit from farm-based tourism opportunities is the idea behind West Virginia University Extension Service’s Agritourism Initiative, a training program for aspiring and beginning agritourism operators in or near the Greenbrier Valley.

The day-long training session covers such topics as risk-management, marketing, hospitality management and business collaboration.

“Farmers are exploring agritourism and farm-based education as an opportunity to help diversify farm income and improve cash flows,” Dee Singh-Knights, WVU Extension Service agricultural economics specialist, said. “The challenge is the lack of education-specific resources and expertise to help them effectively evaluate and exploit this new opportunity.”

Classes are limited to 20 participants and registration is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Your cost of the entire course package is only $30 and includes course materials, meals and snacks; other costs for the program are being offset by grant funding from a WVU Community Engagement Grant.

The final two workshops are offered from 9.00am to 3.30pm at the Greenbrier Valley Visitors Center, on April 9th and May 14th.

To register, please go to www.eventbrite.com and search “WV Agritourism and Farm-Based Education.” Alternatively, you may register through the Monroe County WVU Extension Service, 304-772-3003.

For more information, please contact Dee Singh-Knights at dosingh-knights@mail.wvu.edu or 304-293-7606, or Allison Tomlinson at aechols@mail.wvu.edu or 304-772-3003.

Articles for NewsBytes must be submitted by the 15th of the month prior to publication. Time-sensitive announcements must be submitted no less than 8 weeks prior to the date of the event. Electronic submissions, including photos, are preferred. Send to joanh@wvfarm.org.
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The Torch is Passed

Charles Wilfong, President, West Virginia Farm Bureau

The American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Convention was held January 8-12 in Orlando, Florida. We had a large delegation of folks from West Virginia attending who, as always, represented the Mountain State very well.

Farm Bureau is especially proud of the job that Danielle Grant did in the Young Farmer & Rancher Discussion Meet. Danielle made it all the way to the Final Four competition. As a result of being in that Final Four competition, she came home with a new CASE IH tractor as well as other prizes. Danielle prepared for months for the competition and did an absolutely superb job.

Danielle is an Ag Sciences teacher at Buffalo High School in Putnam County. She has graciously offered to write a series of articles for West Virginia Farm Bureau News based on the topics she researched and debated at the Discussion Meet. We look forward to learning from her extensive study on those topics.

WVFB Vice-President John Pitsenbarger and I were the two voting delegates from West Virginia at the Convention business session. We had the opportunity to discuss and vote on AFBF policy for the coming year. I believe that we have sound policy to deal with the many issues facing American agriculture. The highlight of the business session was the election of a new president and vice-president of the American Farm Bureau following the decision of Bob Stallman to retire. I must say that Bob has done an exceptional job of leading our organization and he will be missed.

There were a number of very qualified candidates from all over the country running for both president and vice-president of AFBF. In the end Zippy Duvall, President of the Georgia Farm Bureau, was elected

see Wilfong, page 27

Protecting Our Freedom to Farm in 2016

Zippy Duvall, President, American Farm Bureau Federation

I am honored to begin serving alongside you all as the new president of the American Farm Bureau Federation. For almost a century, AFBF has been the leading voice of agriculture, standing up for farmers and ranchers across our great country. But the real strength of Farm Bureau is our active grassroots membership. Like you, I learned a long time ago that I’d have to step outside my fencerows if I wanted to have a say in the matters affecting my farm. You are the backbone of the organization, and together we can address the toughest issues facing U.S. agriculture in 2016.

Freedom from Government Overreach

Farmers and ranchers need to be free to work our land. We have a deep respect for our natural resources—our living depends on it. But some federal agencies, far removed from the realities of farming, seem not to care. Instead of respecting our expertise, they produce unworkable regulations that ignore our concerns and trample our rights. The courts and the Government Accountability Office have called out the Environmental Protection Agency for its unlawful advocacy and legal overreach with the Waters of the U.S. rule. Farmers and ranchers can’t wait through the years of litigation it may take to resolve this in the courts. We’re pleased that Congress has recognized this and joined in the call to ditch the rule. The EPA must draft a new rule that acknowledges our concerns and respects our freedoms.

Free to Innovate

Technology plays a critical role in improving efficiency and reducing our environmental footprint. We

see Duvall, page 21
Dwayne O’Dell, Director of Government Relations

I count it a great opportunity and responsibility to serve as the Director of Government Affairs for the West Virginia Farm Bureau. First of all, I want to extend my thanks to Don Michael, my predecessor. He has done an outstanding job, with honesty and integrity. Best wishes to him in his retirement.

Let me tell you a little about myself. I attended public schools in Roane County, graduating from Spencer High School in 1974. I went on to West Virginia University, where I graduated in 1978 with a B.S. in Agriculture Education, followed by an M.S. degree in 1982. I taught vocational agriculture for five years (1978-1983) at Buckhannon-Upshur High School.

During the past 32 years, I have worked in various positions for the West Virginia Department of Agriculture. I started out as State Agronomist, then Livestock Section Chief, and finally Assistant Director of the Marketing Division.

Our family has operated a 700-acre purebred Angus beef farm for the past 35 years. I have been blessed in sharing my life with my wife Cindy, who has put up with me for over 30 years. We have three beautiful daughters and a precious granddaughter.

