

The <http://www.wvagriculture.org/> Market Bulletin

Gus R. Douglass, Commissioner
Janet L. Fisher, Deputy Commissioner Steve Hannah, Deputy Commissioner

Vol. 92, No. 4

April 2008



Agriculture Industry and Rising Energy Costs

I look forward to April as the weather warms and I can enjoy the response from nature. This year there are more challenges on the horizon to deal with than I have experienced in my many years in production agriculture. We question whether we'll have enough feed to maintain the cows we have retained with the hopes of staying in the cattle business after last year's severe drought. Our hope is that there is an early spring to get the grass growing for them. Planning for a crop year is also more difficult as the prices of inputs have increased over last year's prices. Last month, I mentioned the problems the poultry industry is experiencing with the cost of LP gas. This problem hit home when we ordered 400 additional gallons for heating at a cost of about \$1,000.

Sectors of the agriculture industry are making adjustments because of energy costs as well. Pilgrim's Pride, our single largest agriculture industry in West Virginia, has made business adjustments, and fortunately, none of them are directly affecting our production and processing facilities in Moorefield. They have sold their turkey production and distribution center in Pennsylvania. In addition, the company has made known it is closing a processing plant in North Carolina, as well as distribution centers in several western states.

It has come to my attention again that JBS SA, a Brazilian meatpacker, is bidding to buy two large U.S. rivals, Smithfield Beef Group, Inc., and National Beef Packing Co. LLC. If this bid is finalized, it will make the Sao Paulo-based company the nation's largest meat packing company. Investors viewed the deals as a way to give the industry some pricing leverage to battle high feed costs and stagnant herd size. I think much of this consolidation is brought about by inflated fuel prices that are draining our nation of its monetary wealth.

Always with my mind geared toward food production, I read with interest articles from the industry about how they are capitalizing on the changing eating and food trends in

this country. When I was growing up, chicken was primarily the staple meat or preferred food for Sunday dinner. Chicken is still a favorite, but it is certainly processed differently now. My mother killed, plucked and dressed chickens herself until we got rid of the farm flock. Then she went to the butcher and bought a dressed hen for Sunday dinner. On the table today are boneless chicken breasts prepared for heating or a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken. It goes without saying that if you are going to sell your meat product to the younger generation you should plan on doing almost all the cooking before shipping it to markets.

Several of my activities in March were associated with the FFA and the FFA Ham, Bacon and Egg Shows and Sales. The Cabell County Sale included both 4-H and FFA students and was a joint sale with Lincoln County students. This was my first time at this event and I was highly impressed with the support the sale received. There was standing room only and it was greatly supported by the business community. I am very proud of the FFA and its Agriculture Science and Meat Science programs, which teach young men and women in a classroom structure. The sale brought more than \$31,000. As I mentioned last month, statewide, we have 31 facilities for processing and smoking hams that meet federal and state standards for meat inspection. Students are taught and work in business situations to prepare them to pursue careers in food processing if they choose.

All you have to do is see the enthusiasm of the young men and women at the various shows to be convinced that Ag Science is a worthy program. In fact, the State sale in Charleston was one of the best ever in terms of product quality. Many industry professionals evaluated this year's display as one of the best and most uniform they had ever seen. I know I was impressed with what I saw at the auction.

A comment was made that consumer confidence in the product has greatly increased sales. As proof, Berkeley County had a record



Gus' View . . .

setting sale this year of \$54,600. I hope counties that have not upgraded their facilities can see the financial benefits that a commercial-grade facility can provide to their students. I'll have more to say in a future *Market Bulletin* issue about the State sale.

WVDA staff just completed National Agriculture Week visiting school systems in West Virginia. This week reminds the American public of the social and economic importance of our nation's agricultural output. We try to show that the stability of our nation's food supply provides a massive engine for our nation's economy and has allowed other aspects of our society to flourish. However, the general public may not recognize what is necessary to produce, process, transport and protect the food supply we rely upon. Children, in particular, often seem to think the source of their food is the grocery store. This initiative aims to restore the link between farm and food and the minds of the next generation. This is where Agriculture Sciences returning as a major study in our school's curriculum is important. People need to realize that West Virginia alone is home to approximately 1,000 agri-businesses ranging from cottage industries to farmers' markets to agri-tourism enterprises.

