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.

Are You the Next Winner of the Rural Entrepreneurship Challenge?

Entries are now being accepted for the American Farm Bureau Federation’s third Rural Entrepreneurship Challenge. Entrepreneurs will compete for $145,000 in startup funds.

The competition provides an opportunity for individuals to showcase ideas and business innovations that benefit rural regions of the United States. It is the first national rural business competition focused exclusively on innovative entrepreneurs working on food and agriculture businesses.

Competitors are invited to submit for-profit business ideas related to food and agriculture online at www.strongruralamerica.com/challenge.

Businesses related to food and agriculture include farms or ranches, value-added food processing, food hubs, community-supported agriculture programs (CSAs), farm-to-table restaurants, farmers’ markets, wineries, breweries, cideries and distilleries. Businesses can also support food and agriculture such as crop scouting, agritourism, ag advertising agencies and ag technology companies.

“Owners of all types of businesses across the food and agriculture supply chain are encouraged to enter the competition,” said Dr. Lisa Benson, AFBF’s director of rural development. “Through the challenge, we’ll provide 10 rural entrepreneurs with access to funding to take their businesses to the next level.”

All applications, which include a business plan, video pitch and photo, must be submitted online by June 30. Judges will review the applications and provide feedback to the participants.

The top 10 teams will be announced in October. This includes six teams who will each win $10,000 in startup funds.

The final four teams will compete in a live competition at AFBF’s 98th Annual Convention in Phoenix on Jan. 8 to win: Farm Bureau Entrepreneur of the Year award and $30,000 (chosen by judges); People’s Choice award and $25,000 (chosen by public vote) - First runner-up prize, $15,000 and Second runner-up prize, $15,000.

The Entrepreneur of the Year award and the People’s Choice award will be awarded to two different teams. The team that wins the Entrepreneur of the Year award will not be eligible for the People’s Choice Award. The competition timeline, detailed eligibility guidelines and profiles of the 2015 and 2016 finalist teams are available at www.strongruralamerica.com/challenge.
# West Virginia Farm Bureau News

*The Voice of Agriculture in the Mountain State*

May 2016

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On the cover
Stalnaker Farm
Tabby Bennett
Visa Backlog Adding to Ag Labor Woes

Zippy Duvall, President, American Farm Bureau Federation

Thanks to the hard work and ingenuity of our nation’s farmers and ranchers, we enjoy an abundance of affordable, American-grown food. With summer nearly here, consumers are ready for their local grocery stores and markets to be fully stocked with their favorite fresh fruits and vegetables. And U.S. agriculture is eager to keep up with the demand for American food products. But labor shortages and unreasonable visa delays challenge farmers’ ability to get their crops harvested and to market.

There’s no question that we need a long-term solution to protecting our borders while also securing a legal, reliable workforce for agriculture. The fix won’t be quick or easy, but it is possible. Farmers need a market-based visa program, managed by USDA, which gives both employers and workers flexibility for long- and short-term work.

While it will take time to achieve the full reform we need, there are serious problems on the ground with our current system that can and must be addressed now. The current H2A and H2B system ignores the real-time needs of agriculture, and we’re seeing a prime example right now with massive visa paperwork delays at the Department of Labor.

Farmers across the country are already missing deadlines to have crews in place because of a bureaucratic hold-up with guest-worker visa applications. Even after carefully following all the procedures and filing the proper paperwork, farmers are kept waiting 30 days or more for Labor Department approval. The law itself says approval time should be 10-15 days, but the government is far behind with no sign of catching up. It’s time for the agency to shape up and bring the system into the 21st century, before our agricultural labor situation worsens.

Unfortunately, ignoring the unique labor needs of agriculture seems to be business as usual for the Labor Department. That’s why Farm Bureau is calling on the Department of Agriculture to step in. We need USDA to ensure that farmers have the workforce we need to stay in business and continue to provide safe and affordable food. Farmers and ranchers need an agency that understands their labor needs managing this system.

Delays in worker visa approvals may sound like just a human resources headache, but these delays can be devastating for farmers. A crew showing up 30 to 40 days late just doesn’t work when crops need to be planted, tended and harvested. Crops don’t wait for stacks of bureaucratic paperwork to clear.

Yes, we need a long-term solution, including attention to border security, to fully solve agriculture’s labor problem. But we also need a fix today for the needless delays that are keeping farmers from running their businesses.

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Around the Dome

Dwayne O’Dell, Director of Government Relations

I hope all is well with each of you this month. No doubt many of you are enjoying the spring weather. It’s always a great time when the cows are out grazing, gardens are planted, and field crops are in the ground.

Recent national data from the USDA indicate prospective planting of over 93.6 million acres of corn this year, up nearly 6 million from 2015. Likewise, soybean plantings are predicted at 82.2 million acres, with wheat projected at 49.5 million acres. Of course, weather will be a factor in final outcomes.

America truly has been blessed with tremendous technology and production ability. However, the EPA is at it again. This federal agency has used tax dollars to fund local and state lobbying efforts, called “What’s Upstream?” This effort funds anti-farmer campaigns aimed toward the unsuspecting and in some cases uneducated public regarding what really occurs on our farms.

The Government Accountability Office found that the EPA had violated the law by using this type of activity to alter public opinion. This information was presented to the Senate Subcommittee on Waste Management and Regulatory Oversight. You may view how the EPA is portraying farming at www.whatsupstream.com. In addition, 142 members of the U.S. House of Representatives have sent a bipartisan letter to EPA Administrator Gina McCarty, raising concerns over EPA’s recent funding of a grassroots lobbying campaign against farmers and ranchers in Washington State. EPA appears bent on using tax dollars to shape public opinion regardless of facts.