As a new page in my life turns, I look back at the past, but I’m also looking forward to the opportunity of serving the West Virginia Farm Bureau to promote, protect, build and enhance West Virginia agriculture. Many challenges exist, including environmental regulations, educational acceptance by consumers for new technology like GMOs, as well as energy policy issues. All of these affect our rural communities and in particular our farmers and agribusinesses in West Virginia.

The keystone to the future is to remember our past. In his prayer journal, General George Washington wrote, “Bless, O Lord, all the people of this land from the highest to the lowest.” President Ronald Reagan said the portrait of George Washington kneeling in the snow at Valley Forge “personified a people who knew it was not enough to depend on our own courage and goodness; but they must seek help from God, their Father and their Preserver.” These men and many others set the stage for the successes of the past and foundation for the future.

Over the last few weeks, I have become more familiar with the legislative process. I will be updating the Legislative Action Report each Friday to provide you with the most up-to-date information on bills being considered by our legislators this year. Over 25 bills have been introduced that have implications for agriculture and energy development. Several hundred bills have been introduced for consideration. A complete list of bills may be viewed at www.legis.state.wv.us.

I have met many senators, delegates and other State leaders. I’m reminded of President Lincoln’s statement in regard to leadership: “Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you really want to test a man, give him power.”

I look forward to meeting each of you and to being part of a team that seeks to meet the challenges of West Virginia farmers with integrity, courage, and a vision for the future. If I can be of help to you, please call me at 304-871-0885 or send an e-mail to dwayneo@wvfarm.org.
Nationwide, Partners Launch Third Annual Safety Contest

Matt Nicol  Sponsor Relations Account Executive

**Nationwide**  
614-359-7342  
nicolm6@nationwide.com

**Grain Bin Safety Week and Tubes Will Help First Responders Save Lives**

Nationwide, the No. 1 farm insurer, is collaborating with industry leaders and agricultural professionals to launch our third annual safety contest as part of this year’s Grain Bin Safety Week.

The Nominate Your Fire Department Contest runs from Jan. 1 through May 31. It will award grain rescue tubes and hands-on training to help first responders save lives, thanks to the support of KC Supply Co., the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety and our other partners.

“Grain bin accidents can tragically impact individuals, families and entire communities,” said Brad Liggett, president of Nationwide Agribusiness. “Accident prevention means everyone working together, and Grain Bin Safety Week provides a forum for the agricultural community to help keep people safe.”

During the last two years, the national contest awarded tubes and training to 13 fire departments in 12 states. One of those winners — The Westphalia Fire Department in Kansas — used their new skills in 2015 to rescue a man who became entrapped in some grain.

In 2014, 38 documented entrapments resulted in 17 deaths, according to Purdue University. It was the highest numbers since 2010 — when at least 26 U.S. workers were killed in grain engulfments.

“That’s where Grain Bin Safety Week can help,” Liggett said. “This program brings attention to lifesaving extraction methods and procedures, which can improve responder and victim safety.”

For more information about the program, purpose or nomination process, visit www.grainbinsafetyweek.com.

**Nationwide, a Fortune 100 company based in Columbus, Ohio, is one of the largest and strongest diversified insurance and financial services organizations in the U.S. and is rated A+ by both A.M. Best and Standard & Poor’s. The company provides a full range of insurance and financial services, including auto, commercial, homeowners, farm and life insurance; public and private sector retirement plans, annuities and mutual funds; banking and mortgages; pet, motorcycle and boat insurance. For more information, visit www.nationwide.com.**
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West Virginia Farm Bureau News 7
Farming is a business of uncertainty, but here’s something you can count on.

Chevrolet presents this exclusive $500 private offer\(^1\) toward the purchase or lease of an all-new Chevy Silverado — the 2014 North American Truck of the Year. From the family of the most dependable, longest-lasting\(^2\) full-size pickup in America, rest assured your Silverado will keep you working without skipping a beat.

\(^1\) Offer available through 4/1/17. Available on qualified 2015 and 2016 Chevrolet vehicles. This offer is not available with some other offers. Only customers who have been active members of an eligible Farm Bureau for a minimum of 30 days will be eligible to receive a certificate. Customers can obtain certificates at [www.fbverify.com/gm](http://www.fbverify.com/gm). Farm Bureau and the FB logo are registered service marks of the American Farm Bureau Federation and are used herein under license by General Motors. 2 Dependability based on longevity: 1987–April 2013 full-size pickup registrations.
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‡ Available on a limited basis on selected items. Club insider savings and Instant Savings (collectively “Instant Savings”) are subject to availability and valid dates. Select Instant Savings are available online, for Club Pickup orders not placed for online, any savings will be based on and limited to the Instant Savings offers available at the time the member is offered. Offer not valid online. Visit SamsClub.com for a list of items. Some terms and conditions apply. Visit SamsClub.com for full terms and conditions. Only members with a U.S. membership, excluding Puerto Rico, Join or renew by January 31, 2020, in-club or online to receive the $120 in savings.

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West Virginia Farm Bureau Young Farmer Committee member Danielle Grant finished in the top four nationally in the American Farm Bureau YF&R Discussion Meet competition in Orlando, Florida in January.

The Discussion Meet simulates a committee meeting in which active discussion and participation are expected. Participants use four bases for the general discussion: cooperation, constructive criticism, problem solving and communication, and are evaluated on their ability to exchange ideas and information on a predetermined topic.