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WVDA MISSION STATEMENT . . . The mission of the West Virginia Department of Agriculture is to protect plant, animal and human health and the state's food supply through a variety of scientific and regulatory programs; to provide vision, strategic planning and emergency response for agricultural and other civil emergencies; to promote industrial safety and protect consumers through educational and regulatory programs; and to foster economic growth by promoting West Virginia agriculture and agribusinesses throughout the state and abroad.

Cast-Iron Cook-Off Winners Showcase State's Agricultural Products

Fourteen teams competed in the 2008 Cast-Iron Cookoff at Stonewall Resort January 26, bringing attention to West Virginia's great chefs and agricultural products, and raising money for student culinary programs.

Commissioner of Agriculture Gus R. Douglass again served as a judge, and the Collaborative for 21st Century Appalachia presented former West Virginia Governor Gaston Caperton with its 2008 Pioneer Award for his vision of the significance of the tourism industry in the Mountain State.

Commissioner Douglass noted that agriculture and tourism frequently go hand-in-hand these days.

"When people travel, some of the things they seek are unique culinary experiences, and that is something that West Virginia can definitely offer," he said. "There is also an agricultural heritage that remains vibrant in this state, along with a rural lifestyle that is the

envy of most of our neighbors. I predict there will be an agri-tourism boom in coming years that will complement and add to our existing tourism industries."

During the competition, the ten-person teams – each made up of a professional chef, one sous chef and eight amateur cooks – prepared a four-course meal for the competition. The meals, menus and recipes were developed by each team's chef, and were judged by hospitality industry and agri-business leaders.

In 2005, 11.2 million people took overnight trips to West Virginia's tourism properties, a figure that is up 40 percent over the last decade.

"Governor Caperton realized during his two terms that the state had a lot to offer visitors such as skiing, whitewater rafting, mountain crafts and the state's Appalachian cuisine," says Dave Arnold, a tourism industry

leader, who was appointed as Tourism Commission Chairman after Governor Caperton formed the group in the early 90s. "Gaston was forward thinking in realizing that the economic benefit of tourism in West Virginia was a boost to the entire state." The West Virginia tourism industry has a yearly economic impact that tops \$3.4 billion and employs up to 40,800 people.

The non-profit Collaborative was formed to encourage West Virginia farmers to produce fresh, healthful and high-end ingredients for gourmet chefs in the Mountain State, while promoting tourism and preserving Appalachian cuisine and heritage.

For more information on the exceptional culinary event, go to www.castironcookoff.org or www.wvfarm2u.org, a website partially underwritten by the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) to facilitate commerce among farmers, chefs and consumers.

2008 Cast-Iron Cook-Off Winners

Overall Grand Champion

Stillwaters Restaurant (Stonewall Resort)

Best Overall Menu

Bridge Road Bistro – Charleston

Best Teamwork

Pierpont Community & Technical College –
Fairmont State College

Best Use of Appalachian Produce

Stillwaters Restaurant (Stonewall Resort)

Best Use of Appalachian Protein

Bridge Road Bistro – Charleston

Most Creative Course

Stillwaters Restaurant (Stonewall Resort)

Most Creative Single Course Presentation

Provence Market – Bridgeport

Best 21st Century Interpretation of Traditional Appalachian Cuisine

Berry Hills Country Club – Charleston

Best Use of Cast Iron

Bedford Springs Resort – Bedford Springs,
PA

Whistle While You Work Award

Whitewater Grille – Charleston Marriott

Best Use of Value Added Products

Bridge Road Bistro – Charleston

People's Choice

Berry Hills Country Club – Charleston

Gus View . . . *continued from page 1*

The Recognition Committee for the West Virginia Agriculture & Forestry Hall of Fame Foundation for West Virginia, Inc., met on March 13, 2008, to nominate three inductees from agriculture and three from forestry into the Foundation for the outstanding and valuable contributions to agriculture and forestry. The report of their selections for enshrinement into the Hall of Fame will be held April 23, 2008, beginning at 10 a.m. in the Agriculture Hall of Fame Building at Jackson's Mill. Their enshrinement will be during the Recognition Banquet on June 21, 2008, at Jackson's Mill. I hope to see many of you there.

