

ELECTION 2023: The role of the ag commissioner and KDA

The agriculture commissioner is a very important one in the state, and it's more than being the face of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture. The state commissioner of ag is an executive position in all 50 states that protects and promotes ag industries.

Farmland accounts for more than 50 percent of Kentucky's total land acreage, with almost 76,000 farms on 13

million acres, according to Kentucky AgriTech. Ranked sixth nationally for the most farms, Kentucky is also the top beef-producing state east of the Mississippi River. And with it being the Horse Capital of the World, sales of horses and stud fees accounted for nearly \$400 million in cash receipts in 2020.

And, not to be forgotten, 95 percent

of the world's bourbon is produced here — Kentucky is at twice the average of beverage manufacturing employment than the rest of the country.

The ag commissioner is responsible for expanding these markets among others, increasing economic development and promoting the Kentucky Proud Program. Because this person leads the KDA, the commissioner also

chairs or has a seat on a number of boards throughout the ag spectrum.

According to KDA, the department was created to promote the interest of agriculture and horticulture throughout the commonwealth, and its governed by Kentucky Revised Statutes 246-263. The department has many regulatory duties, focusing on consumer protec-

SEE THE ROLE, PAGE 3



MEET THE CANDIDATES

Who are the ag commissioner candidates?

The primary race for agriculture commissioner is swiftly approaching in May. There are four candidates for the state office — Republicans Richard Heath and Jonathan Shell, and Democrats Sierra Enlow and Mikael Malone.

Aside from a question and answer segment, each candidate also supplied a biography in order to share a little about who they are.

Candidate Malone did not respond to any attempts for contact.



Jonathan Shell

Jonathan Shell describes himself as a homegrown conservative and fifth-generation farmer who lives the values he learned on his family's farm in Garrard County. Shell Farms grows flowers, corn, pumpkins

and raises cattle.

Shell also says he's pro-life, pro-Second Amendment, pro-growth and pro-farmer. He's running for agriculture commissioner to fight for farm families and shared Kentucky values, and "against radical liberal ideas that threaten our way of life."

Shell earned a bachelor's in agriculture business from Eastern Kentucky University, and he owns State Solutions LLC and Shell Farms. He is a former state representative, after winning the seat for District 71 in 2012.

He is married to Brooke, and they have four children.

Richard Heath

Richard Heath represents the 2nd House District



in the Kentucky General Assembly, currently serving his sixth term after being elected in 2013. Born and raised in Graves County, he was active in FFA growing up. He went on to raise corn, soybean, wheat and tobacco while going to college at Murray State University. He obtained a bachelor's in agriculture education and a master's in agriculture before becoming manager of Graves County Cop-Op.

Heath is chair of the House Agriculture Committee, where he says he's earned a reputation for being a vocal advocate for farmers and producers. He also serves both the Small Business and Information Technology and the State Government committees, and is active in several caucuses, including the Western Kentucky, Tennessee Valley, Pro-Life and Kentucky Sportsman caucuses.

Heath has won several awards due to his legislative accomplishments and is particularly proud of being recognized

by the Kentucky Home Bakers and the Institute of Justice for his efforts to pass legislation allowing home bakers to sell products straight from their kitchen. He was also named Legislator of the Year by Mothers Against Drunk Driving for his work to pass a law requiring ignition interlocks for offenders.

Heath is also a small business owner, running Heath Building Materials since 2000. He's married to Ruth, who he has three daughters with, two sons-in-law, seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Sierra Enlow

Sierra Enlow says she is running for ag commissioner in order to protect

SEE WHO ARE, PAGE 3



PRIDE IN AG EDUCATION – Farmers Celebrate Earth Day Every Day 19.

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Conservation takes center stage in UK spring workshops

Kentucky farmers and landowners new to land management should save the date for one of three conservation workshops focused on managing pollution. The University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment will host the spring events in April and May. The programs are a collaboration between the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service and the Kentucky Woodland Owners Association.

"These workshops look at the big picture," said Amanda Gumbert, extension water quality specialist. "We want to help producers have vibrant production without pollution. If you are new to farming or managing land, there are some key programs and agencies you need to know about that can help you get the right information and possibly financial assistance."

Agricultural and forestry practices can contribute to sediment and nutrient loading in streams, causing unhealthy conditions. Excessive nutrients produce algal blooms and low dissolved oxygen levels, leading to fish kills. Farmers and landowners can use conservation practices to manage their land to reduce nutrient waterway pollution.

"As smaller streams flow into larger

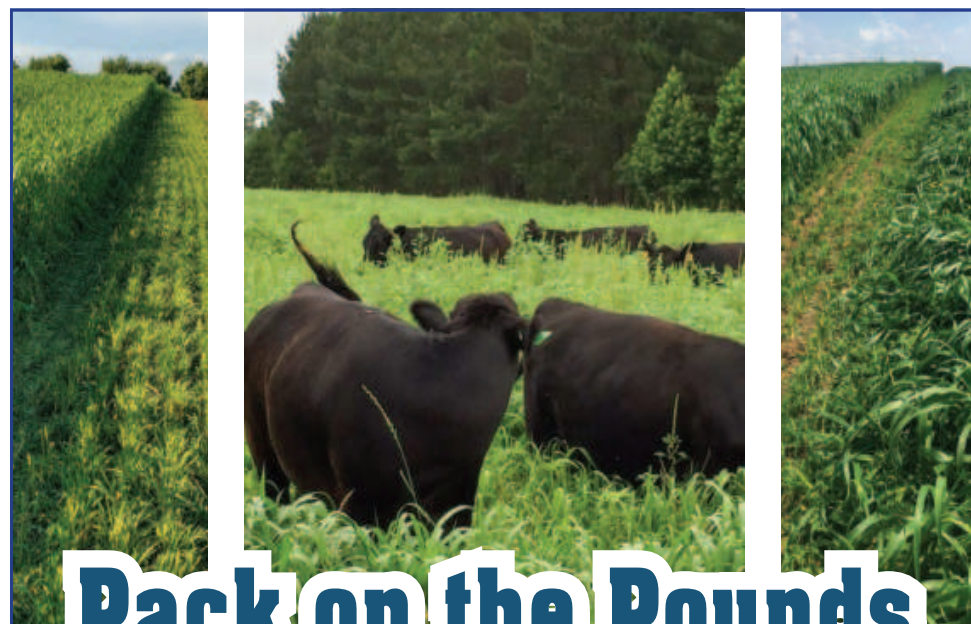
streams and rivers, the problem can magnify," Gumbert said. "Kentucky's water contributes to the Mississippi River, then that flows into the Gulf of Mexico. Excess nitrogen and phosphorus get into the Mississippi River and ultimately contribute to the Gulf's dead zone. That's the big driver."

Networking opportunities between farmers are also a workshop highlight.