Grant, an Agriculture Sciences teacher and FFA advisor at Buffalo High School in Putnam County, competed against contenders from 35 other states, battling through four rounds of discussions on topics ranging from water regulation and animal welfare to burdensome federal regulations and right-to-farm laws. Grant won the Discussion Meet competition at the West Virginia Farm Bureau Annual Meeting in November, which qualified her to compete at the national level.

Chris Van Vlack of Virginia won the Discussion Meet. He will have his choice of either a 2016 Chevrolet Silverado or a 2016 GMC Sierra, courtesy of Chevrolet, plus free registration to the YF&R Leadership Conference.

Danielle, along with the two other runners-up in the Discussion Meet, Dean Cheshire of Florida and Hunter Grills of Tennessee, will receive a Case IH Farmall 50A tractor, courtesy of Case IH, and $3,000 in cash and STIHL merchandise, courtesy of STIHL.

During the final round of the competition, Grant’s students at Buffalo High were able to watch over a live stream of the event, along with friends and family.
Dairy farmer Rem Perkins, owner of Perk Farm Organic Dairy in Greenbrier County, says organic farming is the way Mother Nature intended it to be. “Organic is the cheapest way. We let our cows harvest the grass themselves. They spread their manure; it’s by far the best way to go.”

There is an extreme difference between conventional and organic farming. Conventional farmers use pesticides, herbicides and chemicals on the land. None of that goes on an organic farmer’s land. Cattle are never injected with hormones or antibiotics either; however, some organic wormers, if necessary, are used.

In addition, no commercial fertilizer is spread on the land. “We cut the pastures to control the weeds,” said Perkins.

Perk Farm Organic Dairy has 700 Jersey cattle on 1600 acres – 800 owned, and 800 rented. Perkins’ grandfather, Mason, purchased the land in 1942. The third generation of his family to farm, Perkins switched to organic farming in 2009. Prior to that, the family farmed conventionally, and realized after years of work that the conventional way was not financially feasible for them.

“When my wife and I decided to go organic, at that time my father, Harry, wasn’t making decisions. However, he was not for going organic. He was very much against it,” Perkins said. “I told him that I couldn’t farm the way he farmed 30 years ago.”

Perkins and his wife Mary began transitioning the farm to organic in 2006. “It takes three years to convert the land to organic and one year to convert the cows so you can sell the milk as organic,” Perkins said. He said the animals would always be considered transition animals. The mother of a calf has to be completely organic before the calf is considered organic.

Perkins’ organic milk is sold to Organic Valley. Much of the milk goes to Stonyfield, which is made into Stonyfield yogurt.
Perk Farm is blessed with really good pasture ground, according to Rem. “The main thing people need to understand about organics is to do their best to work with Mother Nature. Tweaking what she does and working with her makes the cows do what they were meant to do, eat grass. Her diet for them is long stem forages, grass, hay and those kinds of things. We do provide extra energy with grain to keep them healthy and maximize production.”

Perkins’ goal is “to produce all the feed we need, right here in West Virginia and keep our money we make in our community. We built a new milking parlor last year. Now we need to produce the grain we need.” The farm formerly spent several hundred thousand dollars on corn in the Midwest. On average, Perkins can grow corn 2 out of 5 years on the same ground, although it takes more acres to generate the amount of corn needed. By growing their own local organic corn, either by themselves or by their neighbors, they save money on trucking and actually get it cheaper. “That’s a win-win situation for everyone,” he said.

With conventional farming, Perkins was using 40 pounds of grain per day. Now he uses 10 pounds a day. As a result, he says, he ends up with a premium product, which to him is more important than having one of the top herds in the country.

“Cows are under less stress. We’re not asking them to produce 60 pounds (of milk) a day. If she produces 35 or 40 that is what we want it to be,” he said. At times, Perkins’ cows walk 6 miles a day to eat grass. That keeps the cows healthy. “We don’t ship near as much milk and we don’t buy near as much grain. Because we don’t buy as much feed, our bottom line is a lot better.” He says the veterinarian bills are less, too, because there is less pneumonia. When cows get pneumonia under conventional farming, they get a shot. With organic farming – “we can’t do that.”

“Organic farming forces you to be a better farmer,” Perkins said.

Perkins comes from a family of very good farmers. His father, Harry, was one of the three finalists in 1989 for soil conservation. “My father should get credit for what I do. Actually he got a football scholarship to Virginia Tech. My grandfather said he’d sell the farm if my dad took the scholarship. So Dad left the scholarship behind and came home to farm,” Perkins said.

Perkins said in due time his dad came to agree with the farm going organic. “He was finally convinced when he saw we had money to pay our bills, and became proud of what we were doing,” said Perkins. “Under conventional farming, we were going broke. There wasn’t enough left over to pay the bills and live on the farm as well. I didn’t want to work as hard as I was and not have anything to show for it. That sucks the life right out of you.”

Life on the ‘organic’ farm is different for Perkins, his wife Mary and their 5 children. “Organic made farming fun for my family. We put money back into the farm, we pay our bills and have some left over,” Rem’s wife, Mary said.

As an added bonus of organic farming, Perkins has been able to give raises to all his employees - five full-time and two part-time - which has made their life better as well.

“We’re farming because it’s fun again, and that’s the way it should be,” Perkins said.
Take A Class

As a beginning beekeeper, one of the best things you can do is take a beginners’ beekeeping class. The West Virginia Beekeepers Association lists 25 local associations around the state. Many of these associations will offer a class or connect you with an experienced beekeeper who can serve as a mentor. Visit wvbeekeepers.org to find the association nearest you.