In late April of this year, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit declined to grant a re-hearing by the full court. This decision determines which court has initial jurisdiction to review legal challenges to the “Waters of the United States” rule (WOTUS). Based on this ruling, we expect EPA to promptly seek dismissal of all pending district court cases. Meanwhile, the AFBF and other litigants challenging the rule will evaluate their options and decide whether to seek a Supreme Court review or proceed to the merits in the Sixth Circuit at this time.

The federal budget process is beginning in the U.S House of Representatives. The following funding levels are proposed for agriculture and related activities in the next fiscal year:

- Agricultural research $2.85 billion
- Animal and Plant Health $934 million (up $36 million from last year) to address citrus greening, antimicrobial resistance and avian influenza
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program $1.43 billion (down $22 billion from last year)
- Farm Service Agency $1.5 billion
- Food & Drug Administration $2.7 billion

AFBF has joined a petition to modernize USDA beef quality grades. The National Cattle Beef Association authorized the petition based on Beef Checkoff funded research using dentition (teeth) to verify age rather than skeletal ossification. In today’s cattle population, many heifers are grading “old” under the current system even though they are less than 30 months of age required for premium beef programs. Research data indicate that the effect of estrogen in heifers prematurely ages the skeleton. AFBF policy supports modifying grading standards if scientific research shows benefit to the producer, processor and consumer. This effort is supported by the United States Meat Export Federation and the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture. If approved, the change would add over $60 million into beef cattle operations throughout the United States.

see O’Dell, page 22
Take Control of Your Legacy with a Succession Plan

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When it comes to succession planning, there’s a good chance a major voice is being left out -- your farm or land. It’s important to consider how a succession plan will affect the well-being of your farm and land, says Nationwide’s Don Schreiber.

“Let the farm ‘speak.’ Ask what it wants, how bad debt will affect it, what will happen if it’s split up. Is the in-law really an outlaw who just wants the money and doesn’t care about the land or farm? Ask the farm what should be done to keep it alive,” said Schreiber, Technical Director of the Land As Your Legacy Advanced Consulting Group at Nationwide.

This tip on what it takes to get the farm from one generation to the next is just one of many that Schreiber has for farmers and landowners who are considering making farm or land succession plans. Schreiber and Nationwide agents hold informational meetings around the state as part of Nationwide’s “Land As Your Legacy” succession planning initiative.

The initiative outlines four major steps for successful succession planning:

• Farm or land income. Is there enough income to support both the current generation and the next generation? A wide variety of benchmarks and formulas are available to help families see where the financial liability of their operation stands and if there are ways to minimize taxes, Schreiber said.

• Risk management. While risk in the form of weather, prices and yields has always been a part of agricultural operations, potential medical costs have become a major financial risk. A succession plan needs to take into account the costs for medical treatments, prescription drugs, hospitalizations and long-term care. Dealing with these issues can be very taxing in both time and money, Schreiber said.

• Mentorship and financial independence. The older generation has a wealth of information about its land and family business that should be passed on so the next generation can thrive. When the time is right, start sharing that information and insight and start giving more control of the family operation to the younger generation. “Nurture the next generation the same as you would with your crops or animals. Don’t let that information go to the grave,” Schreiber said.

• Estate planning. A good estate plan needs to be both tax and cost efficient and address the needs of key stakeholders, including family members who aren’t actively involved with the farm or land. It should include items that are not covered in a living trust or family trust such as health care power of attorney.

County Farm Bureaus periodically sponsor “Land As Your Legacy” seminars. To request or find out if a seminar is being held in your area, contact your county Farm Bureau.
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Patrick Morrisey
A far greater percentage of West Virginians collect Social Security disability benefits than the rest of the nation. For instance, a 2011 review found 9 percent of the state’s working-age population received benefits as compared to 4.6 percent nationally.

There’s no doubt many have legitimate disabilities, but such a high percentage also suggests some people may be gaming the system. Such a significant problem demands action.

That’s why my office recently partnered with federal authorities to launch a Cooperative Disability Investigation Unit (CDI), a first-of-its-kind partnership in West Virginia designed to root out disability fraud before benefits are paid.

The Charleston CDI will consist of two investigators and an analyst from my office. Their salaries will be covered by the federal government as they work alongside representatives from the Social Security Administration, its Office of the Inspector General and the state’s Disability Determination Section (DDS).

Certain claims from Social Security or DDS will be investigated and analyzed and then turned over to disability examiners.

The unit’s report will help others make informed decisions and ensure payment accuracy, a formula that generates significant taxpayer savings for federal and state programs.

CDI has a proven track record. In Virginia, federal officials credit a Richmond unit with saving $1 million per month in federal funds and $700,000 in state funds – benefits otherwise awarded without CDI’s investigative work.

Nationwide, CDI projections show units as having saved Social Security programs $3.3 billion since the program’s inception in 1997. That’s in addition to another $2.2 billion in savings for related programs.

The CDI program is one of Social Security’s most successful anti-fraud initiatives and its formation in West Virginia should be a wake-up call for anyone who thinks about stealing from Social Security.

Such thievery comes at a tremendous cost to the taxpayer and jeopardizes a critical safety net for those who depend upon Social Security now and into the future.

While I firmly believe tackling such abuse is critical, those legitimately receiving disability benefits have no reason to worry. In fact, those are the very people we aim to protect.

