

State FFA convention will be virtual

Due to Covid-19, Kentucky FFA decided to offer FFA members a “virtual experience” this year in lieu of a traditional convention, according to Sheldon McKinney, the Kentucky FFA Foundation’s executive director.

“The concept of the convention has always been to recognize and reward members and give them leadership development,” McKinney said. “The state FFA officers chose a theme for the convention months ago called, ‘You are Here.’ It’s a little ironic now but so very true. Though we aren’t ‘here’ together we are all ‘here’ in our homes and communities.”

During the regional competition in March, FFA members competed virtually via Zoom for speech contests and interviews and that will continue, McKinney said.

“We have judged all students’ proficiencies remotely and we are even planning to conduct state Star and state officer interviews virtually,” she said.

Matthew Anderson, one of three ag teachers and an advisor at the FFA at Boyle County High School, said of the

SEE **STATE**, PAGE 10



Photo by Lynn Pruett

A John Deere 8400-3 and Kelly Diamond Harrow 46 after discing 60 acres for soybeans along the Salt River in Mercer County.

COVID-19: Corn and soybean associations respond

As planting season looms, grain and soybean farmers prepare for a higher level of market uncertainty due to the unknown future effects of the novel coronavirus. Fred Sipes, a producer director with the Kentucky Soybean Association, and Neil Caskey, communications director of the National Corn Growers Association, describe strategies for navigating through this new threat.

“We are pleased to see the administrations, both federal and state, recognize that agriculture is ‘essential infrastructure’ during the crisis and always. While we don’t necessarily want or need people to ‘thank a farmer,’ because we chose this profession, we sure do want to be able to go about the business of providing food, feed, fuel, and fiber to our neighbors and beyond,” Sipes, of Ekron, said. “This includes keeping the livestock sale barns open and lifting restrictions on the truckers hauling livestock and inputs.”

KSA encourages all farmers to follow the guidelines for limiting social contact. Sipes said, “Keep in mind farmers have been practicing biosecurity for years.”

Some pro-active changes have been put in place, such as

being able to call ahead to retail stores and receive products in the parking lot.

“Nutrien Ag is delivering more of our inputs to the farm to keep foot traffic out of their stores,” Sipes said.

In the bigger picture, when the national board meetings and in-person visits with Kentucky senators and congressmen were cancelled in Washington, DC this month, the KSA “immediately arranged conference calls to discuss our concerns during the crisis. If something to do with agriculture comes up in Congress, we can expect phone calls or texts directly from them to see what we think of the issue and the proposed solutions,” Sipes said.

As to the market effect of COVID-19, Sipes said, “We have been in a depressed marketplace for soybeans for several years now. Part of that issue is that soybean farmers are really good at growing soybeans, resulting in a surplus so that we depend heavily on the export market.”

He cited the trade negotiations with China and the decline

SEE **FARMERS**, PAGE 3

HAND SANITIZER: Corn-ethanol partnership helps farmers’ markets. **2**

INSIDE

EDITORIAL	4	CLASSIFIEDS	14
OPINION	5		

Corn-ethanol partnership helps Kentucky Proud farmers' markets

Commonwealth Agri-Energy has diverted their 200-proof ethanol product to fill the need for hand and surface sanitizer, and an idea formed to provide the product to Kentucky's many farmers' markets and livestock sale barns as they begin to open back up to the public.

KyCorn and Commonwealth Agri-Energy are donating bottles of hand sanitizer to these venues across the commonwealth to help them keep their operations as clean as they can for customer safety. Since the hand sanitizer is made in Kentucky (Hopkinsville) with Kentucky corn, it will bear the "Kentucky Proud" label.

KyCorn Executive Director Laura Knoth worked with Commonwealth Agri-Energy, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and Casey Jones Distillery to get the product packaged and labeled. KyCorn staff has been delivering the half-gallon jugs of sanitizer and spray bottles.

"We're proud of the hard work Mick and the Commonwealth team has put in to meet the growing demand of hand

sanitizer," Knoth said. "Now more than ever, it's important to stay connected and take care of one another, so I'm excited to see the Kentucky Proud hand sanitizer find new ways to meet the needs of Kentuckians. One of our top priorities for the new initiative is to get the hand sanitizer to the ag businesses that need it in order to stay safe while they do business. KyCorn is proud to be a partner – it's agriculture helping agriculture through the Kentucky Proud initiative and I'm thankful that our plant is using Kentucky-grown corn to provide value across the state."