An invasive forest pest has once again required me to take action by amending the West Virginia Gypsy Moth Quarantine, this time by adding Fayette County to the list of counties being regulated for the destructive gypsy moth. It was just this past January that Fayette County was placed under quarantine because of another destructive non-native forest pest, the emerald ash borer. When both of these pests were introduced into the U.S., their point of entry was far from the mountains of West Virginia. Now, because of people moving pest-infested items like firewood, the agricultural pest problems of others

are now our problems.

We also were alerted to a sick horse that was showing symptoms of a contagious disease and it was necessary to quarantine the movement of horses at that track. This necessitated cancelling a few races. Fortunately, lab tests came back negative and the quarantine was lifted.

During the month of March, the WVDA conducted another training exercise dealing with the possible mass migration from the National Capitol Region if a catastrophic event would occur. We are aware there would be a mass migration to the west, and West Virginia would be in its path. This exercise built upon previous exercises conducted by the WVDA and other state and local agencies. The scenario is that West Virginia would receive a large number of people from an evacuation of the National Capitol Region and they would have a large number of animals. A large percentage of them would need to be sheltered and cared for in our state. The WVDA is the coordinating agency for the care of these animals. In attendance at the training exercise were some 87 representatives of various federal, state, county and local jurisdictions in conjunction with private corporations and

non-profit agencies. We have acquired 225 pet cages that could be utilized. As always, we plan for the worst, but hope it does not ever occur.

I should report that the Legislature passed a set of rules dealing with anti-degradation of our streams which I consider is livable for our farm community and landowners. The rule strips away the Tier 2.5 designation leaving only Tiers 1, 2 and 3, which as I interpret it, would primarily be protection of waters of quality in state and federal lands.

Another dear friend, Dr. Dale Keyser passed away this month. He was one of the early pioneers that worked for the WVDA at the South Branch stockyards in Moorefield and the stockyards in Charles Town. He was one of the early veterinarians that helped us eliminate brucellosis and TB. He also worked for the Racing Commission at the Charles Town Rack Track. I send my condolences to the family of a great individual.

Not too much happening on the farm. Tom has purchased two new bulls. The bad part is we are rationing hay an hoping the grass will begin to grow soon. I'm anxious to get in the garden.



Retiring to Royal White Sheep



Gloria and Michael McKee are the first owners of Royal White Sheep in West Virginia.



When Gloria McKee retired from teaching in Hampshire County, there was one thing she knew she wanted to do – raise sheep. “It was just kind of an innate thing – my interest in sheep,” McKee said. “I always felt that sheep belonged on the farm. And I always wanted an animal I could work with, as far as size goes. It comforts me to work with the sheep.”

The kind of sheep to be raised on the McKee’s family farm, however, wasn’t such an easy decision. After spending some time looking at the different breeds, McKee’s husband Michael, who has been a full-time farmer for the past 15 years after his retirement from teaching, pointed out an article in the Lancaster Farming newspaper which featured a story on Bill Hoag and his new breed of sheep, a cross of St. Croix and Dorper which he had named Royal White Sheep.

This hybrid-breed sheep produces more meat and less fat to optimize the meat per feed pound ratio. Lean, tender meat is the purpose of this breed.

What McKee calls divine intervention upon seeing the article on Royal Whites led her to call Mr. Hoag in Ohio and start her research on the sheep – the newest breed to be developed in the United States in the past 20 years. And what she found she liked.

Royal White sheep are a pure hair sheep, brown eyed, pristine white and naturally polled. They are easy to care for, no shearing, no docking and seem to be disease and parasite resistant. They are very docile and non-flighty, McKee said. They typically have multiple births, are good mothers and grow very quickly.

Another thing that excited McKee was that as far as they know, they were and are the first owners of Royal White sheep in West Virginia.

“I have always liked new and groundbreaking things. I wanted to get in on ground floor of a new thing,” McKee said.

Her keen interest; however, didn’t equal experience.

“I was definitely a novice at this,” McKee said. “My father-in-law, who recently passed away, helped me tremendously and Mr. Hoag has been a great support system.”

McKee said Hoag calls her regularly to check on the sheep and would like to see the breed spread in West Virginia. This is also a goal of McKee’s, who is trying to market to other people who want to start their own flock.

And soon, she may have plenty to choose from for an interested buyer. The three-month-old ewes bought back in August 2007 are due to lamb in June. She is hoping all her ewes are pregnant and is looking forward to the coming lambs.