Purchasing Equipment

Looking at a catalog of beekeeping equipment can be overwhelming. Speak with experienced beekeepers to learn what equipment they use and why. This will help you determine which options are the best for you. Many of the major beekeeping supply companies offer beginners’ kits that include a basic hive, tools and a beginner’s book. The West Virginia Beekeepers Association also provides a list of suggested supply companies.

Traditionally, the majority of equipment has to be assembled; however, preassembled equipment is becoming readily available for an additional cost.

Purchasing Bees

When purchasing bees there are many different available stocks that are separated according to certain traits and characteristics. Since there is no perfect stock, each beekeeper needs to consider the traits that are important to him/her and select a stock that will meet those needs. Beesource.com provides information on the various stocks of bees, which may be helpful when getting started.

One of the most popular methods of establishing a hive is to purchase package bees. Beekeepers often purchase a 3-pound package of bees with a queen to start the hive. An alternative to package bees is to purchase a started nucleus colony, which contains five deep frames, a queen, bees and established brood. This method allows the colony to get a faster start, but it is more expensive. Another option is to find an existing beekeeper that is willing to sell you an established hive. Even though this is the easiest way to get started, it can be hard to find.

While beekeeping can be a fun and fascinating hobby, it is not an easy task. Finding a mentor and joining a local beekeepers’ association can help you avoid the trials and tribulations of learning on your own.

By John Murray, WVU Extension Agent – ANR, Marion and Taylor Counties

Finding a mentor can be a tremendous help when getting started.
Getting started with beekeeping

If you are interested in becoming a beekeeper this year, winter is the time to start. Planning is vital, as package bees often sell out early and equipment needs to be bought and assembled. There are a variety of options for both, and as a new beekeeper, it starts with gathering information.

Take A Class
As a beginning beekeeper, one of the best things you can do is take a beginners’ beekeeping class. The West Virginia Beekeepers Association lists 25 local associations around the state. Many of these associations will offer a class or connect you with an experienced beekeeper who can serve as a mentor. Visit wvbeekeepers.org to find the association nearest you.

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By John Murray, WVU Extension Agent – ANR, Marion and Taylor Counties
West Virginia heirloom beans

Beans, corn and squash have been cultivated in the Appalachian Mountains for thousands of years starting with the Native Americans and pioneers. Heirloom beans, in particular, are considered heritage crops by many West Virginians. Selected varieties have excellent horticultural traits that allow them to be well adapted to the mountain environment.

Evaluation

The first of a series of evaluations began in early June 2015 when 14 varieties of West Virginia heirloom beans were planted at the WVU Organic Farm in Morgantown, West Virginia. The varieties evaluated included pole bean varieties with unique names and characteristics, such as Turkey Craw, Rattlesnake, Logan Giant, Fat Man, October Tender Hull, Coal Camp, Williams River, Ground Squirrel, White Greasy Pole, Speckled Christmas, Scarlet Runner, Aunt Glenda’s Pole Bean, Flood Bean and Kunde Beans (cowpea type).

Many of the varieties were obtained from Flanagan’s Farm near Summersville, West Virginia. The beans were distinct colors ranging from black, brown and white to mottled seed coats. All varieties exhibited excellent growth and were easy to grow organically. The beans’ vigorous vines rapidly covered the trellises and were harvested after drying. Then, the beans were mechanically shelled and bagged in early October.

High-yielding varieties included Logan Giant, which produced a medium brown seed; October Tender Hull, which had a light brown seed with maroon streaks; and Fat Man and White Greasy Pole, which had high yields of white beans.

For this trial, the heirloom varieties were evaluated as dry beans that can be stored and sold throughout the winter season. Winter markets, such as farmers markets, CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) and restaurants, are viable market outlets for heirloom dry beans.

Harvesting

Heirloom beans can be harvested fresh, semi-dry or dry. Some pole beans are dried in the pods and shelled for cooking. Most pole beans and half runners are harvested fresh, and eaten or canned before the bean fills out when the pods are still tender. Some pole beans, referred to as “shelly beans,” are harvested just as the bean develops in the pod. These beans are shelled and eaten fresh or canned.

Preservation

West Virginians have selected and saved seeds from bean varieties for generations. Heirloom varieties, diverse with unique color and flavor, are genetic treasures that must be preserved for future gardeners not only in the Appalachian region, but the entire world.

When saving bean seeds, it is important to isolate varieties by 25 to 50 feet. The beans can be dried in the pods on the plant, or taken inside and dried before shelling. The seeds should be stored in jars or plastic bags in a cool location until planting the following spring or summer.

Heirloom bean varieties are diverse in color and flavor.
Maternal or terminal – matching selection criteria with purpose

Not all bulls are designed to make cows and not all bulls are designed to make high gaining, high grading feeder cattle – this is a fact that often gets overlooked when buying bulls. Some suggest a bull can offer the best of both worlds, but it simply isn't true. There are far too many genetic antagonisms between maternal and terminal traits. Before purchasing your next bull, determine the primary purpose of your bull and then select a bull that has the necessary traits to meet your needs.

If producing replacement females is the primary goal, prioritize your selection criteria according to the following:

• **Fertility** – Fertility is the most economically important trait in cow/calf production, so make sure to find an early-maturing bull with adequate scrotal circumference that has easily passed a breeding soundness exam.