KyCorn and Commonwealth Agri-Energy worked with Casey Jones Distillery to get bottles of hand sanitizer out in the commonwealth. Pictured are Casey Jones Distillery owners AJ and Peg Hayes with (center) Commonwealth Agri-Energy General Manager Mick Henderson and KyCorn Executive Director Laura Knoth.

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Farmers constantly adjusting to the new norm amid virus

FROM PAGE 1

of China’s hog population due to African Swine Fever as other causes.

Caskey of NCGA said of the effect of the coronavirus on the corn market “Demand for ethanol took an immediate hit as consumers began to stay home in isolation and off the road. By some estimates, corn used for ethanol utilization could decline by up to 330 million bushels over the next 90 days.”

“Obviously the longer the policies require us to shelter-in-place, the greater the impact on corn demand. On the bright side, input suppliers are reporting no known issues in availability of product as farmers head back into their fields for planting,” Caskey said.

Services for spraying are unlikely to be less available due to social distancing or transportation restrictions. Caskey

cited an interview with Mike Frank, CEO of Nutrien Ag, (ncga.com/stay-informed/media/podcast) as a good source for new protocols to insure that farmers can be in the field during the entire growing season.

The best advice Caskey gives is, “First and foremost stay healthy. Beyond that, focus on the things you can control in your operation. Between the weather, the markets, and now a pandemic, farming is full of things you can’t control. However, the management practices you employ on your farm are completely within your control. Focus there.”

The NCGA has formed a task force to address the needs of corn growers during this time. Farmers are invited to share concerns with the task force by emailing them at Coronavirusinput@NCGA.com.



Photo by Jim Mansfield

A corn planter in Garrard County prepped for planting the 2020 crop.

NCGA has also created a list of resources to manage COVID-19: ncga.com/stay-informed/media/in-the-news/article/2020/03/steps-on-the-farm-to-manage-covid-19.

“While it’s impossible to predict how

this will unfold over the coming months,” Caskey said, “it’s safe to assume we’re looking at another tough year.”

By Lynn Pruett
Field Reporter

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Focusing on pricing investigations



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**Larry
Schnell**

To help bring that about, LMA is focusing on the investigations of the differential between the wholesale price of beef and the price that cattle feeders are receiving for their cattle.

To say times are tough in cattle country would be an understatement. Livestock Marketing Association member livestock auction owners and their producer customers are speaking up with significant concerns about volatility, the futures market, and especially, livestock producers not getting their fair share of the beef dollar. While COVID-19 and the Holcomb, Kan. packing plant fire last August are bringing these issues further to the forefront, they are illustrations of long-standing concerns regarding pricing and competition.

Livestock auction markets are an integral part of the process of price discovery, but our value is totally dependent on the success and profitability of the cow-calf producer, and the cattle feeder.

LMA supports the ongoing efforts by livestock organizations and individuals to bring about a pricing mechanism that would better serve the cattle feeder, and thereby the cattle producer. Our businesses are rooted in achieving competitive prices for cattle producers, and we want to see this occur throughout the beef supply chain.

To help bring that about, LMA is focusing on the investigations of the differential between the wholesale price of beef and the price that cattle feeders are receiving for their cattle. Beyond encouraging these investigations, LMA is conducting independent research and having additional discussions to pinpoint specific areas of concern for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Department of Justice, and hopefully, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. This includes looking at futures market issues in addition to issues with fed cattle pricing.

The cattle industry needs answers regarding what is behind the dramatic spread between live cattle and boxed beef prices, and these investigations are critical in answering these questions. Our goal is long-term solutions that will address problems within finished cattle marketing, and a pricing mechanism that results in profitability for all segments of the industry.

These are uncertain times, and this is a difficult task. But with every challenge also comes opportunity. Consumer attention is on the fundamentals of life – and ready access to high-quality protein is one of them. Congresspeople are hearing from their cattle country constituents, and they want to help.

At LMA, we are dedicated to working with our legislative and industry allies for the betterment of the livestock industry and our consumer customers. If we focus on this, and we are successful, we'll be setting up cattle producers to enjoy the good times and weather the tough ones for generations to come.

LARRY SCHNELL is vice president of Livestock Marketing Association.

We're in it together

We are all aware of the strange and difficult times we are in, and please know that all your Kentucky farm groups are working together and doing what we can to try to help our farmers.

While a very small gesture, I was excited to help deliver to farmers' markets and livestock sale barns the hand and surface sanitizer we provided with the support of Commonwealth Agri-Energy. The ability for businesses to adapt is truly amazing, and we could not have accomplished this without Casey Jones Distillery's help as well. Both Commonwealth and many of Kentucky's distilleries made modifications to serve this need, and we hope to involve other craft distillers in the project. Kentucky corn is being diverted to sanitizers, and we hope that business will continue. We're always looking for new uses of our crops.