By exaggerating or lying about one’s disability, the undeserving take from the poor, disabled and retired. They also contribute to the potential exhaustion of Social Security’s Disability Trust Fund, which just this past fall needed an act of Congress to maintain solvency past 2016.

This recent legislation, which involved taking money from Social Security’s retirement fund, represents just a band-aid for a program scheduled to face bankruptcy yet again in 2022.

This extreme action only reinforces the notion that Social Security fraud must be stopped, and now.

Disability fraud has been a generational issue for far too long – one untouched by the West Virginia’s leaders in the past. Fortunately, we are changing that with this unit’s formation. That is why I proudly join a program operating 37 units in 31 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico – this is the beginning of a real cultural change in West Virginia.

I believe these partnerships are crucial for protecting taxpayer funds and reinforcing confidence in the government’s stewardship of this program. It is time for West Virginia to go after fraud more aggressively and reach her potential.

*Patrick Morrisey serves as attorney general for West Virginia.*

*Photo credit: Photographee.eu*
Is Legislation Needed to Protect Livestock Producers from False Accusations Regarding Animal Welfare?

Danielle Grant

“Jay Leno was hilarious.” “Jay Leno was vulgar and crude.” Both comments were made during the 2015 American Farm Bureau Convention while watching the exact same presentation. It is amazing how two people seeing the same presentation can have two completely different views. The same issue occurs when considering animal welfare, from the perspective of the consumer versus the livestock producer. As Farm Bureau members, it is crucial we evaluate our current animal welfare policy to determine if changes are necessary or if policy needs to be created to protect our producers against false animal abuse accusations.

Defining animal welfare can be a challenging task; however this definition is extremely important in protecting producers. For some of our citizens, proper animal welfare includes ensuring the animal has all physical needs met, such as proper nutrition, adequate space, low stress handling and veterinary care when needed. For others, animal welfare means ensuring the animal is “happy.” Animal rights activists support the “animal is happy” definition, and that believe animals should not utilized for agricultural products. As livestock producers, we must assure the definition utilized for determining the care standards for our animals are realistic and measurable. Assessing an animal’s “happiness” could be difficult for an animal abuse investigator; however, if the investigator was educated in animal science, they could evaluate an animal’s Body Condition Score, review the feed and water availability and living conditions to determine if the livestock had proper care. The agriculture community must be represented when creating state regulations defining animal welfare standards. Without proper agriculture representation, these regulations could reflect the views of animal rights, as opposed to animal welfare, which would create unattainable standards for livestock producers.

West Virginia Farm Bureau has a proactive policy to address animal welfare issues at the county level. WVFB Policy #27 supports the establishment of a livestock committee in each county to handle complaints of inhumane livestock treatment. First, the committee should be appointed by the county commission from recognized farmers within the county. The committee would be called upon by the county animal cruelty investigator if an individual was reported for negligent animal care, and they would assist with the investigation. Secondly, if the county humane officer finds livestock in dire conditions during the investigation, he/she should contact a veterinarian for further investigation. WVFB Policy #27 addresses the major concerns most livestock producers have if their operation is being investigated. The policy assures individuals with practical agriculture experience, or trained in animal health, are the individuals determining if the producer has been negligent in caring for his/her animals. As Farm Bureau members, we need to work to assure this policy is incorporated into our animal welfare law, because current state law does not include the creation of a livestock committee at the county level and does not require the county humane officer to contact a veterinarian or the County Livestock Committee before prosecuting the producer.

West Virginia currently has a state Livestock Care Standards Board, which consists of thirteen members. These members include the Agriculture Commissioner, the Director of the Animal Health Division, a licensed veterinarian, the dean of a the agriculture department of a college or university, one member representing a county humane society, two members representing public consumers, one member knowledgeable about food safety, two members representing statewide organizations that represent farmers and three members representing family farms. The agriculture community is well represented on this board. The purpose of the board is to prescribe standards for livestock care and well-being that endeavor to maintain food safety, encourage locally grown food, and protect West Virginia farms and
families. The Livestock Care Standards Board has created standards for the care and handling for each species of livestock. Investigations within a county are completed by the county Humane Officer or the police department. Although the standards are written by individuals representing the agriculture community and include detailed descriptions regarding proper livestock handling and care, they are enforced by individuals who may have no livestock knowledge at the county level. Potentially, the lack of knowledge by these investigators could lead to problems for livestock producers. For example, the Body Conditioning Score of your cattle after they have been lactating for a couple months is not the same, and should not be the same, as after calves have been weaned. Would someone lacking education in animal science or agriculture know the difference?

Farm Bureau has an opportunity to address this lack of knowledge through education and building relationships. We need to be working at the grassroots level to assure informed sources are providing education to the individuals investigating animal welfare claims. Additionally, we need to be creating relationships with these individuals, so if there is ever a question or concern, the county Farm Bureau members are the resource these investigators contact. Creating these relationships may be as simple as contacting the investigator for a meeting, or as the Monongalia County Farm Bureau does, inviting them to a county Board Meeting. County Farm Bureau members should also work diligently to support WVFB Policy #27 and create livestock committees at the county level to investigate these claims. Having multiple individuals with a variety of knowledge is an excellent way to protect our livestock producers. The members of this livestock committee could also serve as valuable resources for producers. These individuals could answer questions producers may have, or address concerns of animal health to assure the animals are protected and are given the proper care.