• **Calving Ease (Maternal and Direct)** – Calving ease indexes are important because of the direct link to fertility. These indices account for birth weight, cow size, age and body condition, making them more robust and useful than actual birth weight or birth weight Expected Progeny Difference (EPD).

• **Longevity/Structural Soundness** – Longevity is a difficult trait to measure, so select bulls out of older cows with complete production records to make sure they are structurally sound.

• **Feed Efficiency** – Feed costs account for 70% of the total cost of production. Using Residual Feed Intake (RFI) and not Feed:Gain ratio as selection for Feed:Gain will result in increased mature size and feed requirements of the cow herd.

• **Frame Size** – Frame size is an indicator of mature weight and feed requirements. Cattle that are too small lose both gain and production efficiency, while cattle that are too large have increased maintenance requirements.

• **Carcass Traits** (Ribeye Area and Marbling) – Carcass traits impact yield and quality and should be considered in maternal bulls. Select bulls with acceptable carcass value but don't overemphasize carcass traits or you will select terminal bulls.

• **Milk and Weaning Weight** – Milk and Weaning Weight EPDs fall to the bottom of the list because they are cost-increasing traits rather than cost-reducing traits. Although most producers sell calves at weaning and these traits impact sale weight, increased production is associated with a cost increase, so there is an optimum level of milk and weaning weight.

When purchasing a bull to produce feeder cattle only and no replacement females, prioritize your selection criteria according to the following:

• **Gain/Feed Efficiency** – First and foremost, terminal bulls should add growth and gain efficiency to the calf crop.

• **Carcass Traits** – Terminal bulls should increase yield, and at the very least, maintain carcass quality.

• **Calving Ease/Fertility** – Open cows and dead calves don't make any money, but a heifer bull is not necessary for mature cows.

• **Weaning and Yearling Weight** – Based upon available marketing options, utilize weaning or yearling weight data to improve/optimize sale weights.

Remember, bull selection is one of the most important decisions you will make as a beef producer, so do your homework and find a bull that not only fits your needs but also fits the purpose – maternal or terminal.

By Kevin Shaffer, WVU Extension Specialist – Livestock

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West Virginia heirloom beans

– continued from page ii –

If you have an heirloom variety in your region that you would like evaluated, please contact WVU Extension Commercial Horticulture Specialist Lewis Jett (Lewis.Jett@mail.wvu.edu; 304-293-2634).

By Lewis Jett, WVU Extension Specialist – Commercial Horticulture
Picture a heart-healthy lifestyle

Picture the lifestyle of West Virginia farm families. What do you envision? Fields and gardens that yield healthy foods for the family table? Nature and scenery for plenty of outdoor activity? Friendly, helpful neighbors? This may describe many West Virginia farms, yet a rural lifestyle may not be the healthiest lifestyle. In fact, the Mountain State has a surprisingly high rate of heart disease. Although trends are improving, it’s important for individuals, families and rural communities to take action now to reduce heart disease.

- Talk with your health care provider about family health history and tests.
- Know your ABCs:
  - Aspirin: Ask your doctor if aspirin is right for you.
  - Blood pressure
  - Cholesterol
  - Don’t smoke: Call the free West Virginia Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW.
- Know your numbers: Body Mass Index, blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, waist measurement (under 35 inches for women and under 40 inches for men)
- Be more active. Aim for 30 to 60 minutes every day with exercise that makes you sweat and your heart pump.

- Eat more colorful fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, healthy fats and drink lots of water.

Farming can be risky business. During difficult years, incomes can be impacted, resulting in difficulty affording the rising costs of food, health care, insurance and transportation. Long work days may mean that individuals are not able to make time for appointments. This situation affects preventive doctor/dental visits and immunizations. Another barrier to good health is safe, convenient places to be active, such as trails, parks and playgrounds.

Our beliefs can also undermine health. For example, an attitude that personal habits or family health history don’t matter may lead to poor choices. When it comes to daily choices, West Virginians may smoke more, exercise less and have less nutritional diets.

Don’t let past habits determine the quality of your life. Take control of your health. Talk to family, friends and neighbors about practical changes for healthier homes, churches, schools and communities. We are a state of resilient, resourceful people and communities, and we can turn the statistics around. Let’s act now to prevent heart disease and make our rural lifestyle the picture of health.

By Elaine Bowen, WVU Extension Specialist – Health Promotion
You’re Invited to Join Us

Positioning for Success

Join us for the 2016 Farm Management Institute sessions that will be held in the Farm Credit of the Virginiast footprint. This year’s content and lecture will be relevant to those who are lifelong learners, including young farmers, potential young farmers, parents, FFA students and those continuing or expanding their farming operations. Dr. Dave Kohl and Dr. Alex White will provide insight, materials and techniques to enhance your growth and success in agriculture.

- Global and domestic economics, including marketing news and trends
- Financial and business management and transition planning
- Communication with family, business partners and the general public

Attend one of these institutes of lifelong learning to enhance your knowledge, build key relationships and broaden your opportunities for 2016 and beyond.

Dates and Locations

**Thursday, February 18, 2016**
*The Country Club of Culpeper*
2100 Country Club Road | Culpeper, Va.
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

**Thursday, March 3, 2016**
*Wytheville Meeting Center*
333 Community Blvd | Wytheville, Va.
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

**Monday, April 4, 2016**
*The South Branch Inn*
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

There is NO cost to attend!