"It's great when farmers talk to each other about practices they use on the farm to decrease runoff," Gumbert said. "Not only that, but we want farmers leading the conversation. At each workshop, a producer will tell their story about how they have used conservation to achieve their goals as well as reduce runoff. This is how conservation really starts."

The initial workshop is April 25 at the Campbell County Extension office, with another offering April 27 at the Warren County Extension office. The series wraps up May 23 at the Bullitt County Extension office. All workshops are all identical and occur 6-8:30 p.m. local time. To register, visit forestry.ca.uky.edu/stewardship-steps.

By Jordan Strickler
University of Kentucky



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Who are the ag commissioner candidates?

FROM PAGE 1

Kentuckians' ability to farm and to have quality lives in their rural communities. She grew up working in the tobacco patch of a fifth-generation family farm in LaRue County, where she says her family taught her the value of agriculture in Kentucky.

Because of her background, Enlow says she intrinsically knows that strong rural communities work hand-in-hand to create strong agriculture operations.

Throughout her time in LaRue County public schools, Enlow was deeply involved in extracurricular activities, such as FFA, and speech and debate, and community activities that included the 4-H Livestock Club and volunteering at the LaRue County Pork Producers Association.

She earned undergraduate degrees from the University of Kentucky in community and leadership development, and ag economics. She received her Masters of Agriculture Economics from UK, as well.

Enlow now serves as an economic consultant to communities and companies as they evaluate opportunities to grow and expand. She's worked extensively in both private and public sides of economic development to create strategies supporting expanding companies, redevelopment projects and new commercial opportunities. She also serves on the board of directors for the Kentucky Association for Economic Development.

By Bobbie Curd
Field Reporter

The role of the ag commissioner and KDA

FROM PAGE 1

tion and protecting Kentucky's livestock and poultry sectors.

The office of ag commissioner is established in the Executive Department Article of the Kentucky Constitution, section 91.

KDA consists of the office of the commissioner and offices for administrative services, ag marketing, ag policy, communications, legal services and the state veterinarian, and the Office for Consumer and Environmental Protec-

tion.

The department's broad-reaching responsibilities have the unique aspect of impacting every Kentucky citizen every day.

Qualifications for the office include candidates being at least 30 years old at the time of the election and a resident of Kentucky for at least two years.

The primary will take place May 16 with the general election on Nov. 7.

By Bobbie Curd
Field Reporter

Q&A's with the candidates start on page 7

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DAIRY STEERS: Large 3: 1 Head, 290#, 102.00; 8 Head, 320-342# 95.00-119.00; 22 Head, 406-423# 131.00-152.00; 18 Head, 450-493#, 125.00-145.00; 13 Head, 565-595#, 110.00-142.00; 2 Head, 620#, 128.00; 6 Head, 660-668#, 103.00-142.00; 4 Head, 1020#, 108.00.

HEIFERS: 2 Head, 635#, 110.00. Medium 3: 3 Head, 432#, 104.00; 2 Head, 478#, 90.00; Large 3: 6 Head, 577#, 127.00.

COWS: Breaker 75-80%: 1 Head, 1600#, 92.00, Average; 10 Head, 1160-1700#, 97.00-112.00, High. Boner 80-85%: 70 Head, 900-1015#, 75.00-99.00, Average; 41 Head, 1050-1750#, 95.00-118.00, High; 10 Head, 920-1550#, 61.00-74.00, Low; 1 Head, 1125#, 94.00, Very Low. Lean 85-90: 11 Head, 805-1165#, 58.00-92.00, Average; 2 Head, 825-930#, 76.00-77.00, High; 2 Head, 900#, 58.00-60.00, Low.

BULLS: 16 Head, 1322-2230#, 111.00-126.00, Average; 2 Head, 1800-1896#, 130.00-140.00, High; 2 Head, 1200-1645#, 94.00-99.00, Low.

FRESH/MILKING COWS: Supreme, O Stage, 1 Head, 1125#, 1875.00; Approved, O Stage, 1100-1510#, 1375.00-1800.00; Approved, O Stage, 900-988#, 850.00-975.00, Jersey.

BRED COWS: Approved, Stage T3, 1 Head, 1100#, 1425.00.

BRED HEIFERS: Approved, Stage O, 4 Head, 285#, 285.00; Approved, Stage O, 9 Head, 300-350#, 385.00-435.00, Jersey; Approved, Stage O, 8 Head, 525-580#, 460.00-585.00; Approved, Stage O, 2 Head, 500#, 500.00 Jersey; Approved, Stage O, 5 Head, 600#, 585.00; Approved, Stage O, 3 Head, 700#, 760.00, Medium, Stage O, 2 Head, 250#, 211.00, Jersey; Medium, Stage O, 2 Head, 300#, 320.00, Jersey. .

BABY BULL CALVES: 4 Head, 60-80#, 80.00-150.00; 1 Head, 60#, 170.00, Beef Cross; 5 Head, 75#, 80.00-110.00, Crossbred.

BABY HEIFER CALVES: 4 Head, 45#, 40.00; 2 Head, 45#, 30.00, Beef Cross; 2 Head, 25-45#, 20.00-50.00, Jersey; 6 Head, 50-60#, 60.00-70.00; 2 Head, 50-65#, 150.00-160.00, Beef Cross; 1 Head, 50#, 130.00, Crossbred.

For a full listing visit: <https://mymarketnews.ams.usda.gov/viewReport/2198>

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Ky. farms continue to connect consumers to value of agriculture



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Ryan
Quarles

I've traveled around the globe promoting Kentucky's agriculture and I've come to know this state is known for chicken, bourbon, and our beautiful horses.

The Kentucky Derby is just around the corner. On the first Saturday in May the world turns its collective attention to Churchill Downs and thus Kentucky.

It's more than just the fastest two minutes of sports. It's about the pageantry, the tradition, the excitement ... and let's not forget those hats.

As Kentuckians, we take pride in showing the world that we love our horses. That love is one of things the world associates with our state. I've traveled around the globe promoting Kentucky's agriculture and I've come to know this state is known for chicken, bourbon, and our beautiful horses.

The equine industry is more than just a love for many Kentuckians, it's an economic driver. The equine industry's impact on the state's economy amounts to more than \$6.5 billion each year, while also providing more than 60,000 jobs. It's hard to separate the two – the state and the equine industry – and we don't want to.

The number of horse farms that dot our landscape of rolling hills is one of our state's most endearing agritourism platforms. Thousands tour Kentucky horse farms each year looking to learn a little more about the equine industry and get a close up view of the majestic animal.

Horse farms are only one of the many options Kentucky offers for agritourism visits. From pumpkin patches and corn mazes in the fall, to floriculture farms in the spring and the summer, Christmas tree farms in the winter, and vineyards and wineries all year round, Kentucky has a variety of farm experiences to satisfy everyone. That's just naming a few. Kentucky has more than 500 destinations across the state to bring people back to the farm and give them that connection many no longer have.