On another small positive note, the most recent grain price report showed increases in corn, bean, and wheat prices thanks to stronger export sales, but we are concerned about the recent freeze on our wheat, rye and barley crops. We are monitoring that closely with the University of Kentucky Grain and Forage Center of Excellence team's help.

Despite this weather concern, we are happy to be moving forward with the rye for grain research project with the University of Kentucky, supported by the Kentucky Small Grain Growers, American Farmland Trust, the Dendri Fund, and the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund. The purpose of the project is to determine how best to grow rye that will satisfy the need of our Kentucky distillers. A limited number of farmers will be selected in this first project year for this intensive research program.

I'm also pleased to announce the new "Don Halcomb Memorial Scholarships for Community Leadership through Agriculture" that is being funded by Walnut Grove Farms, their friends, and the Kentucky Small Grain Growers. The inaugural scholarship steering committee wanted to create a program that reflected Don's values on leadership and education. Two \$1,000 awards – one for a graduating high school student and one for a current undergrad or graduate student – will be given for the 2020-2021 school year, and the awards are open to any Kentucky student pursuing a degree in agriculture or re-

SEE **WE'RE**, PAGE 13



**KY CORN AND
SMALL GRAIN
GROWERS
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR**

**Laura
Knoth**

The ability for businesses to adapt is truly amazing, and we could not have accomplished this without Casey Jones Distillery's help as well.

The Farmer's Pride

- Sharon Burton**Publishersnburton@duo-county.com
- Mindy Yarberry**General Managerpride316@duo-county.com
- Toni Humphress**Sales and Marketingtoni@farmlandpub.com
- National Sales Rep**J.L. Farmakiswww.jlfarmakis.com...203-834-8832
- Diana Withers**Circulationcirculation@farmlandpub.com

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E-mail: pride316@duo-county.com
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Binoculars are needed



MARKET WATCH

Dewey Strickler

What would knock the bears out of their comfort zone is China coming off the bench with an unexpected purchase.

Corn values have fallen so low that binoculars are needed to see the top of the well! The bears are teeming with confidence as corn and crude oil are near historic lows, the ethanol industry is in shambles because of the nationwide shut-down with many plants closing. Ethanol comprises 38 percent of corn usage.

In other developments, planting is progressing ahead of schedule at 27 percent complete versus the average of 20 percent. Export inspections last week were 42.4 million bushels and must average 47 million bushels on a weekly basis to reach USDA's projection of 1.725 billion bushels.

Looking ahead, while it looks gloom and doom for corn, we have just entered the growing season and uncertainties are ahead. What would knock the bears out of their comfort zone is China coming off the bench with an unexpected purchase.

Recently, China made three purchases of soybeans, but it barely moved the needle of the market. With Brazil's harvest complete and available for export, additional positive input will be needed to push values higher. Right now, very little is available with the market focused on the coronavirus and re-opening of the economy.

Meanwhile, planting has begun with progress running ahead of schedule at 8 percent complete compared to the average of 4 percent. Export inspections last week were 20.4 million bushels and must average 30.2 million bushels each week to reach USDA's target of 1.775 billion bushels. For now, the question facing soybeans is with the ethanol industry being devastated, will more acres be planted in soybeans?

Wheat was lower this week but, overall, it is underpinned from Russia suspending exports next month, dryness in Ukraine, and declining conditions of the winter crop in the U.S. Last week, the crop rating fell 3 points to 54 percent in good-to-excellent condition.

Spring wheat planting is underway but running behind schedule at 14 percent completed compared to the average of 29 percent. Looking at exports, inspections last week were mundane at 18.4 million bushels and must average 31.6 million bushels to achieve USDA's target of 985 million bushels. Unless they improve significantly in the next few weeks, we are on track for shipments of 915 million bushels.

DEWEY STRICKLER is president of Ag Watch Market Advisors, LLC. Email Strickler at agwatchdls@comcast.net or go online at www.agwatch.biz.

Don't chain me down

For over a month now, nearly anyone who can lift a fork has asked what the "new normal" in American agriculture will be after COVID-19 loosens its terrible grip.

Six weeks later, we now have a pretty good idea that ag's new normal will look like ag's old normal even if it takes a presidential executive order to ensure it.