Public education is equally as important as education for investigators. In some cases, the individual making the claim is simply someone who is unaware of why the animal may be in a certain condition. For example, if you had only seen beef cows and suddenly you saw a dairy animal, you may conclude the animal is malnourished. But farmers know these animals have been raised for completely different purposes and as such have very different genetic traits. The public needs to understand animal welfare is important to our livelihood, because healthier animals are better producing animals. The agriculture industry must always be transparent about our practices and why they are necessary for the health and safety of the animal. And producers must continuously seek education to ensure they are using the best practices in their operation.

Harsh penalties exist for producers charged with negligent care of their animals, but what consequences exist for individuals who falsely accuse livestock producers of animal abuse or neglect? Even if a producer takes excellent care of their animals, a false claim can destroy their reputation; and if they are forced to stop operations during the investigation, they may lose a substantial amount of income. Media sources, including social media, are quick to spread the word when an individual is under investigation for animal negligence. Many states have adopted food slander laws, which create punishments for individuals degrading a food product without probable cause. Would similar consequences be beneficial to protect livestock producers? Currently, there is no punishment for making false accusations against a producer. If consequences were in place to punish individuals intentionally trying to harm agriculture operations, would people think twice before falsely accusing agriculture producers?

Farm Bureau members need to work to establish livestock committees in every county. We must educate consumers and producers regarding animal welfare, and we should seek to punish individuals who falsely accuse livestock producers. We must build relationships with the county humane officers, or the individuals investigating animal welfare claims. We need to continue to work closely with the Livestock Care Standards Board and our government officials to ensure the policies for handling and care are realistic and attainable. Together, we can protect both our livestock and our livestock producers and maintain consumer confidence, because as the West Virginia Farm Bureau motto says, “We pull the most, when we pull together.”
“FFA is not all cows and plows,” and three students from Buckhannon-Upshur High School proved that when they won first place and a $10,000 prize at the Small Farm Business Plan Contest that was held at the WVU Erikson Alumni Center on the 19th of March.

Natalie Thorpe, Brian Carson and Leah Stankus, facilitated by their FFA Advisor/Ag. Ed. Teacher, Connie Scarbrough, started a custom metal working business called Three Amigos Metal Works and engineered a plan for success.

The metal working idea was developed on a field trip at the North American International Livestock Exposition. At the expo, the students discovered several ideas, and decided to use them as inspiration for a business of their own. Metal working and creating lawn and other types of decorations to sell stood out to Thorpe, Stankus and Carson. After learning about many different business ventures, and discussing their individual
strengths and weaknesses, Natalie, Brian and Leah joined together and got to work planning and welding.

Brian already knew how to weld, so he taught the girls, and they began creating metal products from horseshoes, road signs, forks and any other types of metal they could get their hands on.

According to Connie Scarbrough, the “Three Amigos” took a Gallop poll to find their strengths before beginning their business plan. “They all get along so well and have such compatible strengths,” she said. “That is what made them so successful.”

The Three Amigos first competed at the Small Farms Conference by putting together their lean canvas, which is a short business model, for the contest. After pitching their plan, Three Amigos Metal Works was selected as the third place pitch winner of the Small Farms Conference. Then around the same time, the group discovered they were also finalists out of hundreds of students statewide for the Small Farm Business Plan Contest at WVU.

Although they were excited and had most of their work together, the group was not finished. Knowing there was still work to do, Mrs. Scarbrough scheduled an appointment with Fonda Holehouse at the WVU Business Launch Lab to assist with the development of their business financials. Leah said, “Financials were probably the hardest part, and Fonda gave us the tools we needed to win.” After weeks of phone calls and what seemed to be endless calculations, the group was ready to compete for the finals.

Three Amigos Metal Works created metal decorations, a 15 page financial and business plan, a PowerPoint, and prepared to pitch their business. In the end, only eight business plans were pitched at the final contest, and the competition was intense. Students from all over the state came with strong, diverse ideas that were presented in front of judges and other students in a format that is similar to the television show, “Shark Tank”. One of the competitors even had a partnership with Nike to create a new “tech shoe”.

The Three Amigos pitched their 10 minute presentation to the judges and participated in a five minute question and answer session. After the judging process was over, Three Amigos Metal Works won first place and a $10,000 prize. They were also invited to attend the upcoming collegiate business plan competition, but will be unable to attend, so the group is sending a GoPro video instead.

Winning such a competition and working so hard to develop welding skills, financials, a business plan, and speaking in front of judges and peers to make an idea come to life with a real small business seems like an extraordinary venture for anyone. These three high school juniors from Buckhannon made it happen in a few short months. When asked how they could develop a functioning business so quickly, the students all agreed that the preparation, education and experience they have gained, and are still gaining, comes from their time spent in FFA and 4H. “You definitely get a lot of opportunities from FFA and 4H,” said Natalie. “The experience we are gaining has been really helpful.”

Three Amigos Metal Works is currently working on creating more diverse products, and the fun doesn’t end with lawn décor. The group is also making keychains from forks, and a few other metal items. If all goes well, Three Amigos Metal Works will have a shop on Etsy, and will begin selling their products to the public.
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The West Virginia Friends of Firewood project promotes the importance of high quality firewood to individuals who produce, use or sell it in our area. To produce high quality firewood, it must be split and then seasoned or treated after being cut from a larger log.

Green firewood comes from a live tree that is cut down and then cut into manageable pieces or burnable sizes. Freshly cut pieces are heavy and dense because of the high moisture content – sometimes as much as 50% of the weight is water. Firewood in this stage should be seasoned or treated before use to maximize burning efficiency. In addition, wet wood increases smoke and the risk of creosote buildup in stove pipes or chimneys.