Today many Kentuckians have no direct connection to farm life, even in rural areas. Agritourism gives people an opportunity to better understand the skill and hard work that go into producing the food and fiber we all enjoy. Agritourism could be thought of as the crossroads of tourism and agriculture. It presents a unique opportunity to combine aspects of the tourism and agriculture industries to provide a number of financial, educational, and

SEE KY. FARMS, PAGE 5

We can't buy our way out of climate change

In the final book of his Annals of the Former World anthology, writer John McPhee tackles the geology and geography of the still-young, barely holding-together Golden State. His title, like his writing, is brilliant: Assembling California.

Assembling, indeed, because most of California's land, water, and history are as violent and ever-changing as its San Andreas fault. For example, McPhee writes, "So radical and contemporary (are) the regional tectonics that the highest and the lowest points in the contiguous United States (are) within eighty miles of each other in California."

That wild dichotomy was on full display again this winter as much of California's worst drought in centuries drowned under "atmospheric rivers" of pounding rain. January through March, for example, Los Angeles measured 15.2 inches of rain, twice its usual amount and, incredibly, two times more than fell on Seattle over the same three months.

The storms have also brought devastation. On March 17, the San Francisco Chronicle estimated overall storm damage to the state's highways at almost \$700 million. That price guess is sure to climb.

The rain brought a different challenge to California's Central Valley, a mostly flat, 20,000 sq. mi. agricultural Garden of Eden, where water—and in the last decade, the lack of it—is critical.

Unforeseen, however, is that 2023's rains are fast filling the long-dry Tulare Lake in the valley's Kings County. Now, after the winter storms, reported the April 2 New York Times, the intensively farmed lake bed has become "a 790-square-mile bathtub" equal to "the size of four Lake Tahoes."

And that's before an expected massive snow melt—triple the historical average, another consequence of the freakish winter weather—from the nearby Sierra Nevada mountains adds to the still-expanding lake.

The return of so much water—precious lifeblood in the dry-but-bountiful Central Valley—is the perfect, if unwelcome, metaphor for where many U.S. farmers and ranchers now find themselves. The now underwater "landscape is among the most heavily engineered in the nation" and yet, one official rightly notes, "we have no control over nature..."

We never did but don't tell that to the Times which, for some reason, thinks we're still in charge: "For now, nature seems determined to win in an era of climate change..."

Nature is winning because, as farmer and philosopher Fred Kirschenmann has preached for decades, "Mother Nature always bats last."

And that's just in the far West; other parts of the U.S. face their

SEE WE, PAGE 5



FOOD
&
FARM
FILE

Alan
Guebert

In short, FDIC's unofficial backstop is now officially unofficial and, as a result, banking just got a whole lot less risky. Unofficially, that is.

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We can't buy our way out of climate change

FROM PAGE 4

own climate woes.

For example, as California soaks under too much of everything, “The abundant snow in the Rocky Mountains this year... is not enough to overcome two decades of drought that has pushed major reservoirs along the Colorado River to dangerous levels,” Camille Camlimlim Touton, commissioner of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, told the Washington Post April 3.

That means local officials representing 40 million water users in seven western states must develop a plan for “unilateral cuts to water usage” this year or face an unprecedented federal plan (announced April 11) on “how those [cuts] could be distributed if the states” can’t agree.

Whatever route is followed, trouble is certain to be a byproduct for several reasons—many tied to California’s historical grip on Colorado River water. “Under laws and court rulings dating back decades, in times of shortage,” explains the Post, “Arizona would lose its right to its water before California.”

Of course, Uncle Sam’s checkbook will accompany any federally-supported-imposed or not-allotment plan. Last year’s Inflation Reduction Act “includes \$4 billion for the Western drought that includes payments to farmers who are willing to conserve Colorado River water...”

That concept, almost as old as the river itself, will push “fallowing or making irrigation more efficient” because, Touton explained, “we want agriculture to continue in the [Colorado] basin as well as... support... all the other uses, including for cities, ecosystems and Native American tribes.”

Of course “we” want everyone “supported,” but “we”—no matter the size of our checkbook—can’t buy our way out of climate change.

But here we stand, still swinging at every pitch and believing we are winning.

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.

Ky. farms connect with consumers

FROM PAGE 4

social benefits to communities.

Agritourism also gives farmers an opportunity to generate additional income and an avenue for direct marketing to consumers while helping to keep the family farm for the next generation.

Not only is agritourism a way to bring people back to their agricultural roots, it’s also an economic force for Kentucky and the U.S. The United States Department of Agriculture reports that “Agritourism revenue grew from \$704 million in 2012 to almost \$950 million in 2017.”

It’s evident that agritourism is something that benefits all involved. Kentucky’s ability to capsulize on this endeavor is a great benefit to those

residents and non-residents alike.

To direct this effort, The Kentucky Department of Agriculture re-established the Agritourism Advisory Council, with the responsibility of determining the best ways to promote the agritourism destinations in Kentucky. The Council met in March with more meetings set to take place in 2023.

So, while the world focuses on Kentucky that first Saturday in May, it may be our time to show them we love our horses and all the other avenues our producers have to offer.

*To learn more about agritourism in Kentucky, visit the Kentucky Department of Agriculture website.

DR. RYAN QUARLES is the Kentucky Commissioner of Agriculture.

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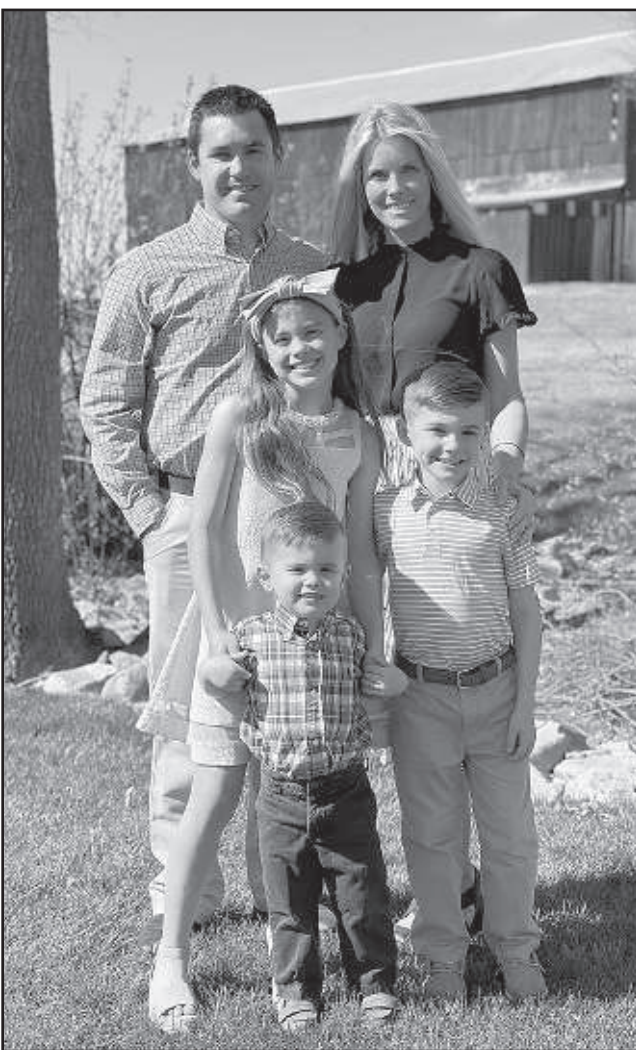
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Kentucky Pork honors outstanding swine farm family



J.W. and Lauren O'Bryan of O'Bryan Grain Farms were named the 2023 outstanding swine farm family. Picture are J.W., Lauren and their children, Avery, J and Lawson.