For more information about the Farm Management Institute, please call your local branch office or 800-919-3276.
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Southern WV Bull Test

33rd Annual Sale
March 26, 2016
11:00 AM  Henderson, WV
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55 bulls
Angus • Hereford

45 yearling heifers
Angus • Commercial

West Virginia Cattlemen’s Association
Jim Bostic
(304) 472-4020
WVCA@wvbeef.org

Bulltest.ext.wvu.edu

Wardensville Bull Test

49th Annual Sale
March 24, 2016
12:00 Noon  Wardensville, WV
WVU’s Gearhart Memorial Farm — 2 miles north of Wardensville on US 219

Selling 100 Bulls
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RFI Feed Efficiency Tested

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Jim Bostic
(304) 472-4020
WVCA@wvbeef.org

bulltest.ext.wvu.edu

Dr. Kevin Shaffer
Office: (304) 293-2669
Cell: (304) 669-1598
Kevin.Shaffer@mail.wvu.edu

West Virginia Cattlemen’s Association
Jim Bostic
(304) 472-4020
WVCA@wvbeef.org

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are using less pesticide on our crops, farming with fewer acres and using water more efficiently thanks to smarter farm equipment, data services and genetically modified seeds. Emerging technologies like drones and CRISPR gene modification mean we’ve yet to see the limit of what we can do to make our farms even more efficient and productive.

Scientists, federal agencies and industry leaders all agree that GMOs are safe, but the push for mandatory labeling sends a mixed message to consumers. When it comes to knowing what’s in our food, consumers deserve the facts, not scare tactics. We want to have an honest discussion about what biotechnology is and how it’s used for everyone’s good. It’s up to Congress now to create a national, voluntary labeling program that gives farmers and consumers choices.

New Markets Freed Up
America’s farmers and ranchers are proud to feed and fuel the world. Our agricultural exports are higher than ever before thanks to important trade agreements that break down barriers like high tariffs and non-scientific restrictions on our food. We have some of the highest quality products available, and our ability to sell American-grown products around the world will keep U.S. agriculture prospering. New trade agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership will open up some of the fast-growing markets in the world. AFBF will be working with Congress and the administration this year to move this agreement forward to set a more level playing field for U.S. agriculture.

Of course, these aren’t the only issues we’re facing in the months ahead. We’ll continue to work to help farmers face an uncertain economy, press on for a workable solution to farm labor, and continue working tirelessly to ensure all consumers have access to safe, affordable food, just to name a few.

I’m eager to serve with all of you at the national level and am confident that we’ll continue to protect the business of agriculture for future generations. We’ll step outside those fencerows and make our voices heard. At Farm Bureau, we’ve shown time and again that we are stronger when we stand together.

Duvall, continued
NRCS Programs: Helping Farmers Help the Land

Stacy Ouellette
Rebecca Haddix
As a recently retired West Virginia beef and dairy farmer, Joe Gumm understands the importance of teamwork, education and being a true steward of agricultural land. He has dedicated his life to working hard, both personally and professionally, to keep agricultural lands protected and growing in West Virginia.

“My focus has always been on conservation as it’s important not only to use our natural resources, but to preserve them as well,” Gumm said. “These hillsides in West Virginia grow really good grass and calves because of it. Our soil and water are so important. I take pride participating in education programs and on different committees. There are so many ways we can accomplish conservation and I take personal ownership in spreading the word to others. Examples include installing livestock watering systems and pasture division fences, improve animal performance, improve management capacity and reduce agricultural impacts on the water.”

Gumm is well-known to many in the West Virginia agricultural community. He works as an advocate for soil and water resources by serving the Tygarts Valley Conservation District (TVCD) while being an active member of state agriculture committees and councils. During his lifetime, Gumm has been the Chairman of the TVCD board, WV Association of Conservation Districts (WVACD) board member, Chairman of the WVACD’s Legislative Committee, Appalachian Grazing Conference committee member, Envirothon committee member, Grassland Steering Committee member, WV Forage and Grassland Council member and National Association of Conservation Districts grassland committee member.

Like Gumm, most West Virginia agricultural producers do not view farming as a job, but rather as a way of life. Whether proudly handed down from one generation to another, or a veteran returning home after serving their country, those recently retired or looking for a career change or fresh out of school, farming is a calling. Becoming a farmer does not require an agricultural background to be successful. Farmers come from all backgrounds, ages, and education levels. Being a farmer requires planning, hard work and dedication. It is these individuals who choose to rise early each morning to greet the challenges that lie ahead with vigor that provide food, fiber and fuel nationwide.

For over 80 years, the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) has been assisting landowners and producers with raising livestock, growing crops and conserving wildlife habitat. As the lead agency for conservation under the U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS is dedicated to “Helping people help the land.” It is not just a motto, it is a way of life for employees committed to enhancing farming operations through conservation. NRCS services are free to private landowners and producers with agricultural-purposed land. The nature of the relationship is unique when it comes to government agencies because the assistance provided is all voluntary. No one is required to work with NRCS, but staff are always available to assist when farmers seek their expertise.

What does this mean to West Virginia farmers? There is a team of knowledgeable, friendly people with expert advice that can help protect your soil, water, energy, air, animals and plant life. NRCS partners with state, local and non-government agencies to provide science-based support to solve tough conservation issues on private lands.