**Splitting firewood**

Splitting wood is a crucial step in the drying process to produce high quality firewood. It exposes more surface area allowing the air to penetrate from all sides, leading to faster drying times.

There are two primary options to split firewood – manual and motorized. Manual methods include less expensive hand tools, like mauls and splitting axes. Typical motorized options include hydraulic splitters that use a small gas engine to pump hydraulic fluid into a cylinder that pushes wood rounds through a wedge. Hydraulic splitters are more efficient than manual splitters but can be much more expensive.

**Seasoning firewood**

Split firewood that has been air-dried for at least six months is referred to as seasoned firewood. Air-drying reduces the moisture content of the wood by 50 to 75%. How can you tell when this point is reached and the wood is ready to burn? Without a moisture meter, determining this can be difficult; however, external signs (such as ends of wood being split, cracked or checked and have darkened) indicate that the proper amount of drying has occurred. Dry wood will also feel lighter that wet wood and will make a crisp noise (rather than a dull thud) when two pieces are struck together. To properly season firewood, ensure adequate airflow and place it somewhere that has access to the sun and wind for at least six months.

**Treating firewood**

When split firewood has been heat-treated, kiln-dried or debarked, it is known as treated firewood. Heat treatments are a process that raise the temperature of the wood, usually to 140 degrees Fahrenheit for a set amount of time (at least one hour), allowing the wood to become sterile and dry.

By processing firewood in spring, you can have an adequately seasoned product in time for next winter, so get an early start!

By Rachel Harris, Project Associate, Appalachian Hardwood Center; Ben Spong, WVU Extension Specialist – Forest Operations; Dave McGill, WVU Extension Specialist – Forest Resource Management
Preparing your harvest for canning

Few things are more rewarding than seeing jars of produce you have grown and canned lined up on the kitchen counter. In order to get from the garden to this point, the produce needs to be handled and processed correctly.

Harvesting
Begin with good-quality fresh foods suitable for canning. Harvest fruits and vegetables at peak maturity or as near as possible. To ensure a quality product when canned, it is best to process the product soon after harvesting. Only gather as much as you can handle within 2 or 3 hours to maintain the peak of quality. If the produce is held too long, spoilage may begin and loss of vitamins and minerals may take place. Only use produce that is free from visible evidence of disease and insect damage. Handle food carefully so that it is not cut or bruised.

Once the produce is harvested, discard any moldy or bad produce. Remove small diseased cuts and spots from food. Next, properly clean the produce by washing it a little at a time. Lift food out of the water and drain the water. Continue washing until the water is clear and free of dirt. Do not let the food soak, because it will lose flavor and nutrients. This can also cause some fruits to become soft.

Safety Guidelines
It is important to check safety guidelines for the food you want to preserve. If you cannot find processing time for a certain food, chances are there are no approved home canning recommendations for that particular food. Some foods are better suited for canning while others may produce a better product if frozen or dried. Make certain to use reliable sources for home canning publications, such as Cooperative Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture and major manufacturers of home canning equipment.

Equipment
Have your equipment ready for canning season. Only use canning or Mason-type jars (tempered glass) with two-piece lids that are designed to handle the temperature changes and pressure needed during canning. Remember to examine your jars for nicks, cracks and rough edges. There is nothing worse than finding a broken jar after processing.

Also, be sure your pressure canner is in good working condition. Pressure gauge canners should be checked annually for accuracy. This can be done at your local county WVU Extension Service office. The weighted gauge canners (the ones that jiggle) don’t have to be tested.

Storage
Lastly, consider how much produce you will use within a year’s time. Canned product is best used within a one-year time period. Canned goods should be stored in a cool, dry, dark place without extreme temperature changes.

For more information on home food preservation contact your local county WVU Extension Service office or go http://fh.ext.wvu.edu/food/food-preservation/canning.

By Zona Hutson and Patty Morrison, WVU Extension Agents – Families and Health; Reviewed by Litha Sivanandan, WVU Extension Specialist – Food Safety and Training
Native and heirloom vegetables for West Virginia gardeners

West Virginia’s diverse climate, topography and soil types give West Virginia gardeners the opportunity to grow many types of vegetables and small fruit crops. For generations, gardeners have selected vegetables and fruits that possess superior traits to pass on to neighbors and family members. These treasured varieties are heirloom, or heritage genetic material, which must be preserved for the future.

As agriculture becomes more consolidated, we are rapidly losing genetic material; therefore, our future food supply depends on preserving our heirloom vegetables and fruits. When propagated, these open pollinated varieties possess the same characteristics as their parents. Heirloom varieties have superior taste and flavor, and in some instances, superior tolerance to stress such as drought or pests.

The following is an abridged list of suggested heirloom varieties for West Virginia gardeners.