The Kentucky Pork Producers Association recognized J.W. and Lauren O'Bryan of O'Bryan Grain Farms as the 2023 Outstanding Swine Farm Family at its Annual Meeting in January. The Outstanding Swine Farm Family award is given to those families who proudly represent the Kentucky swine industry in their everyday lives and careers. The O'Bryan Family embodies that in every sense of the description.

J.W. and Lauren O'Bryan have been married for 13 years and have three children, Avery (10), J (8), and Lawson (2). In addition to raising their family, they manage a 10,000 sow, farrow-to-finish, swine and row crop operation in Owensboro.

As a second-generation farmer, J.W. has been involved in the swine industry and farming for as long as he can remember. Following his graduation from college in 2007, there was no doubt that he would return to work on the farm full time.

When asked why he enjoys working in agriculture, J.W. stated; "We're feeding the world. It's amazing to see how many meals our operation creates. We contribute

to society, the state economy, and reach far beyond just the people we employ here on the farm."

When asked the same question, Lauren had plenty of pride as she spoke.

"It's amazing to see how passionate J.W., Jerry (J.W.'s father), and the employees are about their animals. The care, attention, and time they put into always striving to be better and continuously growing the farm is very neat for me to watch," she said.

When asked about the meaning of being a second-generation farmer and working alongside his father Jerry, J.W. said, "I'm really lucky. Because of the work my dad put into the operation, I have the opportunity to bring in new innovation and ideas while still working towards the same goal. The generational transition is important for all businesses, but especially for agriculture."

The crops that are grown and the animals that are raised are vital in all farming operations, but as most will tell you, the most important thing to raise on a farm, is a family.

"We have an opportunity that most families do not get. Our children are exposed to things and experiences that have allowed them to learn skills that their friends do not have," said J.W. "Agriculture gives you freedom. It's not a job, it's a lifestyle. That mentality helps our family keep it in perspective."

When asked about the importance of raising their children in agriculture and the swine industry, Lauren spoke about their children's pride.

"Our kids are proud of what we do. They want to help contribute and be active on the farm. Every break, whether its spring, summer, or winter, they want to be out on the farm."

Lauren then spoke about their eldest daughter, Avery. "Every year before the kids start school, we ask them what they want to be when they grow up and every year, without fail, Avery has always said 'I want to be a pig farmer.' Each year as she grows up, I expect her to change her answer, but she never has."

Submitted by the Kentucky Pork Producers Association

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AG COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE QUESTIONS:

What are your two top priorities as ag commissioner?

JONATHAN SHELL: “My top priority as the state’s next agriculture commissioner will be to focus on increasing farm receipts while improving agriculture infrastructure across the state. As our state’s ag economy continues to grow and diversify, we embrace new technology. We must have a full inventory of where we are and what we need to sustain and increase this growth. Currently, Kentucky sends a substantial amount of our raw commodities on trucks and barges to get finished and refined out-of-state. We must focus on creating that value add here, with Kentucky agribusiness and jobs.

“Secondly, we must allow our farms to sell more direct-to-consumers prod-

ucts and enhance our local markets. Getting products from the farm gate to the food plate without barriers is essential to the growth of small, family-owned farms. Not only will this lead to higher profitability the closer we get to the fork, but we will break down any misconceptions and falsehoods about the ag industry. When a consumer is at the market or on the farm seeing their local farmer, they can witness the care and craft put into each item. It gets harder to believe lies when you’re hearing and seeing the truth with your own eyes.”

RICHARD HEATH: “Firstly, I improve net farm income for Kentucky farmers by expanding exist-

ing markets and attracting new, diversified opportunities. Secondly, work to reduce the number of expensive and unnecessary regulations under the jurisdiction of agencies which impact Kentucky agriculture — which is every agency. I will accomplish this the same way I have chaired the House Ag Committee, by getting the facts and establishing trust and honest relationships through respect and understanding. I will track the progress and work with every agency, explaining the cost and benefits of the modifications.”

SIERRA ENLOW: “I look forward to bringing new opportunities to our rural communities through increased collaboration with industry

and farmers. Kentucky’s rural communities are shrinking in terms of size and opportunity. The next commissioner will need to increase collaboration across agencies to address the issues, such as a lack of broadband and lack of good job opportunities that make it difficult for our farm kids to return home.

“Internally, the office of commissioner faces the same workforce issues as the rest of the economy — good talent is expensive and hard to recruit. Kentucky’s next commissioner of agriculture will be presented with an uphill battle to increase salaries and find the right talent to support our rural economies.”

Next question page 9



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- 1 cup whole wheat flour

1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 1/2 cups fresh blueberries

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. **Position** rack in the center of the oven. **Wash** oranges. Using a zester or fine grater, **remove** the orange zest from the rinds of both oranges and place in a mixing bowl. **Slice** oranges in half. **Squeeze** juice into a 1 cup liquid measuring cup. **Add** water if needed to make 1/2 cup juice. **Add** juice to the zest. **Add** the oil, sugar, honey, eggs and yogurt. **Mix** together with a whisk. In a separate mixing bowl, **place** the flour, baking powder, soda and salt. **Add** the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and **mix** with a wooden spoon, until just combined. Batter should be lumpy.

Add the blueberries and **fold** into batter until evenly distributed. Using a large table spoon, **scoop** the batter into a greased 12 cup muffin pan, evenly dividing the batter. **Bake** 20 minutes or until lightly browned on the tops. **Cool** in pan for 5 minutes. **Remove** to wire rack and serve.

Yield: 12 muffins. Serving size, one muffin.

Nutritional Analysis:
190 calories, 6 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 40 mg cholesterol, 240 mg sodium, 31 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 14 g sugars, 5 g protein.



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“But you, be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded!”

2 Chronicles 15:7

There has been a movement in recent years to reach out to members of the agriculture industry to talk about suicide. It's a difficult subject to approach, but it's one badly needed in a community that has seen an alarming rate of deaths. One is simply too many.

I know what it is like to take risks to build a business, but I cannot imagine what it must feel like to know that the business, family lifestyle and even the family legacy are on the line every day.