That should give everyone – farmers, ranchers, and eaters – deep concern. If no food supply chain is strong enough to withstand COVID-19 now, what will happen when climate change hammers farms and ranches in the next decade or two or, God forbid, a war or another pandemic strikes sooner?

A quick look at one of the most vulnerable chains, pork, spotlights its weakest links and shows how it can be shortened – and backstopped – by more local production.

According to Successful Farming magazine's late 2019 Pork Powerhouses, 40 national and international companies now own 4,290,700 sows, or mama hogs, in the U.S. Those 40 operations, in fact, own two out of every three sows in America today, the magazine reported.

Equally remarkable, if each of those sows, on average, delivers 25 baby pigs this year (intensely managed sows will "farrow" 30-plus piglets per year), these 40 powerhouses will produce and control 107.5 million hogs.

That, too, is roughly two-thirds of the 150 million or so hogs that will be born, raised, and slaughtered in the U.S. this year. Interestingly, the other one-third of the hogs the Fab 40 don't have a direct hand in nearly equals the amount of pork exported by the U.S. to the rest of the world.

That effectively means the entire domestic pork market is controlled by 40 companies, 15 of which are either owned outright or integrated with a global meatpacker.

It also means that when American taxpayers give their money to "live-stock farmers" during this ongoing pandemic, most will go to a handful of industrial meatpackers who, in fact, are today's "hog farmers."

But that's not the only price Americans will pay. Last week, our highly efficient, industrialized system snapped after the virus landed in its workplace.

The collapse was so concerning the White House stepped in with its muscle and our money. Again.

It was all so predictable.

Just ask Mike Callicrate, a Kansas rancher who raises, slaughters, packages, and sells his own beef and other farmers' local lamb, poultry, pork, and cheese through Ranch Foods Direct, his company. He foresaw the rise of industrial meatpackers and predicted the nation would pay for its growing, reckless devotion to cheap, unhealthy industrial food.

He's also spent the last 40 years fighting meatpackers' rising market power. As a result, he has the battle scars and dwindling bank account to prove it.

But those battles convinced Callicrate that government should be far more proactive in underwriting the rebirth of local agriculture and not reactive in sweeping up the pieces of our increasingly broken food system.

"If our nation really wants to protect our farmers, ranchers, and food workers while making sure we feed every American," Callicrate says in an April 28 telephone interview, "Congress should write a law that requires all government agencies to buy their food locally. Local ranchers, local farmers, local meatpackers, local markets, local restaurants."

Callicrate estimates those purchases – by schools, hospitals, the military, federal and local food assistance programs, and other public agencies – could total as much as 20 percent of domestic production.

"But that small share would mean everything to local economies – good jobs with good benefits; new investments in local meatpackers, wholesalers, and retailers; better housing; better tax bases; better schools; better food; better everything."

The cost?

"We still don't know what this pandemic will cost, but we do know it's trillions," says the rancher. "The next one will cost us even more – maybe everything – and there's no fixing anything after that."

ALAN GUEBERT publishes a weekly column Farm and Food File through the U.S. and Canada. Past columns, events and contact information are posted at farmandfoodfile.com. Contact Alan Guebert by email at agcomm@farmandfoodfile.com.



FOOD & FARM FILE

Alan Guebert

The collapse was so concerning the White House stepped in with its muscle and our money. Again.

Kentucky's poultry industry continues decades of growth



**KENTUCKY
POULTRY
FEDERATION
PRESIDENT**

**Dan
Flanagan**

On behalf of the Kentucky Poultry Federation and its members, we would like to thank *The Farmer's Pride* for allowing us an opportunity to share an update on Kentucky's poultry industry.

The Kentucky Poultry Federation was organized in 1957 as a civic and educational, non-profit corporation. The federation exists for the purpose of fostering, promoting, and encouraging the improvement of production and marketing of all types of poultry, poultry products, eggs, and egg products in Kentucky.

The Kentucky Egg Council coordinates all promotional activities of eggs or egg products, and the Federation acts as the industry liaison with several state and national government entities.

As the Kentucky Poultry Federation became a reality in the 1950s, a goal was set to help local farmers market their products. By coming together as a group of Kentucky farmers raising poultry, their main emphasis was to increase their marketing impact while raising awareness about Kentucky raised products. As we look at that same mindset 60 years later, the terms of Kentucky Proud and Buy Local are

prevalent today. The average poultry farm in Kentucky is owned by a farm family and consists of less than five poultry houses. Additionally, over 50 percent of poultry farmers are or were tobacco farmers. Many started raising poultry to diversify their revenue due to their concerns about tobacco's future. With the help of favorable loans and assistance from Kentucky agricultural finance, we have started to see a trend of younger farmers buying and building poultry houses.