### Table 1. Suggested heirloom vegetables for the West Virginia gardener.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asparagus</td>
<td>Purple Passion, Mary Washington, Wild Asparagus</td>
<td>Purple Passion and Mary Washington will produce small berries; Wild Asparagus can be harvested in early spring.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Beans        | Pole: Brown Cut Short, Red Cut Short, Preacher Bean, Rattlesnake Pole, October Tender Hull, Logan Giant, Fat Man, Nobel Bean Half Runner: Volunteer, Josephine Jackson Broadbean: Windsor | Potential suppliers for heirloom beans are:  
Betty Flanagan  
467 Ritchie Farm Road  
Summersville, WV 26651  
Sustainable Mountain Agriculture Center  
1033 Pilot Knob Cemetery Road  
Berea, KY 40403  
859-986-3204 |
| Beets        | Bull's Blood, Crosby's Egyptian, Chioggia, Golden Beet | Bull's Blood is well suited to beet greens; Chioggia is candy-cane striped and sweet.               |
| Cabbage      | Savoy Ace, Jersey Wakefield                  | Savoy cabbage is very cold tolerant.                                                               |
| Cantaloupe   | Charentais                                   | Excellent flavor; may split when vine-ripe.                                                       |
| Garlic       | German Extra Hardy, Wild Garlic              | German Extra Hardy is a “hardneck” variety; Wild Garlic can be harvested in early spring.          |
| Lettuce      | Deer Tongue, Tom Thumb, Buttercrunch         | Add heirloom types to complement flavor and color of salad mixes.                                 |
| Onion        | Wild Onion                                  | Wild Onions can be harvested in early spring.                                                      |
| Peas         | Lincoln                                     | Does well in hot weather.                                                                          |
| Peppers      | Corno di Toro, Bulgarian Sweet, Aconagua     | Excellent sweet, non-bell peppers with great color.                                                 |
| Potato       | Russian Banana, French Fingerling, Irish Cobbler | There is a great diversity of skin and flesh color with heirloom potatoes.                      |
| Squash       | Cashaw (green or orange striped), Neck Pumpkins | Excellent for pies and baking.                                                                     |
| Tomatoes     | Brandywine, Black Krim, Orange Oxheart, Cherokee Purple | Wide assortment of sizes, colors and shapes with many heirloom tomatoes; market should be determined for appearance or taste. |
| Watermelon   | Moon and Stars                               | Excellent quality and storage.                                                                     |

By Lewis W. Jett, WVU Extension Specialist – Commercial Horticulture
Periodic cicadas coming to West Virginia

Have you heard of Brood V? Brood V is a group of periodic cicadas that will be appearing throughout much of West Virginia this year. These cicadas will be emerging in mass from the soil where they have spent the last 17 years sucking the nutrients from the roots of trees. From May through June the adult male cicadas will announce their presence with a loud chorus of sound that they use to attract a potential mate. Once the females have successfully mated they will cut small slits in the twigs of trees to lay their eggs. When the eggs hatch the immature cicadas (called nymphs) will burrow into the soil where they will remain for another 17 years to start the process anew.

Periodic cicadas

Periodic cicadas are found only in eastern North America and can have either 13- or 17-year life cycles. Periodic cicadas that are in the same stage of development, and that emerge together in a given region during the same year, are known collectively as a single brood. There are 12 broods of 17-year cicadas and three broods of 13-year cicadas. Each brood is designated by a unique Roman numeral. Periodic cicada broods are so synchronized developmentally that they are nearly absent as adults in the years between mass emergences.

Life cycles

All cicadas go through a simple metamorphosis that includes an egg, nymph and adult life stage. They have piercing and sucking mouthparts, which they use to feed on plant fluids. The wingless nymphs will feed underground on the roots of trees for much of the life span of the insect. When the nymphs reach maturity they will dig their way back to the surface, climb onto a tree trunk or some other surface, then undergo a final molt to become winged adults, leaving their shed exoskeleton behind. The adults will typically live for two to six weeks to mate and produce the next generation.

Damage

Cicadas are not normally considered important pests. They pose no health threat and will not bite or sting people or pets. Although cicadas are plant feeders, the only noticeable damage they cause to plants results from egg-laying by females. The incisions that egg-laying cicadas make in the twigs of trees may cause those twigs to hang down or break off. This type of injury can be quite noticeable and extensive during years when periodic cicadas emerge in mass within a given area. Feeding and egg-laying rarely causes much harm to well-established trees. However, it may interfere with the growth or even kill very young or newly planted trees.

Control

Control of cicadas is not necessary most years. However, during years when periodic cicada emergence is predicted in an area, those homeowners may want to consider postponing the planting of new trees and covering existing young trees with a fine mesh netting during the egg-laying period. In addition, pruning out and destroying damaged twigs within a few weeks after eggs are laid can help prevent new nymphs from entering the soil. Insecticide treatments are not recommended for cicada control except in commercial tree plantings.

By Daniel Frank, WVU Extension Specialist – Entomology
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Can I Buy More Land Tax-free When I Sell a Conservation Easement?

David A. DeJarnett

In a previous article, I discussed the basic income tax consequences of the grant of a conservation easement. I mentioned that a conservation easement could be donated to the grantee, or sold for fair value, or sold for less than fair value (known as a bargain sale).

If you sell an easement for its fair value, you will recognize taxable gain if your basis in the easement is less than the sale price. If the easement is entirely donated, you will be entitled to a charitable deduction (subject to applicable limits such as AGI) if many requirements are met. If you sell the easement for less than its fair value, then you will have taxable gain and will be entitled to a charitable deduction if many requirements are met. The requirements for a charitable deduction will be the subject of a later article. For now, let me just say that not every donated easement entitles the landowner to a deduction, and the landowner must carefully plan.

I certainly understand that many landowners sell conservation easements to raise cash for many reasons. If you are selling a conservation easement to raise cash to buy more land, and you plan carefully, no income taxes will be due on gain from the sale of the conservation easement. No income taxes are due on gain from a sale of a conservation easement as long as all of the requirements of a like-kind exchange are satisfied, so careful planning is necessary to be sure all of the requirements are met. If you want to avoid income taxes on the sale by investing in more land, you should engage a competent tax attorney for assistance.