Being a successful farmer doesn't just rely on a person being smart, business savvy and hard working. Mother nature and markets that farmers can't control all play a role in the outcome of a year – whether it's a year of profit or loss.

Whether you farm or operate a newspaper, or whatever your call may be, however, it's good to remember that stuff is just stuff. The one thing most valued are the people you love. And the people you love value you. They need you.

I'm sure we have all had times when something bad happened and it turned out to be the best thing that could have happened. The loss of a job was my moment, one that hurt deeply but turned out to be a blessing.

Please don't think the future has nothing to hold for you. It may feel that way, but we don't always see what God sees. Put your trust in Him, and you will one day look back on the bad days and see how He turned your mourning into dancing!



Cheesy Broccoli Potatoes

- 5 slices turkey bacon

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 clove garlic, minced

2 tablespoons chopped chives
- Salt and pepper to taste

4 large potatoes, cubed

2 cups fresh broccoli florets

1 cup fat-free, shredded cheese

Preheat oven to 425° F. **Cook** bacon until crispy, crumble and set aside. **Spray** 9x13-inch baking dish with non-stick cooking spray. In a small bowl, **combine** olive oil, garlic, chives, salt and pepper; **stir** to blend. In a large bowl, **toss** together potatoes and broccoli. **Pour** olive oil blend over potato mixture; **stir** to coat. **Pour** into baking dish and **cover** with foil. **Bake** for 35 minutes or until potatoes are

tender; **remove** from oven. **Sprinkle** cheese and bacon on top and place back in oven until cheese melts.

Yield: 8, 1/2 cup servings.

Nutritional Analysis: 140 calories, 5 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 20 mg cholesterol, 470 mg sodium, 15 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 2 g sugar, 10 g protein.



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Recipes courtesy of Ky Proud



AG COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE QUESTIONS:

What has the current commissioner or ag dept. done that you would want to change?

SIERRA ENLOW: "Kentucky's Department of Agriculture continues to miss opportunities to collaborate across agency lines to strengthen the farm-gate impact of ag markets. Specifically, our commonwealth needs a commissioner who understands that the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development works, and how to advocate for our farmers as part of that process. Too often, the business and economic needs of farmers are overlooked or ignored. Kentucky farm business must be brought into the 21st century, and as commissioner of agriculture, I intend to do that."

"Our rural communities are at an

inflection point where we need to invest in infrastructure and present new job opportunities to these communities, specifically with a focus on supporting our ag industry. Over the last few years, I have facilitated over \$1 billion in capital investment for Kentucky through my work as an economic development consultant. I look forward to bringing this expertise to the office. Kentuckians need a commissioner of ag who knows how to represent them at the farm gate and in the boardroom."

RICHARD HEATH: "I want to compliment Commissioner Quarles and his KDA team. Like the

previous administration of Commissioner Comer, they have done a good job. I would focus on increased cross-training of KDA employees and utilize the savings in hours and dollars, as well as the experience of the KDA to enhance rural/urban understanding. Invite local and state-elected leaders and the business community to experience the importance of production ag and agribusiness in their respective communities, as well as growth opportunities for the entire state."

JONATHAN SHELL: "We in the agriculture industry have been fortunate to have some amazing commis-

sioners over the years. While 'change' is not the word I would use, I do believe there are opportunities to enhance and build on past successes. One area I want to focus our efforts on is trade. The Kentucky brand is strong both at home and around the world, giving us an opportunity to bring our products to a global audience. I would make sure our office puts an emphasis on having Kentucky at the table when it comes to negotiating or expanding trade deals. Our amazing Kentucky Proud products would thrive in markets all over the world."

Next question page 10



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AG COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE QUESTIONS:

Is there anything the commissioner/ag department has done that you would like to continue or expand?

RICHARD HEATH: "There are several, but one is the Hunger Initiative — much has been accomplished and more is needed. This program brought so many people to the table; not just the dinner table, but the partnership table. It can continue to grow and meet an important need, but also serves as foundation for many worthy initiatives focused on ag literacy and problem-solving, utilizing many talented people and resources."

SIERRA ENLOW: "Kentucky's Department of Agriculture

remains the only in-state organic certification service and the most cost-efficient certification across the country. I am committed to retaining this service within the Department of Ag and continuing to advocate for additional funding to support and expand this initiative.

"Additionally, the expansion of the state veterinarian's office through the creation of an emergency management division allows the KDA to better service rural residents. It is especially important that we continue to support the expansion of this effort."

JONATHAN SHELL: "Focusing on rural health and programs like 'Raising Hope' is important and would be a pillar of my administration. It is undeniable that the healthier we are in our ag community, the better off our state is — a healthy Kentucky is a strong Kentucky. Too often, rural farmers do not have quality access to care or treatment. Farming is hard, back-breaking work, and the folks who put their blood, sweat and tears into putting food on our tables deserve quality healthcare."

"I would hope to continue to expand

the agricultural literacy programs in hopes of getting even more young people to understand the importance of agriculture and farming. Kentucky has some of the best farmers in the world and we need a large support system with all the other secondary jobs like geneticists, engineers, marketers and more. Agriculture isn't just cows, sows and plows anymore, and we must never shy away from sharing its stories of success and opportunity."

Next question page 15

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PRIDE IN AG EDUCATION Classroom Questions

1. What is the role of the Commissioner of Agriculture?
2. Who are the candidates for Commissioner of Agriculture?
3. Choose two of the question/answer articles featuring the agriculture commissioner candidates. For each one, write about the similarities between the three candidates who responded. What are the differences in the answers from the three candidates?
4. What does Jimmy Henning mean when he quotes, "Our knowledge exceeds our obedience?" How is that true in some other areas of life?

Study shows growing economic impact by livestock auctions on local communities

A 2023 economic impact study, which updated a study from 2017, found that livestock auction markets continue to be important for the growth and vitality of rural communities. The study of an average, fixed-facility livestock auction market revealed that the market provides approximately \$2 million in total value-added dollars to its local community. This result is up from \$1 million identified in the 2017 Livestock Marketing Association (LMA) Economic Impact Report.

The case livestock auction market, located in a rural Missouri town with a population of less than 5,000, sells all classes of cattle in a weekly sale. The auction market was selected as a representative example of LMA member-livestock auctions based on type of operation, gross sales of livestock, rural location of market and population of city. LMA represents 85% of the livestock auction markets in the United States, with cattle being the largest per-head species sold through livestock auction markets annually (32 million head, per 2020 USDA P&S Annual Report data).

Key findings also revealed that the market studied provides 17 jobs, generating \$888,000 in labor income to the community's economy. Additionally, the market contributes \$447,000 in local taxes and \$108,000 in federal taxes. Of the total value-added number, contributions were also made by the on-site café, which further provides labor income, state, local and federal taxes.

