

A team of scientists from Canada, Spain and the United States has identified a key gene that allows plants to defend themselves against environmental stresses like drought, freezing and heat. If a plant's stress gene can be identified, the theory is it can be manipulated to adapt plants to climate changes. We'll have to wait and see how this one turns out.

It has been announced that a Huntington biotechnology company, started by two Marshall University students and their professors, could play an important part someday in battling global health crises, such as the recent H1N1 outbreak. Vandalia Research, Inc. has invented a machine called the Triathlon that mass-produces DNA strands. Derek Gregg, Vandalia's vice president, states, "It's a molecular copy machine." For every DNA fragment we start with, we can make 10 to 100 million copies."

On another note, this has sure been a difficult year for livestock producers in the state. A few losses we've traced to toxic grasses, some due to malnutrition and a few I guess we'll attribute to age. We've also had our share of rabid animals biting and infecting cattle and humans across the state. Please be aware of the dangers of rabies. Greenbrier County is almost to the point of declaring an emergency due to the number of cases of rabies in wildlife they are experiencing in that area. Another real concern is our Congress and special-interest groups using scare tactics about greenhouse gas emission (GHG) and animal agriculture. The United Nations has reported that animal

agriculture accounts for 18 percent of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. However, in that same report, the U.S. style of feeding operations was reported as accounting for only 5 percent of the GHG emissions worldwide, but animal agriculture accounted for just 2.5 percent of all emissions in 2006, as reported by the EPA. We will need to keep close check on new and additional information as this legislation moves forward and as the confined feed-



William J. 'Pap' McFadden of Brooke County, celebrated his 102 birthday on April 4. Pap remains active by working on his farm.




Pap received a rare honor during his birthday party.

Governor Joe Manchin sent him an ornate certificate and medal inducting him into the Order of the 35th Star. The award, symbolic for West Virginia being the 35th state, is one of the highest honors presented to outstanding West Virginia citizens who demonstrated a lifelong commitment to their family, community, state and country.

ing operation program is applied.

As you are probably aware, the coalfields in southern West Virginia have been hit extremely hard with flooding. Our compassion goes out to all those affected. The WVDA and Conservation Agency are available to assist if possible. The Conservation Agency has 17 people assigned to the opening and cleaning of streams. The USDA Conservation money is available to help with the rebuilding of streams and the erosion control.

I want to extend a late birthday wish and congratulations to William J. McFadden of Brooke County, affectionately referred to as 'Pap' who celebrated his 102 birthday on April 4. Pap works his 100-acre farm, complete with horses, a very large garden and huge hayfields. He also cuts wood with a chain saw and loads it onto the trailer. He has a grandson, who has been assisting him in recent years. Pap also operates his tractor and ATV. It's good to see him active.

Speaking of fields, our corn is not in the ground and this is as late as I have ever seen us not having it planted. Normally, it would be up 6-8" by now. If it doesn't dry up shortly we probably will forego the corn crop because I doubt a short-season corn will be available to us. Alfalfa growth has been great this year and needs to be cut immediately, but again, that doesn't look to be any time soon as I watch the long-term weather forecasts. We've been able to get a few plants out in the garden in between rains, but we've had some seeds rot in the ground, but we'll just replant them. The green beans, squash and zucchini are all running late. We're all doing fine and hope you are as well. See you next month. 

New state program offering free prescription drugs

Business owners and individuals between the ages of 18 and 65 without prescription drug coverage and who are not eligible for Medicaid can now receive free prescription drugs through the West Virginia Rx Program (WVRx). The West Virginia Department of Agriculture is working with the Governor's Office to let you know about this valuable program. Funded primarily by the Governor's Pharmaceutical Advocate Office, the Heinz Family Philanthropies and the Benedum Foundation, WVRx provides 70 brand-name drugs from eight manufacturers to help West Virginians lead healthier, more productive lives by better managing their health issues.

For more information or to enroll, call WVRx at 1-877-388-WVRX (9879) email WVRx staff at wvrinfo@wvr.org or visit online at www.wvr.org

There is a \$30 processing fee (applies for the year for all drugs prescribed).

WVDA Announces Second Round of Specialty Crop Block Grants for 2009

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) is inviting groups or individuals with ideas for improving the competitiveness of the state's specialty crops industries to submit grant applications. The additional funding is through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Farm Bill funding which differs from the 33 statewide awards made last month by the WVDA. Deadline for submission is June 22.

Specialty crops are defined as fruits and vegetables, dried fruits, tree nuts, nursery crops, floriculture, herbs, honey, maple syrup, mushrooms and Christmas trees. Both fresh and processed specialty crops are included.

The types of eligible projects have been intentionally left open-ended to encourage creative projects, but applications should focus on one or more of the following categories: Promotion/marketing, research, education/training, innovation/efficiency of facilities and equipment.

USDA rules prohibit grants for projects that directly benefit or provide profit to a single company or individual. Research projects must make results public, or provide for some type of public education component to the project.

Examples of eligible expenses include: promotional materials, developing associations to promote specialty crops, creating a cooperative to increase purchasing power, consumer education and increased consumption marketing campaigns (i.e. buy local initiative), product developments of specialty crops, improved planting techniques to increase yield, and innovative fencing used to protect crops.

Grant money cannot be used for construction projects, establishing secondary grant pools, land acquisitions, taxes, vehicle registration, overhead expenses or indirect costs, legal costs, contingency funds, proposal preparation, insurance, contractual project administration, costs that have or will be paid by another entity, salaries, any expenses incurred prior to the award date of this grant, or political or lobbying activities. Submission of a proposal does not guarantee funding.

Proposal packets with program information and application instructions can be downloaded at www.wvagriculture.org. For more information, contact Melissa Hudson at 304-558-2210 or Cindy Martel at 304-541-9756.