Kentucky's poultry industry has a large agriculture and economic investment in facilities statewide. Currently in Kentucky there are over 900 poultry farms, five broiler hatcheries, two primary breeder hatcheries, four processing plants, several feed mills and layer complexes. Kentucky also raises birds and eggs that are sold to processors in neighboring state. Approximately 20 percent of our products are sold to overseas markets.

Looking closer to home, poultry and eggs are the number one agricultural commodity in Kentucky. Chicken, eggs and turkey are an integral part of the state's economy. Annually, Kentucky poultry farmers receive over \$1.2 bil-

lion for the sale of their products. This accounts for just over 20 percent of Kentucky's entire agricultural economy. Our four integrators harvest approximately five million birds per week.

Kentucky also produces 1.2 billion eggs each year, and the turkey growers raise around one million turkeys each year.

As our industry grows, so do other agricultural commodities. We directly impact corn and soybean farmers by utilizing 20 percent of Kentucky grown corn. Another economic driver of the poultry industry is our employment numbers. We directly employ over 7,000 employees, hundreds of subcontractors and USDA inspectors.

As we continue to reach our mission, we use a variety of platforms to educate our consumers. If you have not liked us on Facebook, please do so. We also have excellent educational resources on our website at www.kypoultry.org/ to help parents and families during this global pandemic.

DAN FLANAGAN is president of Kentucky Poultry Federation.

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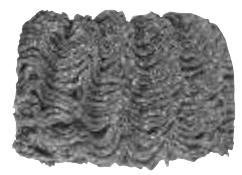
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Avoiding botulism in round baled silage this spring



With baleage, moisture is everything. A recent cooperative research project between several agents, farmers and specialists found that moisture content is the biggest factor in getting good fermentation. While moisture is only one factor of many, it is the major determinant of the risk of clostridial fermentation and botulism.

Briefly, good baleage should be cut at an early stage

of maturity (for high fermentable carbohydrates), baled tightly at 40 to 60 percent moisture, wrapped with at least six layers of UV-resistant stretch wrap plastic, and kept anaerobic (by plugging any holes) until feeding. All of these are important, but you can do all of them right and still have problems if the moisture is wrong.

The moisture range for baleage is from 40 to 60 percent, and fermentation and pH drop are better in the wetter half of that range. Baling too wet is worse than baling too dry because baleage above 70 percent moisture greatly increases the risk of secondary fermentation by clostridial bacteria, and sometimes botulism.

If moisture content is everything, how do you know if fresh cut forage has wilted enough to make good baleage?

Experience and research tell us that in spring it may take a day or more to reach 60 percent moisture and in summer, less than a day. Fresh forage is 80 percent moisture content, and actually dries pretty rapidly down to 60 to 65 percent after cutting if there is sun and some breeze. Estimating moisture in spring cuttings is a challenge, since rainy, overcast days are more frequent. In cool, overcast weather, it may take two or three days to reach 60 percent moisture.

For spring harvests, leave the swath wide for maximum solar radiation interception. Tedding after a few hours or the next day can help to open up the swath for more air penetration. Given good sun, spring cuttings are usually ready for baleage the next day after dew dries. If you are in doubt, it would be a good idea to es-

timate moisture using one of the methods below. Going to the trouble of measuring moisture a few times will help you develop a sense of how fast forage is drying.

Estimating moisture content (MC) in the forage before baling can be done, but no method is both fast and accurate. Windrow moisture can be estimated by feel (the dishrag or twist test). In this method, take a handful of forage and wring it out or twist it as you would with a dishrag. If moisture can be expressed from the forage, it is generally above 65 percent moisture.

Pre-baling moisture can be determined by drying a chopped sample in a portable forced air dryer (Koster is a common brand). A microwave can also be used to dry the sample. These methods are accurate but slow. See UK publication AGR-235, Baleage: Frequently asked questions for more information on estimate

SEE **AVOIDING**, PAGE 9

The Forage Doctor

By Jimmy Henning

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Avoiding botulism

FROM PAGE 8

moisture content using a microwave oven.

Electronic testers are available to estimate moisture in both the windrow and the bale. Windrow testers have proven highly variable because the methodology is hard to compress loose forage uniformly for testing by inserting the probe. If forage is already baled, probe-type moisture testers are now available that can work at the elevated levels used for baleage. Bale probes are generally more accurate than windrow testers.