"Livestock auction markets today remain critical to helping our rural communities continue to thrive," said Kristen Parman, LMA Vice President of Membership Services. They generate a competitive sale environment which results in cash for local livestock producers. That cash equals dollars spent in town and investments back into their businesses and operations."

In collaboration with LMA, the study was completed by Decision Innovation Solutions in Urbandale, Iowa.



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When knowledge exceeds obedience

The Forage Doctor

By Jimmy Henning



We know more than we do. Many a farmer has told me that. Dr. Gary Bates, forage extension professor at the University of Tennessee says it this way: "Our knowledge exceeds our obedience." Nearly every farmer knows the proper time to cut hay. Yet, most hay is not cut very early at all, for a multitude of reasons.

Hay is getting a little more attention this year for a couple of reasons. First, the fall drought across much of Kentucky meant many started feeding hay earlier. Some

producers even had to buy hay to make it to grass. Second, many went into the hay feeding season with less tonnage because fertilizer prices forced them to cut back on applications to hay ground.

Thankfully fertilizer prices, especially nitrogen, have moderated this spring, and forage fields are likely feeling a little more fertilizer love, which will help yields. The need for more yield may justify cutting hay late, because of the extra tonnage. The point of this article is to know what your feeding goals are and to plan your hay harvests accordingly. Growing cattle and active horses need earlier cut hay. Mature animals not so much.

When to cut hay is both an academic and practical decision. Academically, we

know that the optimum time to cut hay is when plants are just starting to enter their reproductive stage, early bloom for legumes and boot to early heading for grasses. High yields for our spring cuttings of grasses come when we let those fields get well into the seed head stage. But is that the best strategy? It depends on the animals to be fed. Practically speaking, you cut hay when it is not raining - pure and simple.

To help you plan your hay cutting strategy, let's take a look at the effects of maturity on performance of Holstein heifers (Table 1). This research compared the gains of 500 pound Holstein heifers fed three fescue hays cut May 3, May 14 and May 25. These dates corresponded to late boot/early head, early bloom, and early milk stage/seed

forming, respectively.

1. The heifers ate more of the early cut hay, 13 pounds/day compared to 11.7 and 8.6 for later cut hay.

2. Early cut hay had the highest digestibility and crude protein. The drop in digestibility was small between May 2 and May 14, but much larger over the next 11 day period. Crude protein dropped about the same (about 3 percentage units) for each 11 day delay.

3. Gain per day ranged from 1.39 to 0.42 lb/day for the three hays. The earliest cut hay supported the best gains, as expected. The decline in average daily gain was about the same for each 11-day delay in cutting.

SEE WHEN KNOWLEDGE, PAGE 20

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Students gather around the Kentucky Livestock Coalition table at Western Kentucky University.

KLC celebrates National Ag Week with Meat Me at the Table: Campus Edition

March 21-27 was denoted as National Ag Week, and the Kentucky Livestock Coalition took to five college campuses to promote the health benefits of animal protein in the human diet. Staff from various coalition member organizations teamed up with on-campus groups at Western Kentucky University, the University of Kentucky, and

Eastern Kentucky University on Tuesday, March 21 (National Ag Day), and others visited Morehead State and Murray State later in the month.

For many students, college is the first time they've lived on their own and been

SEE LIVESTOCK, PAGE 14

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Livestock group takes message to Kentucky campuses

FROM PAGE 13

responsible for making their own food purchasing decisions. For some, it's their first experience cooking full meals on a regular basis. That can be a big step for some, and the farmer organizations that make up the Kentucky Livestock Coalition are here to help! Playing games led to the asking (and answering) of animal protein questions, and after learning a thing or two the students left with kitchen gadgets, recipes, food safety tips and more.

One of the coalition's biggest endeavors is that of educating consumers about the benefits of protein and dispelling some of the myths that pop up from time to time. They want consumers to know that the family farms that they serve are proud to provide safe, affordable, nutritious and delicious protein from their farm gates to consumers' dinner plates.

For more information on the Kentucky Livestock Coalition, visit KyLivestockCoalition.org.



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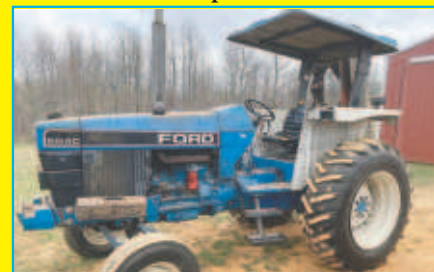
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AG COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE QUESTIONS: How do we solve the need for large animal veterinarians in the state?

JONATHAN SHELL: "This has been an issue in our state for as long as I can remember. It is no secret that it is more lucrative to practice in small animal veterinary services. I think the answer starts with embracing the telehealth medicine revolution we have seen work well for Kentucky families, and bring that to animals. Kentucky has strong vet tech programs at both Morehead and Murray State and leveraging these programs and new technology can expand the reach of a single vet and make care more accessible. Allowing vet techs trained by the traditional small animal vets to

act like nurse practitioners could help cut down on the shortages and make care much more accessible. In essence, it would allow the vet to be two places at once, helping large animals on the farm while tending to the cat in front of them."

SIERRA ENLOW: "Kentucky's need for large animal vets is a workforce pipeline issue linking student interest, availability of spots at vet schools and the transitions to the career force. It's very similar to other workforce issues we've faced in Kentucky and will require the same solution. We

need to determine why individuals fall out of the pipeline in becoming vets, and solve these inflection points. It starts with rooting more interest in our high school ag programs, continuing with providing more support in our undergraduate programs, and with working to allocate more spots in vet programs to students with large animal backgrounds."

RICHARD HEATH: "This has been a concern for several years and a great deal of time has been devoted to addressing the need. A few opportunities I would focus on are promoting

our vet tech programs to encourage Kentucky students to enter the profession, at some level. I would also review the Kentucky Veterinary Act for possible changes similar to revisions we see trending with human health care. And expand the financial support for Kentucky students attending Auburn and other vet schools, who desire to serve large animals in Kentucky. And revisit the opportunities of vet deficits in communities pulling resources to recruit large animal vets by assisting in paying down student loans and vet practice start-up expenses."

Next question page 16

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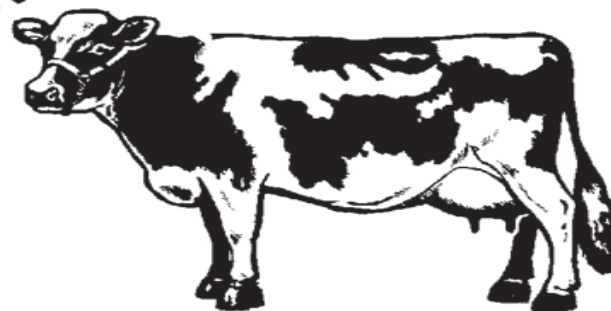
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AG COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE QUESTIONS:

What actions would you take concerning the proposed educational space/meats lab at the Woodford Farm?