Meanwhile McKee is enjoying her dream of raising sheep and likes getting asked about the new breed. She is planning to start a website to help market the lambs and future plans include selling directly from their farm rather than a livestock market.

For more information on Royal White Sheep, visit www.royalwhitesheep.org.

Garden Calendar

— APRIL —

- 2... Seed Swiss chard and carrots (outdoors)
- 3... Seed onions & radishes (outdoors)
- 4... Plant cabbage & kohlrabi
- 5... Plant potatoes & raspberries
- 7... Seed beets & kale (outdoors)
- 9... Seed or plant broccoli, cabbage & cauliflower
- 10... Seed parsnips (outdoors)
- 11... Plant blackberries & fruit trees
- 12... Plant or seed Swiss chard
- 13... Plant peas & seed radishes (outdoors)
- 14... Apply crabgrass control; treat lawn for white grubs
- 16... Seed leaf lettuce (outdoors)
- 17... Seed late tomatoes (indoors)
- 18... Fertilize lawn
- 19... Seed or plant collards; plant perennials
- 20... Start compost pile
- 21... Loosen mulch on strawberries
- 23... Plant peas (outdoors)
- 24... Transplant leeks; seed new lawn
- 25... Put out hummingbird feeder
- 26... Plant sweet corn
- 27... Seed Carrots
- 28... Apply pre-emergent landscape weed control
- 30... Begin spraying fruit trees after petals fall

Continued on page 4

Fayette County Added to Gypsy Moth Quarantine Area

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) has added Fayette County to its gypsy moth quarantine area after egg masses were discovered there late last year. The quarantine is effective as of March 6. This brings the state total to 39 counties under gypsy moth quarantine.

Commissioner of Agriculture Gus R. Douglass said the expansion is indicative of the threat posed by non-native species.

“The gypsy moth is one of a host of pests that are currently causing substantial damage to our fields and forests,” he said. “Gypsy moths defoliated nearly 78,000 acres of West Virginia forest last year, and its range continues to spread.”

The gypsy moth is a non-native caterpillar that has become established in most of the north-eastern U.S. The insect prefers to feed on the leaves of oak trees, West Virginia’s predominant forest tree, but it has a wide range of hosts, including forest and shade trees and ornamental shrubs. The gypsy moth goes through four life stages – including eggs, larvae, pupae and adults – and can be transported long distances to uninfested areas by humans transporting infested materials.

The quarantine is intended to limit the artificial spread of the gypsy moth by man. More specifically, the quarantine requires an inspection prior to the movement of trees without roots (i.e., cut Christmas trees); trees and shrubs with roots and persistent woody stems (i.e., nursery stock); logs, pulpwood and wood chips; and mobile homes and associated materials. Without an inspection, regulated materials cannot be legally moved into a non-infested area.

Recreational vehicles and travel trailers can harbor egg masses. Owners are encouraged to check underneath them for egg masses before they take them on trips.

“We don’t want to stop business, we simply want to work with industry and the public to help them protect areas of the state that aren’t infested,” said WVDA’s Plant Industries Division Director Gary Gibson. “The safeguards needed are common-sense measures and we think we can make a large impact simply by increasing awareness of how this insect can be spread.”

An equivalent federal gypsy moth quarantine is also in place, but it applies to regulated items that cross state lines. The West Virginia quarantine governs movements among counties within the state.

For additional information about the West Virginia Gypsy Moth Quarantine, contact the WVDA’s Plant Industries Division at 304-558-2212. For information about the Federal Gypsy Moth Quarantine contact USDA-APHIS-PPQ at 304-372-8590.

WHAT'S COOKIN'

April 2008

Recipes

My Favorite Grilled Green Beans

I love green beans! I enjoy eating them raw for a snack, too.

- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1½ pounds fresh green beans, washed and trimmed*
- 1 red onion, sliced and left in rings
- 9 mushrooms, quartered

In large bowl, combine first 5 ingredients. Add beans, onions and mushrooms; toss well with tongs to coat evenly. Place on grill pan or electric grill (coat surface with nonstick cooking or grilling spray) over medium heat for approximately 10-12 minutes turning frequently.

- If using half runner beans you may want to string them during the trimming process.*
- If you don't have a grilling pan, this recipe can be prepared in the oven using two layers of heavy-duty aluminum foil. If you choose this method, make the foil into a packet.

Garden Calendar . . .