Remember that baling a little on the dry side is less likely to lead to clostridial fermentation. Just be sure to use at least six layers of plastic and repair any holes, especially in the first month of storage when most fermentation occurs.

From The Forage Doctor

Jimmy Henning

We recommend testing baleage for forage quality and for the quality of fermentation at a certified, commercial laboratory. These tests are typically separate analyses and will cost about \$50 per sample. At the very least, estimate bale moisture with one of the commercial probe-type moisture testers (Agratronix is one brand). If these probes indicate you are 65 percent moisture content or less, there is little damage of clostridial fermentation. Remember to patch any holes made with a probe or from other causes.

Getting the moisture right in spring cut baleage is a challenge, but is certainly doable. It may require moisture testing in a forced air dryer or microwave, but getting the moisture right is the single biggest factor in preventing clostridial fermentation and botulism.

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State FFA convention won't be held in person this year

FROM PAGE 1

changes, "Preparation is much the same, except it is being performed through Google Hangouts. Students present a practice event and we provide a critique. In a typical year, we practice three times a week, from 3:15-5. Now we are able to practice at 7:30 a.m. or p.m., whenever it suits our schedules."

The shift from real time to virtual presentation offers a new challenge, particularly if access to reliable internet is unavailable to students at home.

"From our experience in the regional competitions," Anderson said, "we had a young man participating in a speech contest who was forced to call in to compete, in lieu of using the video, due to a slow broadband speed. There are points allotted for stage presence, which obviously can't be scored if phoning is the only option."

Technological savvy may be a new component students will have to master in order to be competitive. "The state level brings with it higher stakes as these teams will be advancing to a national competition."

"Technology issues may alter the outcome to some degree," Anderson said. But overall, he said, "The skills studied and learned are invaluable to the students who participate. In an unprecedented time, we are making the best out of a difficult situation and trying to provide some options for the students."

Students will still be receiving prize money and scholarships.

"We still need sponsorships to make it all happen,"



A virtual convention will look a lot different than being in person at the convention – like changing of the guard, as in years past.

McKinney said. "Our convention sponsors are going to be recognized throughout the convention and without their support we couldn't pull off a top notch virtual event."

McKinney said the convention format is changing.

"Our hosts will still be Kentucky FFA state officers, but it won't be live. It's all going to be pre-recorded and a produced event will air on all social channels over the course of three nights. We are discussing

now what stays and what goes in order for everyone to be engaged throughout the whole event," McKinney said. The new dates are June 30-July 2.

"Contests for students will be scheduled for about a month prior to the convention," McKinney said. "We sure will miss gathering everyone in Lexington!"

By Lynn Pruett
Field Reporter

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Tobacco grower named in lawsuit against Burley Co-op

A group of tobacco farmers who filed a lawsuit in Lexington aimed at dissolving the Burley Tobacco Growers Cooperative is also suing a Metcalfe County tobacco farmer.

The amended lawsuit, filed by McBrayer PLLC in Lexington, attempts to stop activity by a group of grower members to dissolve the co-op through a membership vote and instead represent them in a class action lawsuit.

The lawsuit, filed by Haynes Properties, LLC, Mitch and Scott Haynes DBA Alvin Haynes and Sons and S and GF Management, LLC, was originally filed against the co-op but was amended last week to add tobacco farmer Greg Craddock "on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated" as a defendant.

Craddock is part of a group of producers who started working together in 2019 to force the cooperative to hold a meeting of its members. They have hired legal counsel and called for a special called meeting and a vote to dissolve the cooperative.

The Haynes lawsuit names Craddock "on behalf of himself and the other members of BTGCA at any time and during the burley tobacco crop years 2016-2020..."

While both producer groups want to force the cooperative board to dissolve the organization, they have taken very different routes to achieve their goal.

Craddock, co-op board member Roger Quarles and others have been working with Nathan Billings, of Billings Law Firm in Lexington, to force the cooperative to hold a membership meeting so members could vote to dissolve the organization. Craddock is listed as a client

of the Billings Law Firm in documents sent to the burley co-op requesting information about its operations.

The group wants to distribute the co-op's assets, around \$33 million, to grower members in Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri and West Virginia who produced tobacco from 2016-20.

A meeting was originally scheduled in April but was cancelled after restrictions due to the coronavirus.

The Haynes group filed the lawsuit on Jan. 27 and seeks to represent growers who were cooperative members during crop years 2015 through 2019 as a class action lawsuit.

While both actions attempt to dissolve the co-op, the main issue rests in who would receive any payout from the co-op and who is identified as a qualifying board member.