SIERRA ENLOW: "One of my first steps as the commissioner of agriculture will be the creation of a 'Transparency Portal' that allows everyone to view how the ag development dollars are utilized by Kentucky farmers. It is important to know that these funds are used in a way that drives economic value through transformative action for not only Kentucky farmers, but rural residents. The more insight provided to the public the better we can create good policy decisions on the allocation of these funds."

"Part of my work creating the portal will include information on projects that failed to get funding, and how they compared with projects that did receive funding. The proposed educational space/meat lab at Woodford Farm is

a prime example of why we need this insight to continue to advocate for important and transformational projects with our ag development funds."

RICHARD HEATH: "This project would serve Kentucky livestock farmers with needed support. It is a proven approach that we know works, because of the success experienced with the Grain Center of Excellence. The education space/meat lab would provide a vital link to meet consumers' dietary expectations, as well as help identify innovative ways to improve production. Ultimately, the livestock center of excellence would also help us develop a strategy that encompasses partnership in the meat industry, as well as other public and private educa-

tional and research institutions."

"I have had the opportunity to work with the committee putting together the livestock center of excellence on the Woodford Farm, and have supported the project as chairman of the House Ag Committee. I would continue to support it as commissioner of agriculture."

JONATHAN SHELL: "I would like to see us work to meet any of the

concerns expressed by stakeholders. It's important as we become much more focused in Kentucky on finishing our livestock and poultry for market, that we have as many tools as necessary to help our farmers and processors be successful. In agriculture, just like in many other parts of our economy, we must balance the needs of our livestock industry, embrace innovation, while still making sure we are being deliberate in our decision making."


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Farmers Celebrate Earth Day Every Day

Earth Day, observed annually on April 22, is a global event that brings together individuals, communities, and organizations to demonstrate their commitment to environmental protection and sustainability. As stewards of the land, farmers play a crucial role in preserving the environment and supporting the Earth Day ethos. Farmers continue to adopt various sustainable practices to celebrate Earth Day that help the environment and benefit their livelihood.

Regenerative Agriculture

Regenerative agriculture is an innovative farming approach that focuses on restoring soil health, enhancing biodiversity, and reducing the negative impacts of agriculture on the environment. Regenerative practices like no-till farming, cover cropping, rotational grazing, and agroforestry improve soil health, reduce erosion, and increase carbon sequestration. These methods enhance the land's resilience to climate change while providing long-term benefits for farmers through higher yields and reduced input costs. Kentucky's agricultural research institutions constantly look at ways to improve production through more natural methods to improve farm profitability.

Biodiversity

Farmers promote biodiversity on their farms by creating habitats for various plant and animal species. Establishing hedgerows, field margins, and wildflower meadows encourages pollinators and beneficial insects, which help control pests and improve crop yields. Additionally, integrating livestock into crop rotations or maintaining mixed-use landscapes with woodland and wetland areas support a diverse array of species, making farms more resilient to environmental stressors.

Conserving and Protecting Water

Water is a precious resource, and its efficient use is vital for sustainable agriculture. Farmers implement water-saving techniques such as drip irrigation, rainwater harvesting, and mulching. These practices help to reduce water wastage, lower irrigation costs, and enhance soil moisture retention. Furthermore, farmers can utilize soil moisture sensors and weather-based



Reddick Farms was the winner of the 2022 Kentucky Leopold Conservation Award. This contest has been awarding innovative farmers dedicated to conservation since 2013.

irrigation scheduling to optimize water use and minimize runoff.

The Kentucky General Assembly passed the Kentucky Agricultural Water Quality Act in 1994 to protect surface and groundwater resources from pollution due to agriculture and forestry activities. The Agricultural Water Quality Act requires all farmers and foresters using 10 or more acres for production to develop and implement a water quality plan using best management practices. Those practices include rotational grazing, planting permanent crops and trees near streams, and managing chemicals well.

Embracing Renewable Energy

Many farmers use renewable energy sources to reduce their environmental impact and cut energy costs, or they may update their equipment to conserve energy use. The On-Farm Energy Efficiency Incentive program through Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund provides a cost-share on eligible equipment and technologies

such as more energy-efficient grain drying systems, poultry housing, irrigation, and dairy operations. Farmers may also install solar or biomass-powered equipment.

Sharing Knowledge and Collaborating

One of the best ways for farmers to improve sustainability is by sharing their knowledge and experiences with other farmers and learning from one another. Participating in local, national, or global networks, such as conservation districts, farmer cooperatives, extension programs, or online forums, can help farmers exchange ideas, gain new insights, and stay updated on the latest advancements in sustainable agriculture. Collaboration is critical to driving positive change and fostering a more sustainable future for all.

Sharing Their Conservation Stories

Farmers can spread awareness about the importance of sustainable agriculture by hosting events on their farms. Open farm days, workshops, and farm-to-table dinners offer opportunities for the public to learn

about sustainable farming practices and experience farm life firsthand. By engaging with the community, farmers can inspire others to adopt sustainable habits and foster a deeper appreciation for the environment.

The Leopold Conservation Award Program is another excellent way that farmers' efforts can be recognized and shared with their communities. Farms engaging in outstanding conservation practices have been recognized in Kentucky since 2013.

Earth Day is an excellent opportunity for farmers to reaffirm their commitment to protecting the environment and promoting sustainable agriculture while further cementing their livelihoods through collaboration and education.

Content provided by the Kentucky Agriculture and Environment in the Classroom. Learn more about agriculture literacy programs at www.teachkyag.org. Learn more about Kentucky agriculture at www.kyfoodandfarm.info.

When knowledge exceeds obedience

FROM PAGE 12

4. Maturity decreased gains per day much more than forage digestibility. A delay of 22 days dropped digestibility by 17 percent (68 to 56 percent). Over this same period, daily gain dropped by 70 percent (1.39 to 0.42 pounds/day).

5. The latest cutting date produced the highest yield (2823 pounds/acre). You

might argue that 500 to 1500 lb per acre is enough justification to delay cutting, and you would be right for mature cows with low energy needs.

6. Curiously, the amount of gain per acre was almost identical for each of the three hays (yield per acre divided by lb of hay per pound of gain), 132, 136, and 125 lb, respectively. However, if you calculate how



More bales per acre is often a reason given for late cuttings of spring grass. This traditional thinking may not be correct for many classes of livestock.

Stage of harvest, date of cutting	Dry matter intake lb/day	Percent digestibility	Percent protein	Feed efficiency, lb hay fed per lb of gain	Yield, lb per acre	Gain, lb per day
Late boot to head, May 3	13.0	68	13.8	10.1	1334	1.39
Early bloom stage, May 14	11.7	66	10.2	13.5	1838	0.97
Early milk stage – seed forming, May 25	8.6	56	7.6	22.5	2823	0.42

*Holstein heifers were used, average weight – 500 lb.
Source: University of Tennessee, reported in AGR-62, Quality Hay Production, University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.

long it would take to get that gain on each hay, you arrive at 95, 140 and 298 days respectively. Hay cut on May 25 could produce the same gain as hay cut on May 3 but it would take twice as much hay and three times as long!