“We can all do more to better use our natural resources, farmers included,” Gumm said. “I worked with NRCS on my property and they have a variety of programs and staff to assist. I cannot forget the partners that work with NRCS including the West Virginia Conservation Agency, Conservation Districts and WVU Extension Service to provide information to help achieve conservation goals. If more private landowners would attend the local agricultural meetings they could learn about the opportunities available through all agencies involved.”

‘Grass… the other natural resource,’ is a favorite slogan frequently expressed by Gumm. “I’ve learned to listen to soil as each field or farm is different,” Gumm said. “I observed what my soil wanted to grow, which was orchardgrass. Orchardgrass kept growing back so instead of trying to change it, I let it grow. I let the soil raise what it wants as long as the soil is healthy underneath.” NRCS staff can help you choose the species of grass which will thrive in your management system.

How does a land user request assistance? Simply call or visit one of the 30 field offices located across the state. Once contact is made, an NRCS Conservationist
will make an appointment to visit your property. A conservation plan will be created after discussing the landowner/producer’s goals, reviewing the resource concerns and proposing possible conservation options. There is no cost for a conservation plan and the plan does not require the farmer to participate in NRCS financial assistance programs. The conservation plan belongs to the farmer and is a roadmap of sorts, helping the farmer set short- and long-term goals for their land.

Funding for NRCS comes from the Agriculture Act, approved by Congress every five years, and is commonly referred to as the Farm Bill. The 2014 Farm Bill contains programs that can provide financial support to implement conservation solutions on your farm. NRCS offers a suite of conservation practices that address the areas of soil, water, energy, air, plants and animals.

Gumm has participated in the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to construct a livestock feeding facility, a dual-purpose structure where cattle are fed in one area and manure is stored in another area for future use.

“One of the highlights of our operations in working with NRCS was a livestock feeding facility, which was often part of NRCS conservation tours,” Gumm said. “I am always open to tours on my property because it promotes conservation and demonstrates conservation practices. Communication is key for educating others and working together; we accomplished that through tours, workshops and conferences such as the Appalachian Grazing Conference.”

What do farmers gain when working with NRCS? Improvements to the land and water challenges on farms translate into real increases in production and lower costs, helping producers make the most of their land. For example, NRCS can help overcome lack of water for livestock, the lack of forage production, animal health concerns, and limited soil capabilities. Financial assistance may be available to you depending on the types of challenges. The conservation plan, conservation practice designs, and staff expertise are a free service that NRCS provides.

“Conservation is a collaborative effort and NRCS is driven by locally-led conservation that starts with landowners choosing to work with us,” said Louis Aspey, State Conservationist. “NRCS partners with both public and private organizations to share expertise and leverage the ability to create an impact well beyond what we could accomplish on our own. These efforts keep our land and water clean, and promote economic growth in agriculture.”

NRCS seeks opportunities to work with partners who can assist in the delivery of conservation. NRCS and West Virginia Farm Bureau have entered into an agreement to showcase farmers and their land in the West Virginia Farm Bureau News. These farms demonstrate conservation and innovative ways to meet the daily challenges faced on the farm. Over the next several issues of West Virginia Farm Bureau News, you will see articles appearing in the magazine that highlight these farms and how they have used NRCS recommendations to improve
production, improve time management, develop water sources, utilize pasture, control erosion and demonstrate creative business ideas.

“We are pleased to work with NRCS to help illustrate the many benefits to farmers through these free programs,” said Charles Wilfong, WVFB President. “By sharing this information with our readers, we can help farmers do their jobs more efficiently and effectively, and perhaps help them find funding that will enable them to grow and improve their operations.”

NRCS has a field office to support every county in West Virginia with staff eager to assist in helping landowners make a positive difference in their operations. Together, private landowners, the NRCS, and Farm Bureau are working towards a common goal – a strong West Virginia agriculture future.

To learn more, go to: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/wv/home/ or call the NRCS West Virginia State Office in Morgantown at 304-284-7540.

Photos: Page 22: NRCS partnered with the local Conservation District, WV Conservation Agency and Trout Unlimited for this stream restoration project at Seneca Rocks. Page 24: The inside view of an NRCS-funded waste storage facility built through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program on Richard Law’s farm, Lost Creek, WV. This page, above: Joe Gumm presents the 2015 WV Association of Conservation Districts Honorary Member at Large award to conservation steward Mary Lebnick at the quarterly meeting, Oct. 27, 2015. Photos courtesy NRCS.
WVDA Urges Extra Caution Following Indiana Avian Influenza Outbreak

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) is prepared if avian influenza (AI) shows up in the Mountain State, Commissioner of Agriculture Walt Helmick said following new reports of the disease in commercial turkey flocks in Indiana last week.

There has been no sign of the disease in West Virginia, and the outbreak poses no risk to food or human health. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is responding to the situation in Indiana. The outbreak is especially concerning in light of the AI outbreak in spring 2015 that became the worst animal disease outbreak in U.S. history. From December 2014 through June 2015, a high-pathogenicity strain of AI (HPAI) affected 48 million poultry on 223 premises in the West and Midwest.

"Substantial planning is already in place due to past incidents of avian influenza here in West Virginia, and USDA is on the affected farms in Indiana," said Commissioner Helmick. "However, the risk is definitely elevated, and we're encouraging our growers to be especially vigilant and to be very strict when it comes to their biosecurity measures."