The cooperative has changed the rules in recent years in how a producer qualifies as a member and its most recent rules required producers to contact the co-op. Its membership list has grown since Craddock's group held meetings across the state notifying growers of the process needed to be recognized as a member. Instead, the lawsuit seeks direction from the court in determining the proper distribution of assets to members.

In addition to seeking dissolution of the co-op, the lawsuit seeks damages and alleges that the cooperative has acted illegally and in a manner that is not in the best interest of members. It accuses the co-op of wasting its assets and not serving an effective purpose. The suit seeks damages in an amount to be determined by trial.

A temporary injunction has been issued that puts on hold a plan approved by the cooperative to distribute \$30 million over several years but keeps the co-op open. The plan, adopted by the cooperative board on Feb. 5, would retain \$3.5 million in assets for future operations. It would modify the purpose of the cooperative to include "advocacy for tobacco growers, support research, education, programs and services to tobacco growers directly and in aid of their transition to other types of farming as the market for tobacco decreases."

The injunction was agreed upon by the cooperative and stops any distribution of funds to members and stops the purchase by the co-op of any tobacco. A hearing is scheduled for today.

The Burley Co-op is represented by Sturgill, Turner, Barker and Maloney PLLC in Lexington. Dinsmore and Shohl LLP in Louisville were hired by an insurance company that provides errors and omissions coverage to represent the Co-op.

By Sharon Burton
snburton@farmlandpub.com

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National Corn analysis shows \$50 per acre revenue decline for corn due to virus

Analysis released by the National Corn Growers Association showed cash corn prices have declined by 16 percent on average, with several regions experiencing declines of more than 20 percent, since March 1 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis projects a \$50 per acre revenue decline for the 2019 corn crop.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is being felt across all sectors of our economy,” said NCGA President Kevin Ross. “This analysis clearly illustrates its impact on corn growers and will be beneficial as we work to ensure they have the resources needed to navigate these very difficult times.”

NCGA commissioned the economic analysis, conducted by Dr. Gary Schnitkey of the University of Illinois, as part of the organization's efforts to better understand the economic impact of the global pandemic on the corn industry and work to create solutions to help corn farmers and their customers recover from the financial impacts of this crisis.

The analysis was based on cash corn

prices as of mid-April and estimated losses would likely increase through the rest of the marketing year. Further analysis is already under way for the 2020 crop year, with losses anticipated to be higher than those in 2019.

“Corn will be one of the most impacted crops as its two largest uses - livestock feed and ethanol - are under pressure. Impacts of reduced livestock demand are just beginning to come to bear in the market, as livestock processing plants are beginning to be disrupted,” wrote Schnitkey.

An average Price Loss Coverage Program payment of \$17 per base is projected for corn which would fall short of covering 2019 revenue losses, underscoring the need for the assistance provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program.

NCGA will continue to work closely with members of Congress and federal agencies on ways to mitigate the pandemic's impact and help farmers recover. You can learn more about these efforts at ncga.com/covid-19.

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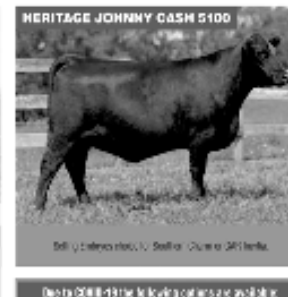
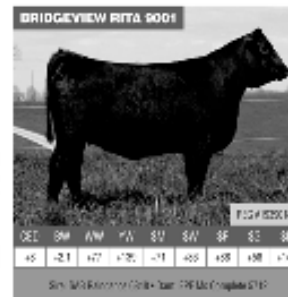
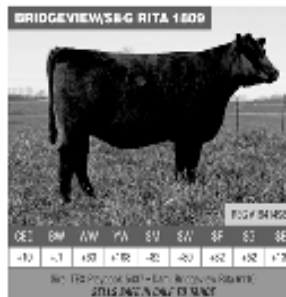
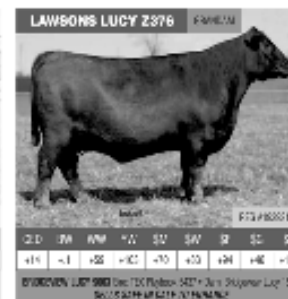
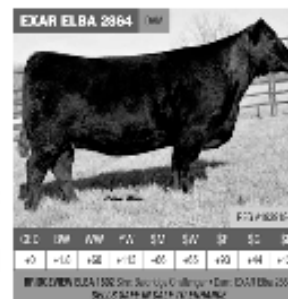
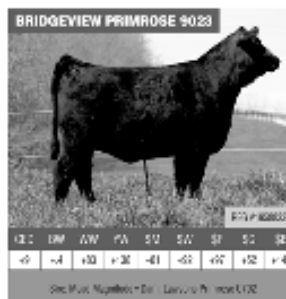
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Trump orders meat processing plants to remain open

President Trump signed an executive order last week compelling meat processing plants to remain open as processors continued to deal with employees in those plants becoming ill from COVID-19.