A key to qualifying a sale of a conservation easement as part of a like-kind exchange is to sign an agreement with a qualified intermediary before the closing on the sale of the easement, and be sure the closing attorney makes the net proceeds check payable to the intermediary, not to you. If the net proceeds check is payable to you, the sale will not qualify as part of a like-kind exchange. A competent tax attorney experienced with like-kind exchanges should be able to help you meet the requirements on short notice.

Another key to qualifying a sale of a conservation easement as part of a like-kind exchange is to identify the new property you want to buy in writing to the intermediary within 45 days after the closing on the sale of the easement. That is not a lot of time. Therefore, you should begin to consider which property you would buy long before the closing on the sale of the easement.

The last key I will mention to qualifying a sale of a conservation easement as part of a like-kind exchange is to close on the purchase of the new property within 180 days after the closing on the sale of the conservation easement.

If you look, you will find many qualified intermediary service providers on-line. While their services are necessary and many providers are very helpful, they are not a substitute for a tax attorney that you hire and who is responsible for assisting you to be sure the transactions qualify as a like-kind exchange.

David is a partner in the Martinsburg office of Bowles Rice LLP. He has over 25 years of experience in advising clients regarding income and estate taxes, estate planning and land succession planning. For more information, please contact David at (304) 263-0836.
In state news, the budget continues to be stalled. Recent data indicates tax collections continue to miss monthly projections for this year. Also, Standard & Poor’s Rating Service has downgraded West Virginia’s bond rating to AA minus. With only about two months left on this year’s budget, the shortfalls will be made up from the Rainy Day Account. Governor Tomblin and Senate and House leaders appear to be at an impasse on how to proceed. Some have stated that the budget shortfall has been useful in that all areas of government are being evaluated.

Some of the options under consideration include: (1) raising the cigarette tax by $1.00 per pack; (2) raising the consumer sales tax by 1 percent; (3) using funds from the Rainy Day Account; and (4) cutting government by 5 to 10 percent. I hope by the time you read this article that a plan/agreement will have been forged.

In the face of so many problems, I’m reminded of our 32nd president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who faced some of the worst economic crises in American history. In his fourth inaugural address on January 20, 1945, he said, “The Almighty God has blessed our land in many ways. He has given our people stout hearts and strong arms with which to strike mighty blows for freedom and truth... So we pray to Him now for the vision to see our way clearly—to see the way that leads to a better life for ourselves and for all our fellow-men...”

Lastly, Memorial Day (originally called Decoration Day) is the last Monday in May. Memorial Day was born out of the Civil War and a desire to honor our dead. It was officially proclaimed on May 5, 1868, by General John Logan. It was designed for the purpose of decorating the graves of comrades who had died in the defense of our country. On the first Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, and 5,000 participants decorated the graves of 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried there.

Memorial Day is truly a great time to remember those who have died in service to preserve the freedoms we now enjoy in the United States of America. A look back often helps build the correct bridge to a successful future. Have a great day!

---

O’Dell, continued

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WVDA Accepting Women in Ag Nominations

West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) is seeking nominations for the 2016 “West Virginia Women in Agriculture” program. Nominations are due by June 15. Induction is granted to those women who have made significant contributions to the establishment, development, advancement or improvement of West Virginia agriculture, forestry or specialty crops in the Mountain State. An inductee reception will be held at the 2016 State Fair of West Virginia, where the women’s biographies will also be featured in the Ag complex.

Nomination forms can be obtained by contacting the WVDA’s Ag Outreach Specialist Cindy Shreve via e-mail at cshreve@wvda.us or on the WVDA website at agriculture.wv.gov. Completed applications should be returned to: Cindy Shreve, WV Department of Agriculture, Moorefield Agricultural Complex, 60B Moorefield Industrial Park Rd., Moorefield, WV 26836 or sent to cshreve@wvda.us.

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Tabby Bennett
“I never thought of doing such a thing,” Charles said. “If I had thought of it, I would have done it years ago. It really works.”

Charles and Rachel Stalnaker have been married for nearly 61 years, and for 55 of those years they’ve been farming together in Calvin, West Virginia. Both grew up on farms, but when they were first married, they did not have an adequate amount of land to grow and produce. The Stalnakers felt that something was missing from their lives, and as soon as land became available to purchase their own farm, they jumped on it.

Although the Stalnakers have had many decades of farming experience and learning opportunities, the couple took a suggestion from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that has made their workload on the farm significantly less taxing.

The Stalnakers raise hay and 21 head of cattle on around 92 acres of land, most of which is fenced. For years Charles struggled to keep his fences in working condition because deer would run through and break them down. “The deer were tearing down in one night what I built in a week,” he said.

One day an NRCS agent made a visit to the Stalnaker’s farm, and while there, he asked if they would be interested in trying something new with their fence. The agent told the Stalnakers about reflectors that could be used along their electric fence to make the thin wires that stretched around their fields more visible to deer and other wildlife that passed through. These reflectors could be attached by zip ties, and would not only keep animals from crashing through the fences, but would also protect the wildlife.

Charles and Rachel agreed to try the reflectors, technically known as Wildlife Friendly Fencing, and enrolled in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) through NRCS. The Stalnakers agreed to a five year contract, which provides them with the benefits of NRCS technical and financial assistance as they use the reflectors on their fences. “I never thought of doing such a thing,” Charles said. “If I had thought of it, I would have done it years ago. It really works.”