7. The May 3 treatment would also have the added benefit of 22 extra days of forage

growth compared to the May 25 hay field – extra growth that could further improve the argument for making an early first cutting.

Hopefully this new bit of knowledge can improve our obedience to cutting hay earlier, especially when it is for growing animals like these Holstein heifers.

Happy foraging.

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Corn Grower Leaders to EPA: Maintaining Consumer Access to E15 Increases Fuel Supply

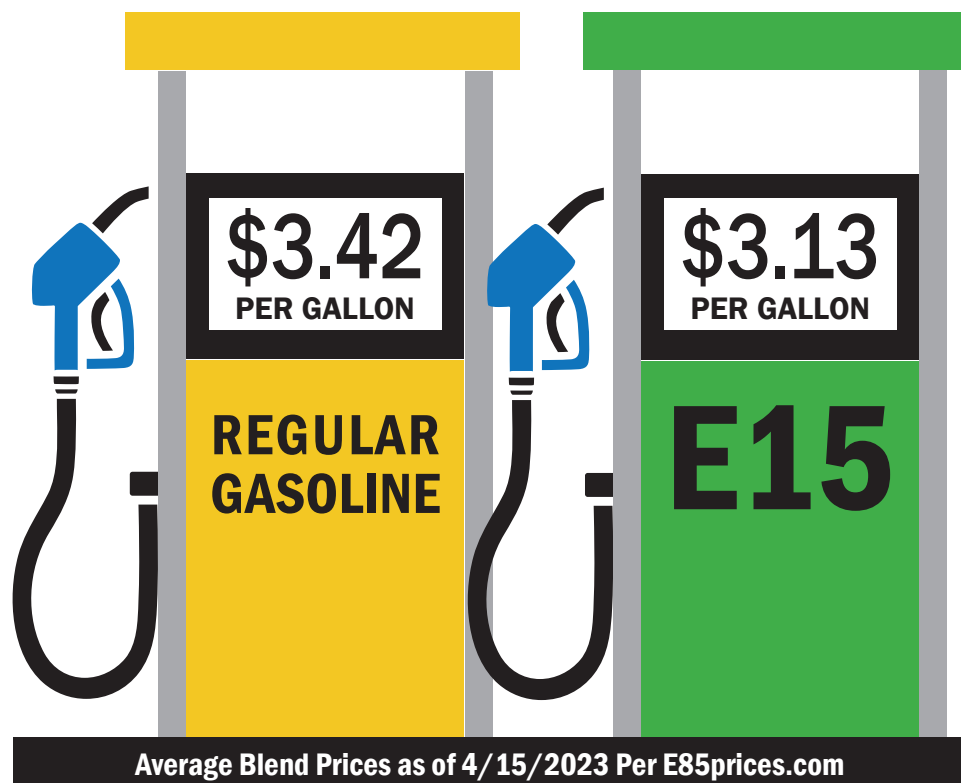
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency should use its authority under the Clean Air Act to provide consumers with continued access to low-cost, low-emission E15 during the summer months, according to a letter sent earlier this month from corn grower leaders to EPA administrator Michael S. Regan.

The president of the National Corn Growers Association, joined by leaders from 18 state corn grower groups, signed the letter, which called on EPA to replicate its actions from last year and ensure uninterrupted access to E15 through the summer.

“At a time when fuel supplies remain constrained and prices remain high, consumers and retailers need all fuel choices available, especially as seasonal demand increases during the summer,” the farmer leaders stated. “Fuel market conditions that warranted EPA’s actions last summer are expected to continue this summer, and Russia’s war in Ukraine continues to disrupt global energy markets.”

EPA approved E15, or 15 percent ethanol blends, in 2011 for use in all 2001 and newer vehicles, which account for more than 96 percent of vehicles on the road today. Retailers have increased availability of E15, often marketed as Unleaded 88, to offer consumers choice and lower fuel costs, as well as increase the fuel supply. E15 has been sold year-round for the past four years, but outdated regulatory barriers continue to hinder permanent full-market access to E15.

NCGA and state corn grower associations reminded EPA officials that access to higher blends of



Gas prices remain elevated and hard-working families are feeling pain at the pump. Fortunately, American-made ethanol provides some relief. Today, gas with 15 percent ethanol is the lowest-priced fuel available. But this blend, E15, will disappear on Thursday, June 1, unless Washington acts NOW.

ethanol can help keep prices down at the pump. The corn grower leaders pointed to warning signs, such as OPEC’s announcement of a 1.16 million barrels per day output reduction beginning in May, as reason the Biden administration should do everything possible to increase the domestic fuel supply to help keep prices down.

“With ethanol currently priced around 50 cents less per gallon than unblended gasoline at wholesale, drivers are continuing to save up to 15 cents or more per gallon,” the growers stated. “As the number of retailers offering drivers this low-cost, low-emission choice increases, the economic benefits also expand.”

Finally, the leaders noted that, in addition to increasing the fuel supply and lowering prices for drivers, higher ethanol blends like E15 reduce emissions.

“Ethanol results in nearly 50 percent fewer GHG emissions than gasoline, so Increasing ethanol blending from 10 to 15 percent further cuts GHG emissions,” they said. “Blending more ethanol to make E15 displaces the most toxic aromatic hydrocarbon components in gasoline, reducing exhaust emissions for cleaner air.”

The grower leaders urged EPA to act on their request in the near future to provide market certainty.

Next Generation Fuels Act Update

The **Next Generation Fuels Act** (NGFA) was reintroduced in the U.S. House of Representatives (HR 2434) and Senate (S 944) last month.

Congressman James Comer (KY-1) is an original co-sponsor. Corn Growers applauded the development because it recognizes the contributions that ethanol can provide for achieving clean energy goals while also boosting performance and affordability of the internal combustion engine by utilizing octane. Ethanol has an octane rating of 109, compared to a rating of 85 for most gasoline blend stock. The March 2023 price of ethanol was 43 cents per gallon less than regular gasoline.

This legislation creates an octane standard, building on our nation’s clean energy progress. It advances higher ethanol blends and ensures the reliable octane that auto manufacturers need to modernize engines with higher compression ratios. NGFA ties the newer engines together with a higher-performing fuel to deliver greater emission reductions, cost savings and consumer choice. Fuel efficiency and, in most cases, torque are also increased when these engine advancements are enabled.

Kentucky Corn, NCGA and other affiliate state corn associations are currently working to rebuild a group of industry supporters. In the previous Congress, NGFA was endorsed by General Motors, United Auto Workers, Association of Equipment Manufacturers, CHS, Farm Bureau, National Farmers Union, John Deere, CASE, New Holland, Bayer, Corteva, Syngenta and the national ethanol organizations.



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