At least 20 meatpacking plants have closed in recent weeks due to outbreaks from the coronavirus, according to The Washington Post. A union organization official said at least 17 employees have died from the virus.

"The food supply chain is breaking," John H. Tyson, chairman of Tyson's board, wrote in a full-page newspaper ad published Sunday in The Post, the New York Times and the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

"We have a responsibility to feed our country," the ad said. "It is as essential as health care. This is a challenge that should not be ignored. Our plants must remain operational so that we can supply food to our families in America."

Smithfield Foods issued a press release in support of Trump's order, stating the company believes the order will

"provide priority assistance in securing an ongoing supply of critical PPE, as well as aid the company in securing broader COVID-19 testing for its employees."

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association also issued a release in support of the executive order.

"While there are currently no widespread shortages of beef, we are seeing supply chain disruptions because of plant closures and reductions in the processing speed at many, if not most, beef processing plants in the United States," stated NCBA CEO Colin Woodall.

The National Pork Producers Council also voiced support for Trump's decision to invoke the Defense Production Act through the executive order.

"We must safely stabilize the current plant capacity challenge and overcome other major hurdles facing the nation's pork production system, one that employs 550,000 workers and generates \$23 billion in personal income across rural America. Hog values have plummeted to virtually zero and hog farmers

are facing liquidation of their farms and other assets without immediate relief, including expanded financial aid without

payment limitations," said Howard "A.V." Roth, NPPC president and a producer from Wauzeka, Wisc.

We're in it together

FROM PAGE 4

lated field from any accredited college, university or trade school. Information on the scholarship can be found at www.kysmallgrains.org. The application deadline is June 15.

It's exciting to offer this additional scholarship program. We just notified the recipients of the Kentucky Corn Growers Scholarships, a program in its ninth year. Kentucky's corn farmers have to date contributed and awarded \$46,000 to students of member families. I am so proud to work for two organizations of farmers that care so much about the future of young people in their industry.

Lastly, there are many resources available for farmers and small business owners trying to navigate our current situation. We have a list of those resources from many organizations listed on our web sites: kycorn.org or www.kysmallgrains.org. My colleagues and I know how the stress of financial uncertainty can affect anyone's wellbeing. If you need assistance in any way or have ideas on how we can be of better help, please do not hesitate to contact me or your local board member.

LAURA KNOTH is Kentucky Corn and Kentucky Small Grains executive director.



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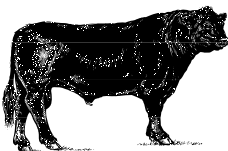
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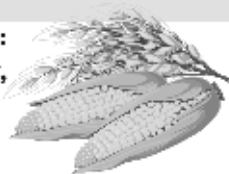
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- Extensive, ongoing input on COVID-19 GAP policies & educational tools
- Direct communication with companies on grower concerns & needs
- Engaged with congressional delegation on ever-changing tobacco landscape
- Working with Council for Burley Tobacco, N.C. growers to seek shared solutions on shared issues

YOUR ADVOCATE IN EDUCATING FOR THE FUTURE

BTGCA has awarded \$3,000 scholarships for the 2020-21 school year to 10 individuals attending community and technical colleges, private colleges, two-year colleges, seminaries, trade schools, or public universities.

If you know any of the recipients, congratulate them. If you don’t know them, you should meet them. They’re amazing.

Kiley Birge

Summer Shade, KY
Major: Agriculture/Business Management

Gracie Brent

Turners Station, KY
Major: Health Sciences

Lydia Gosney

Falmouth, KY
Major: Soil Science/Animal Science

Cally Harlin

Gamaliel, KY
Major: Education

Ashley Hinton

Falls of Rough, KY
Major: Agriculture Education

Whitney Bauman

Otway, OH
Major: Speech and Hearing Sciences

Rachael DeMarcus

Lexington, KY
Major: Public Health/Healthcare Management

Madison Goecke

Augusta, KY
Major: Animal Science/Pre-Vet

Ty Raines

Seaman, OH
Major: Animal Science

Magen Woods

Princeton, KY
Major: Master’s in administration