The warning applies to both commercial growers and "backyard" poultry farmers who keep smaller numbers of birds for eggs or meat. Backyard birds are at an even greater risk due to their exposure to the environment and wild birds that are known to carry AI.

West Virginia previously dealt with AI in 2002 and 2007. Extra safeguards were developed and refined following those incidents, but they are no guarantee against AI finding its way into domestic fowl in the Mountain State.

WVDA tests every commercial flock before they are moved from the farm for any reason, ensuring that sick birds are not being trucked past other poultry farms in the region. The regional laboratory in Moorefield - in the heart of poultry country - is able to perform a wide range of tests, including rapid screening tests.

AI is an enormous threat to the economic well-being of the U.S. poultry industry and has substantial implications on international trade. West Virginia's poultry industry alone is worth more than $350 million annually, not counting valuable breeding operations. AI also is very expensive to contain and eradicate. The cost of response to the 2015 outbreak was upwards of $1 billion, according to USDA.

Recommended biosecurity practices include:

• Minimizing farm visitors. AI can survive on vehicle tires, footwear - even in the nasal passages of humans
• Clean and disinfect shoes, clothes, hands and tires before entering production areas. Clean all visible dirt and then apply disinfectant
• Don't share farm equipment during AI outbreaks
• Be on the lookout for signs of disease (unusual bird deaths, sneezing, nasal discharge, diarrhea, poor appetite, drop in egg production, purple discoloration of wattles, comb and legs)

Call the WVDA if you think your birds might be sick at 304-538-2397 during regular business hours or 304-558-2214 after regular business hours.
Wilfong, continued

AFBF President and Scott VanderWal, President of the South Dakota Farm Bureau, was elected AFBF Vice-President. They are both very good principled leaders who will direct our organization very well. I have known both of them for a long time and am confident in their ability to do the right things for this organization.

Attendees at the Annual Convention also had the opportunity to take part in a variety of workshops and seminars on current topics of interest to agriculture and organizational improvement as well as tours of several interesting agricultural entities in that area.

Anyone who attends the AFBF Annual Convention comes away impressed. If you would like to attend next year, plan ahead for the 2017 meeting, which will be held in January 2017 in Phoenix, Arizona.
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SNACK IDEAS

When you’re snacking, it can be tempting to skip the fuss and grab a bite on-the-go. Keeping healthy and convenient snacks at the ready helps you stay disciplined without sacrificing taste and enjoyment.

These three-step healthy snack ideas show how easy it can be to serve up a variety of tasty treats in just a few minutes while adding more fruit to your diet. Make the most of your snacking experience with this advice:

• Stock the pantry with versatile options that let you prepare a range of snacks, from sweet to savory combinations. Choose options such as DOLE Jarred Fruit, which offers delicious, ready-to-eat fruit in five varieties that are fat-free, cholesterol-free and packed in 100 percent juice for maximum healthy snacking versatility.

• Look for quick solutions that help trim prep time and skip the cutting, peeling and mess.

• Avoid worrying about waste or spoilage with convenient, re-sealable lids that let you use what you need for a single serving and save the rest for later.

Find more quick and easy snack ideas at dole.com/jarredfruit.
Banana Split On-A-Stick
Serves: 1
1/2 cup DOLE Jarred Pineapple Chunks, drained
1 slice pound cake, cut into 6 cubes
1/4 small banana, cut into 4 slices
2 teaspoons bottled chocolate sauce
2 tablespoons light whipped topping
1 maraschino cherry

1. On two wooden skewers, alternate threading four pineapple chunks, three cubes of pound cake and two banana slices.
2. Drizzle each skewer with one teaspoon chocolate sauce.
3. Serve skewers with whipped topping and a maraschino cherry.

Lemon-Blueberry Parfait-tini
Serves: 1
1 cup reduced-fat or fat-free cottage cheese
1/2 teaspoon grated lemon peel
1/2 cup DOLE Jarred Mixed Fruit, drained and diced
1/2 cup fresh blueberries
2 teaspoons sliced almonds

1. In small bowl, combine cottage cheese with lemon peel.
2. In another small bowl, combine mixed fruit with blueberries.
3. In martini glass, alternately layer lemon cottage cheese with blueberry and mixed fruit combination. Top with sliced almonds.

Asian Chicken Lettuce Wraps
Serves: 1
1/2 cup refrigerated cooked chicken breast strips
2 large Bibb or Boston lettuce leaves
1/2 cup DOLE Jarred Mandarin Oranges, drained
2 teaspoons slivered almonds
1 tablespoon light Asian salad dressing

1. Equally divide chicken between two lettuce leaves to make two wraps.
2. Place 1/4 cup mandarin oranges and 1 teaspoon almonds into each wrap.
3. Serve lettuce wraps with salad dressing for dipping.

Pineapple and Shrimp Skewers with Thai Peanut Sauce
Serves: 1
1/2 cup DOLE Jarred Pineapple Chunks, drained
6 medium cooked shrimp
1 small lime, halved
1 teaspoon chopped fresh cilantro
2 tablespoons bottled Thai peanut sauce

1. On two wooden skewers, alternate threading four pineapple chunks and three shrimp.
2. Squeeze lime over prepared skewers and sprinkle with cilantro.
3. Serve with bottled Thai peanut sauce for dipping.
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