Charles was able to prepare and set up the reflectors in his spare time which was typically in evenings after he had finished his other chores. He has lined an estimated 80-90% of his fence to date, but noted one could probably get away with only lining around 60% by spacing the reflectors farther apart. The simple set up did not take long, and only improved his daily routine. “The reflectors keep me from having to work on the fence all of the time,” said Charles.

Two weeks ago Charles checked his fence, because he was planning on moving cattle into a different area, and found that only two small sections of his fence were damaged. According to the Stalnakers, that is minimal compared to the damage they faced before using the reflectors.
Another way the Stalnakers help themselves while helping wildlife is by mowing from the middle of their fields toward the outside. Their NRCS agent made this suggestion as well, as a way to scare the deer and other animals out of the field so they do not get trapped and run over by the tractor.

These suggestions have helped the Stalnakers run a more efficient, sustainable farm in their later years, and have made farming for more years to come a greater possibility. When asked if he would participate in more NRCS programs, Stalnaker said, “I’m game for anything. I’ll try anything once.”

Photos: Page 24: A view of Stalnaker’s fence line with an array of reflectors attached. This page, right: Sign denotes Stalnaker Farm’s recognition as a Conservation Farm in 2015. Below, a close-up of the reflectors NRCS recommended to Stalnaker.
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Most Americans consume about 1,000 milligrams of sodium over the amount recommended by nutrition and health experts. New research shows cooking with spices and herbs could help you ditch the salt shaker and meet sodium recommendations.

Keeping a resolution to cut salt from your diet is easy. Use simple spice swaps to create tasty, low-sodium meals. From seasoning eggs with basil instead of salt to adding spices and herbs to no-salt tomato sauce, the McCormick Kitchens offer these easy tips and recipes to make low-sodium meals full of flavor:

- Beat 1/8 teaspoon herb instead of salt into 2 eggs before scrambling.
- Add oregano, garlic powder and red pepper to no-salt added tomato sauce for a tasty, low-sodium pasta dinner.
- Try making Citrus Herbed Chicken with Asparagus, Fiesta Citrus Salmon or Tuscan Pasta. These dishes don’t call for any salt. Instead, they swap in basil, garlic powder and oregano. For more low-sodium tips and recipes – such as shaved vegetable salad with Italian herb inaigrette – visit McCormick.com/recipes/low-sodium.

Fiesta Citrus Salmon

Prep time: 5 minutes
Cook time: 15 minutes
Serves: 4
1/4 cup orange juice
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons McCormick Perfect Pinch Salt-Free Fiesta Citrus Seasoning, divided
2 tablespoons packed brown sugar, divided
1 pound salmon fillets

In small bowl, mix juice, oil and 1 tablespoon each seasoning and sugar.
Place salmon in large re-sealable plastic bag or glass dish. Add marinade; turn to coat well. Refrigerate 30 minutes, or longer for extra flavor.

In another small bowl, mix remaining seasoning and sugar. Remove salmon from marinade. Discard any remaining marinade. Rub salmon evenly with seasoning mixture.
Grill salmon over medium-high heat 6-8 minutes per side, or until fish flakes easily with fork. (Or bake in 400 F oven 10-15 minutes, or until fish flakes easily with fork.)
Tuscan Pasta
Prep time: 15 minutes  
Cook time: 25 minutes  
Serves: 6  
1 can (28 ounces) diced tomatoes, undrained  
1 can (8 ounces) no-salt added tomato sauce  
1 tablespoon sugar (optional)  
2 tablespoons packed brown sugar, divided  
2 teaspoons McCormick Garlic Powder  
2 teaspoons McCormick Perfect Pinch Italian Seasoning  
1/2 teaspoon McCormick Black Pepper, ground  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 pound zucchini, sliced  
1 package (8 ounces) sliced mushrooms  
1 small onion, chopped  
6 ounces pasta, such as spaghetti or linguine  

In medium saucepan, mix tomatoes, tomato sauce, sugar and seasonings. Bring to boil on medium heat. Reduce heat to low; cover and simmer 20 minutes.  

In large skillet, heat oil on medium-high heat. Add zucchini, mushrooms and onion; cook and stir 4 minutes or until vegetables are tender-crisp. Stir tomato sauce into vegetables.  

Meanwhile, cook pasta as directed on package. Drain well. Place pasta in serving bowl. Add vegetable mixture; toss well.

Citrus Herbed Chicken with Asparagus
Prep time: 10 minutes  
Cook time: 20 minutes  
Serves: 4  
1/4 cup flour  
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese  
1/2 teaspoon McCormick Garlic Powder  
1/4 teaspoon McCormick Black Pepper, coarse ground  
1 pound thin-sliced boneless skinless chicken breasts  
1 tablespoon oil  
1 1/2 cups chicken stock  
1 teaspoon McCormick Basil Leaves  
1 teaspoon McCormick Oregano Leaves  
1 pound asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  

In shallow dish, mix flour, Parmesan cheese, garlic powder and pepper. Reserve 2 tablespoons. Moisten chicken lightly with water. Coat evenly with remaining flour mixture.  

In large nonstick skillet, heat oil on medium heat. Add 1/2 of the chicken pieces; cook 3 minutes per side, or until golden brown. Repeat with remaining chicken, adding additional oil, if necessary. Remove chicken from skillet; keep warm.  

In medium bowl, mix stock, basil, oregano and reserved flour mixture until well blended. Add to skillet along with asparagus. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to low; simmer 3-5 minutes, or until sauce is slightly thickened, stirring frequently. Stir in lemon juice. Return chicken to skillet; cook 2 minutes, or until heated through.
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