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MAY

- 1... Seed summer squash & cucumbers (outdoors)
- 2... Plant fingerling potatoes
- 3... Seed snap beans (outdoors)
- 4... Seed head lettuce (outdoors)
- 5... Control broadleaf weeds in lawn
- 7... Seed leaf lettuce & winter squash (outdoors)
- 9... Seed late celery (outdoors)
- 10... Seed sweet corn
- 12... Plant early celery & tomatoes
- 14... Seed annual flowers
- 15... Fertilize houseplants
- 16... Transplant or seed melons
- 17... Plant sweet potatoes
- 18... Plant large pumpkins
- 19... Plant pepper & cabbage
- 20... Harvest established asparagus

Spring Leg of Lamb

By Jean Smith, Director, Marketing and Development Division

It is nice to know that spring is just around the corner. While I love snow and the colder weather holidays, I am always ready for the spring flowers, green leaves and flowering trees.

This month's recipes include a wonderful lamb recipe that I didn't include last month, but I promise it is wonderful for whatever occasion you prepare it for. Many thanks to Allen Arnold of the Collaborative for the 21st Century Appalachia for sharing it.

The Collaborative is doing a great job with their website (www.wvfarm2u.org) and in connecting chefs to local farmers and growers.

I hope the other recipes become family favorites. Happy Cooking! — *Bon Appetit!*

Recipes

Holiday Braised Leg of Lamb

Serves 8-10.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Whole leg of lamb | 5 tablespoons whole black peppercorns |
| 1 tablespoon salt | ⅓ cup ground coriander |
| 1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper | ¾ cup juniper berries |
| 1 pound of garlic (½ pound minced & ½ pound whole cloves, peeled) | 6 bay leaves |
| 1 cup fresh rosemary leaves | ¼ cup tomato paste |
| ¾ cup fresh thyme leaves | 2 cups flour |
| 2 medium yellow onions | 1 bottle dry red wine |
| 2 carrots | 2 quarts water |
| 6 celery ribs | Salt and pepper to taste |
| 2 cups olive oil | Pasta or gnocchi, if desired |

Day 1:

Leave bone in lamb but trim excess fat; place on plastic wrap large enough to cover entire leg. Rub with salt, pepper, minced garlic, rosemary and thyme. Slit lamb and insert whole garlic cloves. Wrap leg tightly with plastic; marinate 24 hours in refrigerator.

Day 2:

Preheat oven to 425°F. Brown lamb in heavy roasting pan for about 30 minutes until it takes on some color. Remove pan from oven and lamb from the pan; set it aside. Remove whole garlic cloves from lamb. Lower oven temperature to 300°F. Cut onions, carrots and celery into large (approximately 2") pieces. After removing lamb, heat oil in same pan on top of stove over medium heat. Add vegetables and spices. Sweat and brown vegetables for 10 minutes. Add tomato paste and flour; stir to mix thoroughly. Deglaze pan by adding red wine and 2 quarts water; bring to boil. Adjust seasoning by adding salt and pepper as necessary. Place lamb in braising liquid. Cover pan with parchment paper and then aluminum foil.

Place roast in oven for 7 hours. Remove from oven; cool in cooking juices for 45-60 minutes. Refrigerate for 24 hours, then remove and discard congealed fat. Lift lamb out of braising liquid and slice. Bring braising liquid to boil, strain and adjust seasonings as necessary. Place sliced lamb in warm sauce to reheat. Arrange slices on warm platter or on individual dinner plates with generous spoonfuls of the sauce. Serve with fresh pasta or gnocchi.

Recipes

Powerful Shortcake

Because of their abundance of vitamins and minerals, blueberries are considered to be a power food.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 4 tablespoons sugar, divided | ⅓ cup milk |
| 2 teaspoons all-purpose flour | Nonstick cooking spray |
| ⅓ teaspoon ground cinnamon | 1 cup blueberries |
| 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons baking mix | |

In small bowl, combine 2 tablespoons sugar, flour and cinnamon; set aside. In another bowl, combine baking mix, milk and remaining sugar.

Spray 1-quart baking dish with nonstick cooking spray; spread half of the baking mix mixture. Top with ½ of blueberries and ½ of sugar mixture. Repeat layers. Bake at 350°F for 25-30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in middle comes out clean. Can be served warm or cold. Wonderful as a dessert with whipped cream or ice cream or for a special breakfast food.